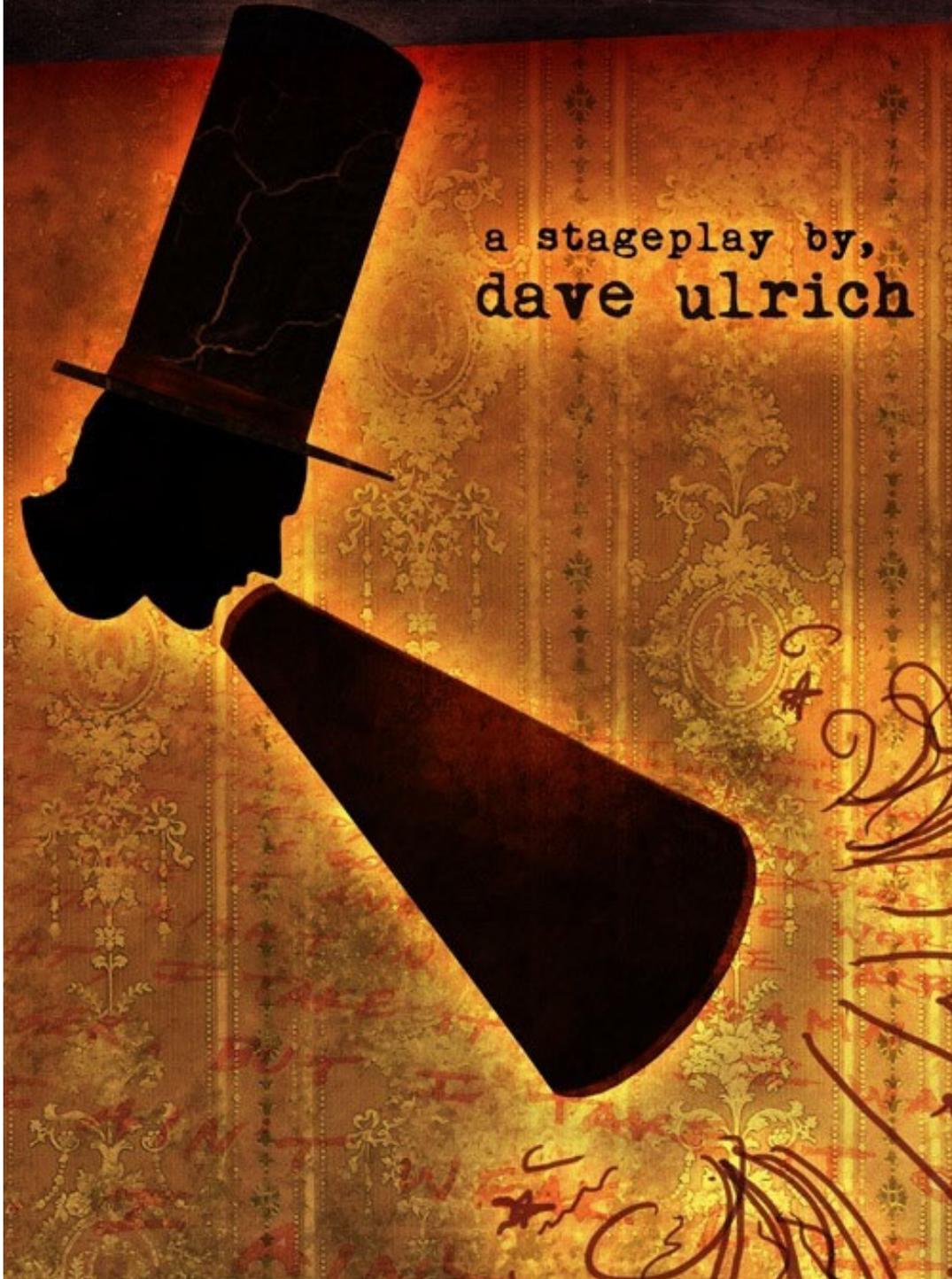


# the passionates

a stageplay by,  
dave ulrich



# **The Passionates**

by, Dave Ulrich

A play for the stage.

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*For anyone foolish enough and brave enough  
to choose a life behind, in front, or on top of a stage.*

# ACT ONE

## ACT 1 / SCENE 1

*(LIGHTS up to a SPOTLIGHT center.)*

*(SPIELER, a circus ringmaster with a large moustache, is curled up in a fetal position asleep.)*

*(His corded microphone is lying upstage of him, but still in the light. His top hat is on the floor by his head. A whistle is around his neck.)*

*(He begins to sense the LIGHT and rustles.)*

SPIELER: Mmmmm.

*(He wakes slowly at first. Then realization hits that he is in the SPOTLIGHT and caught unaware.)*

*(He rolls into a sitting position, grabs the mic, and leaps to his feet with astonishing dexterity and energy.)*

*(He sweeps his hat from the floor and puts it on his head as he vibrantly announces:)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Roll up, roll up! Roll up for the greatest show... on this stage tonight. (to people offstage and not into the mic) Butchers! Now! (to the audience) Tonight we perform wonders... tens of people have seen. For tonight it is... the Circus of Theatre!

*(As the MUSIC of a tinny Sousa march recording blares triumphantly, CONCESSIONAIRES enter from the wings.*

*(They descend into the audience and hand out cotton candy and bags of peanuts, then exit.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): You will witness a dazzling array of... lights!

*(As many SPOTLIGHTS and follow spots available spin around the stage — even if only one.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Some in glorious... color!

*(The SPOTLIGHTS disappear and every colored light available flashes in frenzy —*

*again, even if only one.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): And daring, death-defying... physical feats!

*(The SPOTLIGHT comes up on TWO STAGEHANDS carrying a table & chair onstage.)*

*(They set the furniture near center, bow, and exit.)*

*(The SPOTLIGHT moves back to SPIELER.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): But before I reveal our main event... SEND IN THE CLOWNS!

*(The MUSIC becomes zany, and colorful LIGHTS come up while TWO CLOWNS rush in from the wings and collide behind SPIELER.)*

*(They fall flat on their backs and the effects are punctuated with whistles and zithers offstage.)*

*(The TWO CLOWNS sprout fake bouquets of flowers tucked in their armpits, feigning death.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): (keeping composure as best he can) The clowns!...?

*(A THIRD CLOWN sneaks up behind SPIELER from directly upstage, giving the "shhh," signal to the audience.)*

*(SPIELER turns to see what has happened to the clowns.)*

*(The THIRD CLOWN moves with him, remaining hidden behind his back.)*

*(SPIELER sees the fallen clowns lying on their backs and removes his handkerchief from his jacket pocket.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): (into the mic) Oh dear.

*(He wipes his brow as he turns back to face the audience.)*

*(Again moving with him, the THIRD CLOWN gives the "shhh," sign once more over SPIELER's left shoulder.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Well, let's get right to...

*(When SPIELER senses something and turns his head, the THIRD CLOWN moves to the right shoulder to give the 'shhh' sign once more.)*

*(When SPIELER turns his head to the right, the THIRD CLOWN runs around the left and drops SPIELER's pants — revealing large red heart boxers under his wrinkled shirttails.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): (into the mic) Very funny Luigi!

*(As SPIELER pulls his pants up, the THIRD CLOWN has approached the front row. He removes a long balloon from his shirt, and quickly ties it into a balloon dog, which he tosses into the crowd.)*

*(He honks a horn on his belt and runs off.)*

*(The other CLOWNS roll over, and right up onto their feet again.)*

*(They look at the bouquets in their hands, realize something, and then swap them with one another.)*

*(They skip out, exiting through opposite wings.)*

*(The MUSIC stops, replaced with a drumroll.)*

*(Back to the SPOTLIGHT on SPIELER.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): (lower, slower, and dramatic) At the heart of our show, lies wonders deeper than your wildest imagination. In the center ring of our small stage you will behold horrible... tragedies!

*(The drumroll is replaced by MUSIC — a haunting gypsy violin.)*

*(The LIGHTS come up dimly.)*

*(The MAIN PLAYERS enter and walk single file in circles around SPIELER, following a taped line and holding hands — like a procession of animals.)*

*(SPIELER indicates various members of the MAIN PLAYERS as he speaks.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Like disfigured morality... (beat) ... dangerous obsessions... (beat) ... acts of desperation... (beat) ... pitiful indiscretions... (beat) ... and... vengeance!

*(On this last word, the MAIN PLAYERS stop and stare at the audience with exhaustion.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): My dear liberal theatre audience, we bring you... the Passionates! (motioning around the circle) Unfortunate souls — for your scorn and disapproval. (he pats cheeks, tugs ears, etc.) Sinister! They are... and are not. Mad! Yet mad is not madness. Perhaps just a spot, jot, a bitty bit for the caricatures who shall traipse about

the stage in your judgement. Yours alone. Placed on the table of simplification so you may glad-hand your neighbor in shared enlightenment. (stepping from the center and circling them) Laugh at these 'freaks,' if you must. And fear them, as you should. But most of all, listen for their greatest, most tragic flaw... conviction. (studying the faces) But where do we begin? (after several beats of study) Well let us waste no time beginning our dissection... (pointing with force) Nicholas!

*(Opposite of SPIELER, NICHOLAS steps out of the ring of MAIN PLAYERS.)*

*(SPIELER points to the desk & chair.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Sit!

*(NICHOLAS rushes to the desk, sits in the chair, and bows his head.)*

*(SPIELER blows on his whistle and the MAIN PLAYERS scatter.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Ladies and gentleman... (spreading an arm in grand gesture) ... I introduce to you: The Passionates!

*(BLACKOUT.)*

*(The offstage cast applauds from the wings in the darkness.)*

## ACT 1 / SCENE 2

*(The spotlight comes up on NICHOLAS.)*

NICHOLAS: (looking up and around) May I have a cup of hot tea? Please? Honey if you have it. Milk. (focusing on the audience) What a world this could be, if... (sighs) You must understand... (beat) Who do you suppose is the greatest artist the world has known? Michelangelo? Mozart? Shakespeare, perhaps?, DaVinci, Tchaichovsky? You dare not venture a guess, do you? How could you? There would be no point. It is, after all, a trick question. They are all the same person. And I speak not of a grand conspiracy to create a false world history. I mean to say that the works of these men were not theirs to claim. (beat) God is the only true artist. Therefore, we should understand that all great works are the strokes of His hand, flowing through the bodies of the mere mortals we have admired — and foolishly idolized. (beat as his finger traces his eyebrow) This is what I had hoped to explain if I had sufficient opportunity. But I was silenced time and again as they made what I did seem so disgustingly simple. Despite everything I wished to say — hoped to say — my words were never heard. No, I was never allowed to tell them that God's great work is ever-present, and it is we who fail. We who fail in allowing Him the chance to move us. (hotly) And no! God did not guide me! What I did was not art! (reflective, calming beat) But they don't listen. They wouldn't listen. Just as you will surely refuse to listen to what I'm saying now. There are but a few who listen anymore. (looking around to someone he can't see) I'd like to stand. I'm going to stand now. I'd just rather pace about. (stands) What she did was the greatest sin... So rare is it that God speaks to us anew. Today it often seems we may only revisit His voice on the walls of museums. And listen to passionless performances of the His greatest works by the soulless symphonies of regional Philharmonics. Or we must open sadly abridged and weakened translations of what was once His great poetry. No. (shaking his head) No, what she did was the greatest sin I can imagine. What she did was stop the voice of God in a time when His true voice is very difficult to hear — amidst the noise of today's gluttonous world. And if you stop the song of God, you destroy a small piece of this boisterous, bellowing place we must serve our time in. (sighs) I was God's vengeance. I served Him. I freed His voice — with my hand. (a look of disgust comes over him) They didn't understand this in the slightest. They focused on fantasy. Fiction. The worst was the talk of the girl. "Did I love her?" Or "Did I touch her?" It was insulting and pathetic. An attempt to demonize me. Me?! An Angel of God on Earth. (impatiently) God loves her. God loves to use her. God loves her more than me, perhaps. (vocal exhale) That's what was tragically ridiculous. None of this was about the girl at all. But that's all they had to ask of me. "Did you love her?" But they didn't want to hear anything I had to say. Or that it wasn't about her. They remained completely oblivious to the fact that it was all about His work. Hadn't they ever seen perfection? Surely not. Have you? (a pause) There is nothing more beautiful than a person living, existing, in a moment — doing something perfectly. Maybe you can't understand. Maybe you've never witnessed this in your lifetime. Or missed it. The faithless always have their eye focused on pain, suffering and defeat. To someone like you, Jennifer was just

a distracted and disinterested child. But if you would hand her the violin...

*(MUSIC plays softly under. It is dissonant, haunting, and distant strings.)*

NICHOLAS: (a bit louder over the music) Mind you, the violin is a very remarkable instrument. The beginner can produce the most offensive sounds in all the music world, while the master can produce beauty unmatched by any wind, percussion, brass, or even fellow string. At seven years old, Jennifer should have hurt me. Should have rattled my ears and made me plead for mercy. I knew she wouldn't... Hurt me. I had heard about her. It's why she was sent to me. (lost in the music) The magic produced by this seven year old — the sounds that came from this disinterested child... the voice I heard, the passion — was not hers. It was God singing. For heaven's sake, she would improvise — improvise! — the most fantastic melodies. Notes strung out as random as the stars on the sky's blanket. Yet... perfect. Scattered as perfectly imperfect as the actual heavens above us. Ahhhh. (almost tearful) No. No, you don't compete with God when you are blessed with the opportunity to hear Him sing directly, wondrously, into your ear. You don't argue with Him, you don't — stop Him. Oh no, no. You embrace His song — you must. You encourage it, and do everything in your power to let God speak to us all. That is how we hear Him! It is the only method he chooses to speak directly to us. In the perfect curve of a painter's line, or the perfectly pitched voice of a mezzo soprano. In the perfect hand gesture of a possessed actor... or the perfect arrangement of words by a poet. (beat, then slowly and deliberately) And in the perfect strokes of the bow by a seven year old girl in braids. (a beat) If you silence these things then you have taken God from all of us. If you silence these things the reasons to spend our lives on this Earth become few and our time feels futile. We need God's voice. We need to see His art. And when some bitch comes along and says it isn't healthy for a girl to think only of the violin, she is stopping the hand of God. Who did she think she was? (sits and places his palm on his forehead) God is the Father, His word vetoes the power of a child's faithless mother. Each time I stabbed that cunt I heard the notes of God's song sing louder. Just as they would soon sing again through the child I was saving. Soon sing out to all us... again. (beat) To those who listen, anyway. You see, I did this for you. I did this for everyone who put me in this place. I martyred myself to save His voice. For you. And for all who believe. For all who have a future on this Earth. Though I do not. (beat) But I do have future elsewhere. Because there is no death. My future is forever. Yours, too. But I wouldn't like to go where I suspect you'll be going. (smiles, stands and sends this out to the unseen people) And God is telling you, each day, where that is...

*(The MUSIC stops suddenly.)*

NICHOLAS (cont'd): (sing-song) ... but you won't hear.

*(BLACKOUT.)*

## ACT 1 / SCENE 3

*(A SPOTLIGHT comes up stage left and finds SPIELER there.)*

SPIELER: Nicholas, the furious! The faithful. The morally morbid master. And the first silly string of tonight's show... The Passionates! (deep breath of preparation) MUSIC!

*(LIGHTS come up and more celebratory march MUSIC blares.)*

*(Someone cartwheels across the stage, another walks on their hands.)*

*(STAGEHANDS remove the table and set up a fake fireplace & mantle, an end table, and a recliner chair.)*

*(The THREE CLOWNS weave through the action in a fast/slo-motion/fast again farcical chase that ends with a gun shooting a bouquet of flowers that are then removed and passed out to the ladies in the audience.)*

*(The LIGHTS go and we return to a spot on SPIELER.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Gil! Enter the ring! (whispering into the microphone to the audience) Ladies and gentlemen, we now bring you... tragedy. Or is it... insanity? Heartbreak, or collapse? Perhaps a pointless entanglement with fate... but you may chide, you can dismiss. Feel free to mock, for he is... (bigger) ... a Passionate!

*(BLACKOUT.)*

## ACT 1 / SCENE 4

*(Lights come up on a "living room.")*

*(GIL is standing beside a fireplace mantle.)*

GIL: Got this a few years back at an estate sale. (picks up a brass candlestick from the mantle) Damn near black when i saw it. But I knew. And I was right. Shined up real good. If you take something like that and put a little elbow in the effort, you gonna to get something stand up real tall and look proud. (puts it back) Roy was like that. My boy. That's him, there. Here. (walks over and picks up a framed photo) Right here — with a mighty young Bill Clinton. (chuckles) Lookit Billy there. Knee deep in pussy that year, I betcha. (drifting) I betcha. (back) But my boy. Roy. He was... I'm gonna say ten. Funny how he ended up in this here photo. Funny story. (puts the photo back) See, Roy gets himself in trouble at school one day. He's ten, mind you. Well he don't want to say the Pledge one day. Seems he read some history book didn't sugar coat nothin' about our checkered past. You know, of the stars and stripes, I mean. And you know, maybe — maybe that shit's all true. Maybe so. Maybe we done some shit, but it's still the best goddamn country in the world. And ol' Roy... (laugh) ...ten years old! And he didn't think much of making no pledge to the flag of a country that went and killed a bunch of Indians. Had slaves. Burned witches, and what not. But Miss... (scratches his head) Ah, damn, I wanna say — Miss Friedman. Well she punishes him with a paper. A paper 'bout why he loved America. Was a punishment, mind you. But ol' Roy goes and writes something no ten year old supposed to be writin'. I mean to say it was real smart. Wins an award and everything. Next thing we know, he's shakin' hands with a young Slick Willie right there in that picture. (motions to sit down and sits himself) To my mind, before that, he took too much after his mother. But, something happened. I don't know what the boy found inside him to love the USA like that, ya know — after he was down about it. But whatever it was, it stayed with 'em. Right into active duty. And it's funny 'cuz I never thought me being a soldier really moved him much one way the other. So when he went and wrote up something like that. I guess I kinda thought, or hoped, that maybe I had something to do with it. That it was his way of saying he thought... you know, he was proud of what I done. Even if he was only ten. I suppose he was awful young to understand it much. (shakes his head) That boy. (looks off in strained reflection) But I never been so proud as when they showed up at my door. When I opened it up and saw uniforms. Shiny brass buttons in the sunshine, stripes, hats, fresh folded letter in hand. I knew. I knew what they was gonna tell me... (deep breath) Those goddamned crazy people in the Middle East. I gotta tell ya. I always said you gotta nuke 'em or just stay the hell out of there. But now you know, I know now — that's just chickenshit thinkin'. 'Cuz we went in there, boy howdy. We went in there and showed that sonofabitch a thing or two 'bout what we got. America ain't gonna sit back and watch no bullshit. I gotta dead boy to prove that. (stops with sudden restraint) A lotta young punks these days look at the military like free school. Like extra cash when it all get done. Roy didn't go in like that. Roy understood what the armed forces is all about. One word: Service. Serve. Your. Country. If the United States gonna be so great that we'll go and get our

hands dirty in some crazy country of mindless animals — just to try and save them dumb bastards from themselves... Well, you go, goddamn it. You go and do what you gotta do and ya don't bitch about the fact you never thought you'd see action. You want a country like we got, you gotta be willin' to die for the opportunities we got. For the opportunity of life it gives ya. That's why, Vietnam, I signed up. No drafting this ol' boy. I went and killed those yellow commies 'cuz it was the right thing to do. You didn't have to drag my ass out there crying. And Roy did the same thing in Iraq. Went with a clear head to show the world America's strong, 'cuz Americans are strong. That's my boy. That's the kinda boy I raised. That boy. (little catch in the throat) Tough like his daddy, and made me proud. Yeah. Yeah, I'd love him just the same if he lived. But dying in service. Wooo. Daddy's proud ol' Roy, you sonofabitch. (smiles fighting tears) Sonofabitch. (beat before clarity) If he turned out like his mother, I mighta been the one to kill myself. How I ended up with... she didn't... I still can't figure how she didn't... How was she not proud? Roy was our life work and he died a hero, but she gotta act like it was for nothing just 'cuz he died before she did. How long'd she think I was gonna sit back and listen to her call our masterpiece worthless? A waste of time. Who knows what I'd a done if she didn't beat me to it. And it took every bit of decency I could manage to arrange for her... after she... finally went and did it. Well, I made it as fast and simple as her family'd let me. Nothing fancy. Not like Roy. Roy got done up real good. Salute and all. (gets up and starts to move off) Here, I wanna show you something else. (without turning back) Just sit tight, I'll bring it out.

*(GIL steps off for just a beat.)*

*(He returns with a shotgun.)*

GIL (cont'd): I was gonna give this to Roy when he got back. This was my favorite. My baby. And he knew it. He loved it, too. I let him shoot it a few times, but he didn't never think I'd go and give it to him. (admires the gun lovingly) I was gonna. I ain't gonna lie to ya. (looks up with glossy eyes) What's hard about it all. The only thing that makes it... I can't completely... I'm proud. You know. I am. Prouda 'ol Roy, but that... that... Roy did die in service. And that's a hell of a thing. That's something special. Active duty, out in the thick of... Sent over and ready to... But that... that — motherfucker who... (angrily) You ain't supposed to die by the hand of one of your own! That mother...! When that fuckin' motherfucker piece of shit threw a grenade in my boy's tent... When that sick faggot bitch snapped in the head and stole my boy... That traitor motherfucker... (weakly) ... threw a motherfuckin' grenade... (pause) There is no punishment, no torture, great enough to — mean enough to make up... (brief sob) Every night I shine this up good. Slow. So as to enjoy it. And I load it. Slow. Both barrels. Get it good and ready. Give it power. Power in waiting. Like a horse ready to buck out the gate. Ready to explode — with a scream so loud it's gonna wake the world. And I take it... I take it and I stick the barrel in my goddamn mouth. Right in my goddamn... (pause to gather himself) And then every night, I take it out. I wait a little bit longer. But I take it out. I take it out 'cuz I ain't weak like that bitch I married. I ain't weak like that bitch traitor that blew up my boy. I'm gonna die fighting. That's what we're born to do. Die. Fighting. I always said

that. I knew it since I was a baby myself. That's what every man's gotta do. Go out fighting. Roy woulda. You can bet your life on that. Roy woulda. Woulda if he didn't get his face scattered across the desert... (long pause) Roy shined, boy howdy. (cracks open the barrel and pulls a couple of shells from his pocket) And when he meets me at the gates, he's gonna be prouda me. I'm so proud of him. That goddamn boy. (starts to load the gun) Ol' Roy put a little elbow in his own life, and he shined up real good for his daddy. Real good.

*(BLACKOUT.)*

## ACT 1 / SCENE 5

*(A SPOTLIGHT comes up and no one is there.)*

*(We hear SPIELER whispering in the wings.)*

SPIELER: Elyse! Elyse you're next! El... (trying a different tact) My dear, why aren't you prepared?

ELYSE: (also in a hushed voice, but with an indeterminable accent) Fuck you, Spieler.

SPIELER: Farrah. Elyse is up next and... holy...! Look at your hair!

ELYSE: I yain't doin' it.

SPIELER: That, young sass, is impossible.

ELYSE: We'll see 'bout that, won't weh?

SPIELER: Darling, you know the show must go on, and you are to perform Elyse in a matter of moments.

ELYSE: Noi!

SPIELER: What the devil...? Did Klaus hurt you again, do you want me to...

ELYSE: Noi!

SPIELER: Farrah, the show must go on!

ELYSE: 'S the point?

SPIELER: Don't be ridiculous... because!

ELYSE: Uh huh.

SPIELER: Because it must! Don't bait me, you realize what is at stake.

ELYSE: What? What's et stake, Spieler?

SPIELER: The audience. What will they...?

ELYSE: I could count the flatties out 'ere and half 'ems comp'ed.

SPIELER: You... you must... go.

ELYSE: Noi.

SPIELER: Why not?

ELYSE: Difference do it make? We yain't gon' see a penny 'til we's a dressed show. An we yain't had one yet.

SPIELER: That's no reason. If we were here for the money we'd be fools. (beat) I can't help you if you don't tell me what's wrong.

ELYSE: I...

SPIELER: Quickly Farrah, you'll miss your cue.

ELYSE: I dun' understand why thar's only two donas in the show! Two garls, Spieler. Only two!

SPIELER: Come now, I didn't write this nonsense.

ELYSE: So?

SPIELER: So, that's the nature of this circus. There are more actors than actresses. Writers write to accommodate.

ELYSE: D'ya know what year 'tis?

SPIELER: Of course, my dear. Now get ready, Bentley's about to finish up the Gil monologue. Spotlight will be up in no time.

ELYSE: You're such an idget sometimes.

SPIELER: How's that?

ELYSE: Turn 'round Spieler.

*(There is a pause.)*

## ACT 1 / SCENE 6

*(SPIELER comes sliding smoothly and fantastically into the spotlight on his padded knees.)*

*(Despite his dexterity, his red-face reveals the embarrassment.)*

SPIELER: Ladies and gentlemen, a heart-wrenching flip fop: Gil the shattered! The second of our ferocious parade of... Pass-shee-ah-naught-taze! (beat) MUSIC!

*(Dangerous, dramatic circus MUSIC bursts out.)*

*(More LIGHTS come up.)*

*(A LION TAMER steps out of the wings. In one hand he holds a small stool to fend off an attacker. In the other hand he has a whip. He has a large black, waxed moustache.)*

*(He snaps the whip at something offstage.)*

LION TAMER: Down! Down, you beast!

*(Suddenly, the THIRD CLOWN (Luigi) leaps on him from offstage while wearing a fake tiger's head.)*

*(They tumble to the ground as the MUSIC turns zany.)*

*(The CLOWN pretends to lick the LION TAMER's face with his big felt tongue.)*

*(The CLOWN leaps to his feet and chases SPIELER around in a couple of circles.)*

*(SPIELER grabs the stool and thrusts it out menacingly.)*

SPIELER: Ah ha!

*(The CLOWN freezes.)*

*(Then he simply removes the stool from SPIELER's hand with little effort.)*

*(They stare at the power exchange for a moment.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Easy now, Luigi...

*(The THIRD CLOWN shrugs and tosses the stool high over his shoulder.)*

*(As the stool goes airborne, STAGEHANDS have entered — and one catches the stool*

*midair. Others remove GIL's living room set pieces.)*

*(Meanwhile, the LION TAMER has gotten back to his feet and taps on the THIRD CLOWN's shoulder with his whip.)*

LION TAMER: Ah ha!

*(The CLOWN thrusts his hands in the air like he is under arrest, then removes his tiger head and sets it on the ground as a peace offering.)*

*(As the LION TAMER leans down to pick it up by an ear, the CLOWN runs up and kicks it like a football, and then runs wildly through the house and out through the house door — with the LION TAMER in hot pursuit.)*

LION TAMER: Stop that cat!

*(The exit is punctuated with humorous drum beats.)*

*(Throughout this action, the STAGEHANDS have been setting up a porch swing and a picnic table with a glass of lemonade.)*

*(The stage now clear, the LIGHTS dim, but SPIELER's SPOTLIGHT still burns hot.)*

SPIELER: Elyse! Enter the ring. (confidentially to the audience) Ladies and gentlemen, we now bring you... sweet ruthlessness — with a dash of calculation — in the key of honeysuckle. Or is it justice — dipped gently in arsenic? Smile from up high, shake your heads, for she is... (bigger) ... a... (say it with me)... Passionate!

*(BLACKOUT.)*

*(Lights come up on a "porch.")*

*(There is no one there.)*

SPIELER: (from stage right) ELYSE!

ELYSE: (from stage left) NOI!

*SPIELER walks on stage red-faced — mixing anger and embarrassment.*

SPIELER: (to the audience forcing a chuckle) Un minuto.

*(He smiles and exits stage left.)*

ELYSE: Git away from meh Spieler!

SPIELER: Roustabouts! Place her upon the stage! She will not be able to help herself.

*(A beat, and then STAGEHANDS carry on a kicking and screaming ELYSE.)*

*(She wears a seemingly expensive sundress and pearls. She holds a handkerchief.)*

*(They place her on the bench part of the picnic table, facing the audience.)*

*(She sees the audience and her eyes widen for just a moment, then she quickly shifts to a calm smile.)*

*(She turns demure right before the audience's eyes.)*

*(The STAGEHANDS exit quickly.)*

## ACT 1 / SCENE 7

*(ELYSE takes a sip of her lemonade and dries her chest with the handkerchief.)*

ELYSE: (nobly, with the excellent diction of a socialite) Donald was a good man. Of course they're going to forget about that. They'll learn. All of 'em. The hard way, I imagine. There was this one I heard... (closes her eyes and shake her head a bit) No. I'm not going to. I'm above spite. (she takes another drink) I have to remind myself to pity. Pity's what lets you drink your lemonade with the Lord one day. My mother told me that once. Not to diminish my appreciation of your fine company. But you know, if I could choose who to have a drink with... (she smiles) But I do think it's just... refreshing that you aim to find out the truth. Most people ignore the real issue — want to scream bloody murder and be done with it. Donald had little to do with it, all told. (takes a drink and sits more relaxed) It is amazing to me, in the aftermath, to see what they do. What they have done. Sure, I can understand that the courts had no choice but to drag me into this, just to confirm timing and our communications. Follow the trail. But the media? How ridiculous. The things they come up with. Some went so far as to claim that I had been having sexual relations with Donald. (she sweeps her hair from the back of her neck and suspends it) Can you imagine? Tommy and I, that's my husband, we had quite a laugh about that. What kind of personal message would we be inserting into the message of the Lord with that kind of behavior? A woman spends a lot of time with a man and the heathens jump to conclusions. (lets her hair fall) No, Donald was a good man. Just look at the effort he took to keep me clean. To guard me from prior knowledge — for when the police would begin their storm. (fans herself with the newspaper on the table) But they've got to sell these damned things somehow, I imagine. Pardon my language. (leans forward) The Lord is fair. This one retaliation prevented hundreds of murders. It is not God's time to visit and walk amongst us, therefore it is our duty to be his sword. (leaning back again and stops fanning) And you should know quite plainly that I have politely listened to the arguments on the other side. They assume someone like me has only a deaf ear. Oh, I hear them clearly enough. Yet still I feverishly disagree. Why do you think that is? (she tosses the newspaper on the table) Because I do not have any doubt, whatsoever, that I am right. That's why I needn't waste too much time arguing. Bickering is the sign of a desperate mind trying to find answers to one's own empty questions. The truth is in faith. The only people desperately clawing for answers of invention are the faithless — full of doubt. But the civilized... Christians... we have the truth, which is why we know peace. (exhilarated) Can you imagine that? Have you felt this? And I'm not talking a day off from everything with a light stroll and a soft breeze under the junipers. I speak of an unending peace stretched across the whole of your life. Something you never lose. Something that picks you up and buoys you everyday, and every night. (beat) Do you know it? (beat) Well the Lord gave me that. That feeling. Died so I may feel that. And that understanding is what Donald and I shared. Not sins of the flesh. Heaven forbid the thought had ever crossed one of our minds! (traces her finger in absent-minded circles on the tabletop) Naturally, the media was quick to point out that he was physically attractive, and that people sometimes fall to temptation. But to imply... that was just absurd speculation. And besides, without

temptation how would we test our resolve? But no. No his flesh did not move me. If anything would have made Donald desirable, it was his love for the Lord, his selfless sacrifices to serve Him. But I have a husband who loves the Lord... in his own way. So I did not need Donald as a partner. (looks off in reflection) Donald was just a beautifully true friend. And a true servant of the Lord. For that I will always love him. Long after the day they take him from us. (snapping out of the moment) You know they tried to attack my credentials. I nearly lost my publisher in his panic over this — when they connected me to Donald. But I emerged unscathed. And I told him that my thoughts may be controversial, but they sell for a reason. They were published for a reason. Something greater than us. Something divine. I had to remind him of what we've achieved. The greater the adversity the more clear it becomes that our work is necessary. And for every achievement we make there are many more attempts to undo what we have accomplished. For example... look at how they covered Donald's work. (rolling her eyes) It was all painted in such a biased, unreasonable manner. For each photo they showed in the papers, or the footage on the television showing graphic remains of the clinic... did they put any of it beside examples of the mangled fetuses those doctors had slaughtered? These people who lost their lives at least had an opportunity to have one. Not like the souls sent back before seeing the Earth. Before having the chance to prove themselves to Jesus. (getting a little riled) And then, of course, we were forced to listen to the ridiculous crying for the 'innocent' victims. Innocents who happened to be receiving birth control and other tools of impurity. Or treatment for diseases that can only be caught from sexual deviance. I'm sorry, but God understands acceptable loss. Noah's neighbors may not have been evil, but they did ignore God's command. (guffaws) And isn't it funny that I don't suffer any of the diseases caught by infidels? Why do you suppose that is? Perhaps because I do not engage in acts that would require 'protection' from the consequences of such acts. So you see, it's quite difficult for me to understand how they claim innocence. How could they? How, if they require any of the services a clinic like that one provides, can they believe themselves inculpable? Am I to believe that just because these patients did not happen to be specifically engaged in the murder of unborn souls, they were otherwise wholesome? Oh, I doubt that emphatically. (waves the thought off) Besides, they are now freed from the Earth for their final judgement. If they were indeed wholesome, then Donald simply blessed them with a hastened journey to paradise. In which case, I dare say, I envy them — in a way. This world is only for waiting. And how you fill that time can grant you or deny you heaven. Donald has earned his pass. And when they flip the switch on him, they'll be sealing their own fates as well. (sits back and takes a drink) There will be more. That I can promise you. I do not know when or where it will be next. But until this country abolishes the slaughter of unborns, another Donald will come to us. I promise you that.

*(ELYSE wipes her mouth and examines the handkerchief to see if she lost her lipstick in the process.)*

*(The LIGHTS dim on ELYSE.)*

## ACT 1 / SCENE 8

*(A SPOTLIGHT comes up on SPIELER.)*

*(SPIELER raises his free hand in the air as ELYSE rises and exits.)*

SPIELER: Ladies and gentlemen, the cool calculator: Elyse the righteous! A devilish Passionate! (beat) MUSIC!

*(March MUSIC explodes once again.)*

*(Then, suddenly... most, all, or a section of the back wall falls forward with a huge CRASH!)*

*(Behind the wall is a frightened and surprised GIL, half-costumed, holding a cup of coffee and an unlit cigarette in his mouth — mid-backstage cross.)*

*(The MUSIC halts abruptly.)*

*(The LIGHTS come up full.)*

*(HANDY, a stagehand, rushes on stage as SPIELER spins around in shock.)*

*(He looks at HANDY.)*

SPIELER: Handy! Explain this!

HANDY: I... We...

SPIELER: (pulling him upstage and lowering his voice) Quickly — the audience!

*(The THREE CLOWNS rush on stage with chairs and small tubs of popcorn. They sit and start munching as they watch the "show" between SPIELER and HANDY.)*

HANDY: Sorry Mister Spieler, sir. It's just... we thought she'd hold.

SPIELER: (hushed but forgetting his mic is on) Why the devil did you think it might not?

HANDY: Well, we taped it, Mister Spieler.

SPIELER: You used tape to hold up a wall?!?!?

HANDY: You see, sir... we ran out of screws.

SPIELER: Well, why didn't you get more?

HANDY: We ran out of money, sir.

SPIELER: (quick, embarrassed look and smile back at the audience - then through clenched teeth) Then why didn't you get nails?

HANDY: No money for that, neither, sir. Not if we're to have bread and coffee this week.

SPIELER: (a thoughtful beat) Well... (another beat) Well, it is the theatre. The only thing we have in abundance is labor.

HANDY: You're absolutely right, sir!

SPIELER: So. Have two of your men hold that wall up from the back throughout the rest of the show.

HANDY: Yes, Mister Spieler... exceptin' one thing — beg your pardon.

SPIELER: What's that? (another quick look back at the audience) Quickly!

HANDY: My men need to be movin' stuff around in the show, sir.

SPIELER: Right you are. Well grab any of the troupers... get the ducat grabber from outside, for all I care. Just make it happen!

HANDY: Yes sir!

*(HANDY runs off.)*

*(The CLOWNS applaud.)*

SPIELER: (to the CLOWNS) Scram!

*(The CLOWNS hop out of their chairs and flee with their popcorn but leave their chairs)*

*behind.)*

*(STAGEHANDS enter and remove two chairs and place a desk in front of the remaining chair.)*

*(NICHOLAS arrives in the hole where the wall used to be, holding a piece of toast and looking bored — but prepared for duty.)*

*(The LION TAMER also arrives. His moustache is dangling half off and he is wearing a tank top.)*

*(NICHOLAS rests the piece of toast in his teeth, and the two lift the wall back into position — disappearing behind it.)*

*(The LIGHTS fade and the SPOTLIGHT returns to SPIELER. He smiles awkwardly.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Heh. (to offstage) Windjammers!

*(Dramatic violin MUSIC plays.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): (gathers himself) You have seen three Passionates thus far, ladies and gents. Anger, pain, scheming... in that order and not. Are you ready for more? Because we certainly have more for you... (loudly) ADRIAN! Enter!

*(An early 20s young man in hip jeans, a T-shirt with something funky on it, and dramatic shoes & sunglasses. He is by any standard, a rock star-esque hunk. Not cheesy at all, just pure confidence.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Ladies and gentleman, we now bring you... the future! Is it what is to always be... or is it a temporary spike in a generation? Widen your eyes in delicious terror... but do not hide, for you must keep a careful watch, lick your chops, and remember there will always be more... Passionates!

## ACT 1 / SCENE 9

*(ADRIAN slinks into the chair, puts his feet on the desk.)*

ADRIAN: I did it again. (relaxed with hands behind his head) So easy. They almost make it not fun, you know? It's not even hard, they've got such a pathetic rag tag defense machine. And when all they got are blanks to shoot, it's kinda like taking on a Terrier with a baseball bat. (dropping forward and hands on desk) They get so flustered. That's the really disgusting thing to watch. I used like it, take pride in watching them piss their pants. (thoughtful beat) I'm probably sounding like an asshole. I know, I know. I'm just trying to protect us. They are on a mission to take us down under the guise of kindness. Kindness that we really don't give a fuck about. And to fight that shit, you gotta bend the rules... and the truth. A little dirty pool.

*(He takes his sunglasses off and hangs them on his shirt.)*

ADRIAN (cont'd): This business suits me, and I'm a superstar. It's a bonus that the work is fun. You know, get out there and show the nation how sexy we are. (laughs then turns genuine) I know we've already won — by a long shot. But you've got to amp up the threat of your enemy to squeeze every last bit of support for your cause, get them to crawl into farthest corner of the cellar and wait for the shoe. (stands and leans on the desk) 'Cuz come on, thieves and liars have always reshaped the world. The normies are quite helpless — that's my endearment for the masses: Normies. Non-contributors to the world's spin cycle. Normies need someone to muscle them so they know what the fuck to do. In fact, they demand it. Silent pleas that we'd dip into their veins, and push them right out of their own heads. It's truly easier that way. Because people don't want choice. (smiles) Seriously! They fucking don't. That stupid mantra of the opposition: Choice. Choice. Choice. It's bullshit. Normies want the guy that will act first and think later. Normies will take the inferior product if it's what most people have. Normies have brand loyalty for the car they've got — just so they don't have to think about all the fucking choices next time. They want to know their burger in Berlin is gonna taste just like it does down the street and they want monolithic clothing empires to explain the season's style to them. And they don't really want to choose between having a baby or having to cry over a bloody toilet, a broken relationship, and a lifetime of self-hatred.

*(He walks around to the front of the desk, pulls out his cell phone and types a text message as he talks.)*

ADRIAN (cont'd): Prove me wrong.

*(He looks up and smiles then back to message.)*

ADRIAN (cont'd): All they really ask for is the illusion of choice. Let the tiny, tiny, fucking tiny minority of discerning individuals run out and buy their organic crap, composters,

and Hybrid cars. America wants it's Camry, it's fuckin' fast food, and slavery to Mideast oil. Even if it makes the world vanilla, fat, and scared shitless. 'Cuz that's what we've got now, it's what our neighbors have, and what we're certain will still be there tomorrow. The things protected by majority rules don't get discontinued.

*(He sends the message.)*

ADRIAN (cont'd): That's why we have a one party system... but the illusion of a two party system. The modern world works on so many levels that if you sit back and waste time with innovation, deep thought, and debate over the right thing to do... you do it for whoever comes later — to rape the land like locusts. Come later to steal your idea, your creation, and twist it into something actually fucking useful in the modern world... Even if it breaks in the process. But there's money to be made in repairs as well, you know. And jobs, too. (beat) Look, I'm no elitist. It's not like I'm some silver spoon. My dad may have been a millionaire, but I have 5 brothers and sisters, so that's like lower middle class. And I've had jobs. (with pride) Hell, this is a job. Even if my funding is all under the table. But I'm doing it well. I'm sexing up the party for the new generation. (buddying up to the audience) I mean come on, the only people my age that would vote Liberal today are too poor get their fat, fast food, welfare asses on the bus to make it to the polling station. Or too busy volunteering for shit to get there on the right day. If you make enough to pay taxes, you vote Republican for one reason only: we tell you to. We have to because it's impossible to survive on a five figure salary. Everyone knows that. So you sure as shit don't want to pay for some crack whore to get AIDs treatments, or some slut to have birth control, or ghetto kids to get nets for their fuckin' basketball goals. (beat) Do you? Seriously. From your pocket? (beat) Exactly. So why do the Liberals think we care about that fuckin' crap. That we want to pay for other people's shit? But they really do think that way — because they are elitists. (fakes gasps) What? What did I say? That's right. Democrats are the elitists. I say that because an elitist is someone that thinks they know what the public wants, and is actually clueless. They have the elitist nerve to shove their morality down our throats. And since they're wrong, and we're on the other side — does that mean we're right? (beat) Yes. (beat) No. (beat) Yes and no. But what difference does it make? (shakes his head in disgust) And that's probably my biggest point. It simply doesn't fucking matter. We are the winners. We own everything: the media, the airwaves, the public's financial trust, the businesses... the everything. We have the House, the Senate, the Superior Court, and we can manipulate the Presidency whether we have it or not. (beat) We understand the people. We know how to speak in the black and white people need to hear. That makes us win — and winning makes us right. The other guys keep trying to not only help the people, but explain shit to them — and they wonder why they're extinct! (devilish grin) And everyone wants to fuck the winner, because winners get remembered. But those whiny Baby Boomers and their Occupy kids call the new, young Right selfish. Say we take advantage. (begins a furious rant) Bullshit. We are simply realistic and modern. If normies want corporate responsibility, then they should get an MBA from a good school and start their own. Lead by example, or shut the fuck up. If you don't want to lose your job to some engineer in India making thirty cents an hour, then don't be a fucking

engineer — get an education that leads to the only jobs left: banking. Oh, yeah, yeah — not everyone has the brain power and opportunity to be white collar as all the blue collar and even white-ish collar jobs disappear. Well... not trying to be callous, but that's the new fucking age. There will be hundreds of millions of casualties. Normies are gonna fall through the cracks. Sorry, but it's a necessary cleansing. If you're too poor, helpless, and uneducated to get a real job and make at least \$250,000 a year — then you mean absolutely zero to this economy. That's why you get no voice and why you need to pay the taxes. That's why it's a waste of time and thought paying attention to you unless you don't pay up. And those tiny, faint, Liberal voices still screaming for decency and infrastructure will evaporate from historical record... So do we really need to bother with tip-toeing around all the corpses in the flooded-out gutters, just because Liberals scream that it's only decent to do so?

*(He plops down on the edge of the stage with a rock star sort of sexy presence.)*

ADRIAN (cont'd): This is a whole new generation. Our brains move faster. We juggle more. And we are armed with more information than a stale mind can hold on to — even if they can grasp it. We control video games that move crazy-fast and look like life, we rant about politics online at fucking thirteen, and we don't waste our time believing in hokey shit like... true love. Dreamers had their day, and they slept through it. It's our time. Rock 'n roll has moved over to the Right. (casually) Dissent is impossible. Today. Join the movement or live a life of poverty that will dissolve into nothing but a body bag of wasted years shouting against the wind. Seriously, the funniest thing I've seen in this life is how proud those dumb fucks are to be driving the wrong way down a one-way street. Don't they realize we're all shaking our heads and thinking they're idiots? They don't see that you've gotta make your billions fast because we're going to watch it all burn from a distance. (smiling at the ridiculousness) This is war. A war to give the people what they truly want, even if they don't realize it yet. And it ain't high speed rails, space programs, or monuments. We're at war, a global financial war where the rules of engagement do not adhere to the same principles as civilian society... and law. You strike in any way possible. If the truth is discovered, so what? The damage is already done in the country's consciousness. No one reads retractions. That's why I make the videos. (beat) So easy. A few costumes, an iPhone, and a pirated copy of Final Cut and you get a two month scandal sweeping through the country. Circles the web quick as lightning. Shown 24 hours a day on FOX, and boom! Another suck-my-cock middle-class defense mechanism is erased from the planet. By me. One young rock star able to destroy entire institutions with a single vid. No more free shit for women. No more protections for poor people. No more unions. No more environmental whining. No more news for the college educated. I can do that shit in a week and the country gets changed forever. (smiles devilishly) Hell, the world. I'm gonna do my best to make sure the poor have no place to go but to the grave, and the country will kiss my ass with thanks when there's no more shitty schools, no more hand-outs and no more socialism. If you can't afford life, you shouldn't have one. Health care, too. (nods with pride) And all the young starfuckers out there can climb aboard our gold-plated train until we don't need them anymore. Because normies will always think rich will rub off on them, if they

just give the rich a hand. So we'll just illuminate the path to the billionaires of this world, with a nice, big PayPal donate button. Then watch the lower classes throwing every twenty bucks they've got at it as fast as they can earn it. Hilarious. (stands again) Of course, the "intellectuals" won't propel our cause for us. They call our lemmings rednecks and racists... not realizing that it just makes those guys dig in their heels and listen to them even less. And as long as we keep public schools jacked up, we can keep making those smart ones the enemy and grow our army. Train the kids today that normies are socialists. Marxist, fascists who don't want help, but want gifts and hand-outs. And they'll fight the fight for us. They can't have our money, of course, but we'll loan them some of our cool. And even though we drivers of this movement are gonna take everything and keep it for ourselves, the normies will lay it at our feet anyway — because we're fucking rock stars. And no other reason at all. But we do it because we're smarter than those jobless idiots who didn't get a degree in finance pining to have their cubicles back. And smarter than middle management wondering why their company's address is a P.O. Box in the Cayman Islands and their 401k tanked. (as he saunters out) And after we beat you down as your thank you — (looks back for one last beat) While you lie there bleeding... you'll beg us to fuck you again, hard and dirty, just one more time. Because you can't help yourself. And because we're so fucking rock n' roll.

*(BLACKOUT.)*

## ACT 1 / SCENE 10

*(A SPOTLIGHT comes up on SPIELER.)*

*(SPIELER lifts a megaphone to his mouth.)*

SPIELER: (through the megaphone) Chills. Chills, ladies and gentlemen. The loudest voice in the nation: Adrian the fiendish youth! A Passionaté modérne! (beat) MUSIC!

*(A MUSICAL MARCH explodes.)*

*(STAGEHANDS enter as the LIGHTS come up a bit. They set a long bench (painted to match the wall of the set) upstage center.)*

*(The first TWO CLOWNS enter bouncing, pulling focus from the STAGEHANDS.)*

*(SPIELER tosses his megaphone to one of the STAGEHANDS as they exit.)*

*(The FIRST CLOWN pulls a ball of string from his costume. He holds it up and runs along the front of the audience making sure that everyone knows what it is. Even going so far as to pull out some slack, and let an audience member feel that it is real and tug on it.)*

*(The SECOND CLOWN taps his foot impatiently.)*

*(After a beat:)*

SECOND CLOWN: Ahem!

*(The FIRST CLOWN gets the hint and runs on stage and positions himself just in front of one side of the bench. The SECOND CLOWN is just in front of the other side of the bench.)*

*(The FIRST CLOWN tosses the ball of string to the other, keeping hold of one end. The SECOND CLOWN catches it and they each hold up their end to show the audience the string.)*

*(LUIGI, The THIRD CLOWN, runs onstage proudly, bowing to the audience repeatedly. Hying himself while the other CLOWNS roll their eyes.)*

*(The TWO CLOWNS take a knee and pull the string taut, exactly in line with the top of the bench.)*

*(LUIGI dances over to one side of the bench/string.)*

*(The TWO CLOWNS dramatically pull tightly in preparation.)*

SPIELER: Luigi, you aren't really going to try that, are you? To walk on a string?!?

*(LUIGI nods.)*

*(The other TWO CLOWNS nod.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): But that's impossible!

*(LUIGI shrugs.)*

*(A DRUMROLL kicks in.)*

*(LUIGI backs up a few steps, claps his hands and rubs them in preparation, then runs and leaps on the bench.*

*(He immediately assumes a melodramatic I'm-trying-to-keep-my-balance pose.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Whoa! Careful!

*(LUIGI walks down the bench as if he is on the string. His arms spread eagle for balance. As LUIGI reaches the halfway mark, an oversized bee comes down from above and pesters him.)*

*(There are off stage sounds of a bee buzzing.)*

*(LUIGI swats at it while trying to remain balanced.)*

*(He starts to teeter dramatically as if he will fall and the drums react with him.)*

*(At last he falls downstage... he turns it into a shoulder roll and emerges from it on one knee with one hand extending a bouquet of flowers to the audience.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): He's just fine, ladies and gentlemen.

*(Celebratory MUSIC returns.)*

*(The other TWO CLOWNS rush over, take the flowers from him, divide them in half, and then toss them high into the audience.)*

*(The THREE CLOWNS exit merrily while STAGEHANDS return, placing a prayer mat on the stage.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): JAWAD! Take the stage!

*(JAWAD, a tall and intimidating man with Muslim robes and headgear, enters and*

*kneels on the mat. He assumes a Muslim prayer position.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): (confidentially to the audience) Ladies and gentlemen, we now bring you the anxious dash of shock to widen a heart's hole. A mere culture clash... or is it unpolluted evil? Tremble, turn away, for he is... (bigger) ... a Passionate!

## ACT 1 / SCENE 11

*(LIGHTS UP.)*

*(JAWAD rises after touching his forehead with the fingertips of his clapped-together hands.)*

*(He looks at the audience for a beat and then approaches.)*

*(He walks all the way to the front of the house, hovering over the front row. Head held high.)*

JAWAD: Thank you for waiting. I apologize. And I apologize for the secrecy and security. I do not wish to begin this discussion with a negative tone... but I must remind you that any attempt to trace this location or any description of my appearance will have grave results. I respect individual journalists, even if I have no love for this country's media. (beat) Now, let me address the hasty question that came before. I could not be certain that I could sufficiently answer such a complex question in time. It was probably best we waited until after. (hesitates) To answer, I must first note that you word it in too simple terms. I can give you a simple reply to this simple question, if that is what you seek. (beat) Yes, I do believe that I can hate America and be American. But the simplicity you use to frame this question, does itself complicate the matter. It makes suggestions and creates implications. Your question — without saying it — supposes that to hate America is to hate Americans. This is what you misunderstand. (he looks directly at an audience member) I do not hate you. People and policy are not the same. Some of you are gentle people. Of course Allah will have no forgiveness. But that is for you to discover, not for me to prove. I am not an extremist even if I support them. I have a post that must be protected. (he begins unwrapping his headgear) Some of my people believe that this life is not at all important and there is no need for earthly comforts and societal development. That there is no need to modernize the homeland. These extremists are easily used for the purpose of destruction. To sacrifice themselves for Allah's love is all they require. However, I am one who believes we must repair our own systems of government to create a powerful land once more. (beat) But we cannot do this with the presence and interference of the West. We cannot do it with the infiltration of — not only the American militaries — but American ideas, excesses, and improprieties.

*(His headgear removed we now see his closely cut hair that looks generically American.)*

*(He rolls the headgear and holds it in his hand.)*

JAWAD (cont'd): Do you have an idea of what your presence has done for my true home? (beat) You need to understand that it is the ideas — it is the impurity of American notions and actions that must be destroyed. That is why the loss of American lives is a

necessity. How else can the Muslim world get the attention of the West? The West and its ever wandering eyes and outstretched arms, muscling the world.

*(He begins to remove his robes.)*

JAWAD (cont'd): Your arrogance is the culprit. It is arrogance that has brought America to encroach upon the affairs of others, and that arrogance has brought death to Americans. And shamefully, the American government claims it wishes to do the correct thing... the righteous thing for our people. That it wishes to protect its own people with its aggression. But all they have done is rescue outdated monarchs that are part of our problem, concern themselves with our oil, and whore themselves to the wishes of Israel. And this is what puts you in danger. How do you stand for it?

*(His robe removed, he drapes them over his arm.)*

*(Under his robe he wears typical American business attire. A shirt, tie, and rolled sleeves. He looks quite normal.)*

JAWAD (cont'd): I hate America for not staying home. And it must be taught to worry only for itself. It must stop trying to make all the countries of this world arms of its octopus. (pause) You probably wonder why I have chosen to reveal myself to you. Why should I grant confirmation to the media that people such as myself exist? The clever may suspect that it is to resound echoes of fear. For fear is a terror in its own right. This is true. But it goes deeper than that... my fellow Americans. (ironic smile) You understand, three thousand lives... that was such a tiny sum in a land of hundreds of millions. That was not so terrible a terror. Do you know what was the true terror we invoked? It was the waves of confusion and fear that seeped into the minds of America. What would be next? When? Where? We forced Americans to think about what America had done. Has done. Is doing. (scolding) But like savages, you did not retreat, you thought only of retaliation. Your anger outweighed your fear, and you now stomp across the world — across our lands — with more arrogance than ever before. (pause) That is why the fear must be stoked, it must rise to the surface again. The number of deaths must grow and the flames must be fanned. Until you are frightened enough to stop. To get out, and stay away. Yes. We must demolish you to tear down your economy. The relentless and large-scale destruction — and the dollars to rebuild after it — must grow so large that you do not have the time, the energy, the money, or the strength... to harm the world any longer. The world cannot grow until America is unable to cross the sea. (pause) So. Although my existence alone may put great fear in the hearts and minds of your readers... that is not my true message. That is not why I stand naked before you now. Unmasked, you might say. No, I am here to give warning. Specific warning. (warmly directly to people throughout the audience) It is too late to stop the beginning of the next wave of destruction. But when the first city falls, you must accept the message at last. You must revolt. If you wish to live, you must take your corrupt government by force and make it stop. If you do not, the wave will roll on until America becomes a flailing fish, gasping for a sea it can no longer reach. Do not make the same mistake

you made after the first attack. Do not run to anger again just to regain your composure. Let your fear bring you wisdom. Let it give you the strength to rise up and destroy your oppressors who wish to oppress all the world. (calmly) That is what I brought you here to tell you, my neighbors... that is what I cannot impart as I walk among you, raising funds for your deaths. (beat) It took but one question from you to provoke my entire message. So I need not take anymore. Good afternoon.

*(He turns and climbs back on the stage.)*

*(He turns around center stage and smiles ominously.)*

JAWAD (cont'd): Allahu akbar.

*(As the LIGHTS fade spooky-slow, JAWAD exits.)*

## ACT 1 / SCENE 12

*(A SPOTLIGHT comes up to an empty stage.)*

*(A sudden scream of pain is heard offstage.)*

SPIELER: (loudly offstage): Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh! Yes! Got it! Yes! You can tell them — tomorrow! Tomorrow we'll have the money! But you can't stop the show! After tomorrow's show I'll have it. All of it. The rent, the protection... the everything!

RUFFIAN (offstage): You'd better, Spieler. This town don't take kindly to theater. You wanna play, you gotta pay.

SPIELER: Of course, my good man. Of course!

RUFFIAN: Tomorrow night, Spieler.

SPIELER: You have my word.

*(Silence.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): (hoarsely) Handy...? Is the... spotlight up, lad?

HANDY: Yes sir, Mr. Spieler, sir.

SPIELER: Carry me to it, dear boy.

HANDY: Yes sir.

*(HANDY enters holding SPIELER in his arms like a bride over the threshold.)*

*(SPIELER is doing all he can to not whimper.)*

*(He holds his leg as if it has been broken.)*

*(His face is bloodied.)*

SPIELER: (struggling) Ladies and gentlemen... the secret... predator: Jawad! The modern day... Nostradamus... the male Cassandra... the Muslim Bartholomew... and....

another... Passionate! (beat) COMMENCE THE INTERMISSION!

*(SPIELER passes out in HANDY's arms.)*

*(BLACKOUT.)*

**END OF ACT ONE**

# ACT TWO

## ACT 2 / SCENE 1

*(LIGHTS UP to a spotlight on SPIELER.)*

*(His blood is wiped away, but the marks have already developed. One leg is in a makeshift splint created with a broomhandle, a flute, and duct tape.)*

*(He carries a cane to help him walk.)*

*(He flashes a great big smile and his eyes brighten with excitement over being in lights again.)*

*(He extends both his arms in a flourish, the microphone cord and cane dangling.)*

SPIELER: Ladies and gentlemen, are you ready for the Secundus Actus? A myriad of madness, more fearful fire, more... Passionates?! Well...

*(An actor, SAM, walks onto the stage through the spotlight, into darkness. A fluid cross downstage center where he sits ominously out of the light.)*

*(SPIELER freezes in confusion.)*

*(Silence.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Umm...

*(The confused SPOTLIGHT starts to move over but SPIELER throws up a finger and shakes his head.)*

*(The SPOTLIGHT returns to SPIELER.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): (after a beat) Well... (a beat and then in forced whisper to SAM) Sam! What are you doing?

SAM: (from the darkness) I'm going on.

SPIELER: This is not your cue!

SAM: I don't care.

SPIELER: Well I do.

SAM: So?

SPIELER: I do. And I think Isobel will care. And the playwright will care. And if the audience knew any better, they'd care, too.

SAM: But I don't.

SPIELER: That's of little consequence.

SAM: Oh, I wouldn't say that.

SPIELER: And why is that?

SAM: Because it doesn't matter what you think.

SPIELER: You cannot perform Mark before Isobel has performed Jessica. It will weaken the show. It will make...

SAM: I'm not going to do Mark.

SPIELER: You're...? Then just what do you intend to do?

SAM: Me.

SPIELER: Oh no you are not!

SAM: I am.

SPIELER: I won't allow it.

SAM: Yes, you will.

SPIELER: Have you gone batty? Stages are not meant for base improvisation!

SAM: (with rage) I'M DOING ME, Spieler! (suddenly calm) I suggest you go.

SPIELER: I should go?

SAM: Yes.

SPIELER: My dear colleague, what makes you believe I would allow this to happen?

SAM: You're in no condition to stop me.

SPIELER: Well... you've a point... But the stage manager certainly is. The...

SAM: It doesn't matter.

SPIELER: I should say it does matter.

SAM: What's the point of this?

SPIELER: I have the whole cast and crew.

SAM: What's the point of this show, Spieler?

SPIELER: What on earth are you going on about?

SAM: What do you want from this? Thought-provoking drama?

SPIELER: A question that foolish proves a frailty of mind you should be ashamed of.

SAM: Answer me Spieler! Is it danger and intensity? Shock and surprise?

SPIELER: What do you want Sam?

SAM: I want the stage.

SPIELER: You can't have it.

SAM: Then I'll take it.

SPIELER: You'll have to take us all then.

SAM: If I must. But I wouldn't recommend that.

SPIELER: But... why?

SAM: I have something I want to say.

SPIELER: Who doesn't?

SAM: That's irrelevant.

SPIELER: You can't give stages to just anyone. That would kill the theatre!

SAM: Theatre's a risky business, Spieler, it's in the wrong hands much of the time. You know that. And I'm allowing you the opportunity to do something daring and exciting. But to do it you must let go of your reins. (beat) Just for awhile. (beat) Take a chance. And walk away.

SPIELER: Do you know the location of your marbles, Sam?

SAM: Perhaps not.

SPIELER: Then why would I even entertain the idea of...

SAM: Precisely because I may have embraced madness and emerged with something

we could all use.

SPIELER: But...

SAM: Walk away, Spieler, and give me light.

SPIELER: I...

SAM: For old time's sake.

SPIELER: But...

SAM: For the drama.

SPIELER: I don't...

SAM: Remember what it was like to risk?

SPIELER: Of course, but...

SAM: For the love of the theatre!

SPIELER: (like a yelp) Ahh!

*(SPIELER examines SAM for a moment.)*

*(Pause.)*

*(SPIELER turns to the audience.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): (hesitantly) Ladies and...

SAM: Go on, you can do it.

SPIELER: ...gentlemen. Ladies and gentlemen... Sam, the... riled rebel. A. Brand.

New... Passionate!

*(SPIELER gives a signal to the booth.)*

## ACT 2 / SCENE 2

*(LIGHTS UP on SAM as the spot goes out.)*

*(SPIELER hobbles off.)*

*(SAM stares at each individual in the audience, ominously.)*

SAM: I bought a gun today.

*(SAM looks off distractedly. He anxiously twiddles his fingers on his leg. His eyes are off in the wings as if afraid he'd hurt the audience if he faced them.)*

SAM (cont'd): Yeah.

*(SAM starts to speak, but catches himself mid-breath.)*

*(A beat.)*

SAM (cont'd): It's not that... I'm not... you know — mad, mad. I guess.

*(He turns his head toward the audience, almost accidentally at first, but since he's there, he stops.)*

*(He studies the crowd again. This time, it's almost with contempt.)*

SAM (cont'd): But you make it really hard, you know that? It's disgusting. I get... disgusted. I don't understand the point anymore. There's a line, I've seen it, and the other side isn't pretty — but at least it's true. (pause) Day after day I have to walk among these people so foreign, so ridiculous, so... so unlike what I was taught to believe people could be, would be... would want to be. (closes his eyes) Everyday you look and it's like — there's one...! crippled by fear. And there's another... cruel and indifferent. Oh, there's someone so pretty outside... and charred black inside. Those who want love get destroyed, while the destroyers have love thrown at their feet. The harder you work, the less you receive. The kinder you are, the greater the obstacles. You know the list. The whole world works against the grain of what we claim to want and admire. It's either that, or our nature is so incongruous to the shape of the world that we simply don't know how to behave. How to expect to... whatever I mean... you know...? Things aren't right. (looks away again) Not right at all. (pause) I wanted to fit. I did. And I never wanted think so much, or feel so much. I've wanted so badly to be callous and cruel so that I could have respect. I've wanted it to all stop so the world would make sense. Like it seems to for the people who just don't care about anyone or anything. I just...

*(He bows his head and rubs his palms on his temples.)*

*(And breathes.)*

SAM (cont'd): All our life we're shown examples of the triumph of underdogs. We're taught to cheer them in movies, on television, in books. But the moment we step back into life only a handful continue the sentiment. The rest of the world... (beat) The rest just... (enraged) GODDAMMIT! You wanna know life. You wanna know... okay, okay. Here. Here's a good one. My cousin's stepfather's son — (recounts the steps in his head and then goes on) — happily married, wife's pregnant, getting closer all the time, about seven months. She's twenty-three, he's twenty-nine... I think. He struggled after school, but now it's all coming together. A decent job, a home, a wife, a new truck, and a baby on the way. Not my sort of life, but one that I can certainly recognize as an admirable goal. So one day, he's off to work when she quite suddenly realizes she's going into early labor. She manages to get to a neighbor who rushes her to the hospital. At the hospital the child dies — inside of her. They put her under to remove the still-born baby... And she never wakes. An aneurism, an anomaly that they can't quite explain snaps in her head and she goes into a coma. Brain dead by the time her husband is home from work and can't figure out why the house is empty and unlocked. (deep breath) Yeah. (beat) And now her family wants to keep her alive, a vegetable for another fifty years... a vegetable that he's expected to visit, of course, to look upon, care for. An empty shell that serves only to remind him of all he's lost. (beat) Imagine. Going to work with your life finally on the track you always dreamed. You come home, and you've lost everything. A full grown, mid-western man's-man, splayed out on a hospital floor weeping into a sweat-soaked jacket. (beat) Why? Why, when despite everything we try so hard to accomplish, do these things linger around the corner ready to slap the unsuspecting in the face. Does anyone deserve what he's trying to endure? He can barely function now - is that fair? Does this make sense? Can a world like this really have a plan?

*(He pulls the gun from the back of his shirttail.)*

SAM (cont'd): (with a chilling calmness) I bought this today.

*(He studies it.)*

SAM (cont'd): I bought it, because I'm sick. (strange laugh) Sick to see it all. The heartbreak. The foolishness, the mindlessness, the pain. And I'm sick of the selfishness most of all. I get so tired. Tired of those who don't care, don't think, and don't feel. Of the stupid voter, the closed-hearted religious... the, the... the snobs... or, you know, or the... the assholes who would rather make a job of bugging me for my pay than try to make their own. The activists. The roll-over defeatists. I'm sick of the dispassionate. And I'm sick to death of The fucking Passionates. (beat as he studies the gun in his hand) And I'm sick of the people who buy these goddamn things, and don't even do it right. (beat

as he looks up again) And I'm sick of you. (beat) And I don't even know who you are.

*(He looks away.)*

SAM (cont'd): It was a stabbing in the back of my neck, high, like in the... you know, the... (touching the back of his neck) ... brain stem. And when I crossed the line and saw it all clear... it just became warmth. Like a fever, but my head had never been more clear. And when you're ready to die because this life is so pointless a parade — why not take others with you? You know. Why not make people pay? Drain their veins so their hearts can finally shrivel for real. (eyes the audience again) I look at my life and where it falls short and all the things I'm made to believe that I lack... yet even with those things, I'd still fall short of finding this life bearable. What are we supposed to do? Are we supposed to "make it?" We'll just run out of things to buy and get fucked by anyone we try to love, because that's what love does... fucks you, no matter how rich, how famous, how smart you are. (pause then changes tone) Or what happens if you find yourself fifty-something and still trying? Unqualified for anything but answering phones and brewing coffee because you're a storyteller in a world that's tired of tales... (eerie smile) ... unless something blows up...

*(He sets the gun back down and leans in closer.)*

SAM (cont'd): How do you... how do you... smile? You know. When the years start... sliding off the board like fish guts under a blade — yet inside... inside you still feel exactly like that seventeen year-old kid you once were — the one who swore to grab the moon and live forever. What happens when you realize just how unoriginal we all are? (beat) It pays no attention to class, or race, or... geography, or even... you know... job. Anyone, anyone, can realize the sadness of this charade. (pause) So what do we do? What will you do... when you realize the Earth finds we humans not so very special a virus? Just meals that cause an occasional itch, and require the occasional scratching.

*(He sets the gun down on the stage beside him.)*

SAM (cont'd): Well, you snap. You stop caring. And that... recolors the world. (beat) The colors blur and blend and morph and move. Sunlight... burns and laughter digs claws into your backward heart. And you start to wonder if — since the things we strive for are so contentious to our nature — maybe we're ignoring what we're really supposed to be. Think about that. (beat) Maybe, maybe we are supposed to despise one another. Maybe love really is just a chemical imbalance suffered by the weak. Maybe we're supposed to play king-of-the-hill in a free-for-all world of murder and destruction. You know... (smiles) ...crazy person thoughts. (pause) But what's most unsettling — when you allow yourself to consider this dark alternative to our incompetent society — this... thing, this... peg, we keeping struggling to fit into a misshapen hole. When you think of this world as a place where we're supposed to embrace evil... well, it makes too much sense. It works too well. It flows so much better with our nature. Our nature as vicious,

selfish, careless human beings. And when you distance yourself from this invented, elevated concept of the human being — and you see the human animal... you realize, you understand, why civilized society just can't seem to be civil. (beat) And... the colors change. (beat) You find you can take a fresh look at Hitler, or Stalin, Pol Pot... and think: oh. Oh, I get it. The world is just a playground. If you allow yourself to... play big. If you... If you just let yourself think like that. When you think like that. You can react to the stabbing in the back of your neck. You can push back, make a change. Move mountains. Rule the school. Make a feast of the power of muted, calculated fury. You can give genocide orders just because you're itching to finish a lie you started, or you can start nuclear production because you're a bit — dorky and insecure, or you can crash a plane just because you're jealous of your sister and hate yourself. (rolls his eyes) Or you take a smaller step based on no specific agenda. And you make a purchase. Not out of pitiful selfishness, but to help push the world toward it's rightful course. Acceptance of its true nature.

*(He picks up the gun and looks at it almost lovingly.)*

SAM (cont'd): I bought this today.

*(He points it down the house aisle.)*

## ACT 2 / SCENE 3

*(The STAGE MANAGER, wearing a headset and holding a clipboard, had entered during SAM's speech.)*

*(He/she speaks up from the back of the house and starts walking toward the stage.)*

STAGE MANAGER: Oh no, no, no! You do not point that at the audience! You had your say but that's e...

*(SAM shoots the STAGE MANAGER in the heart and is thrown backward, unprepared for the kick of the gun.)*

*(The STAGE MANAGER collapses instantly without drama — goes motionless, hand clutching bloody heart. Clipboard falls to the floor/steps and headset is askew.)*

*(LUIGI, drops his clown character completely and rushes in from backstage to go assist the STAGE MANAGER.)*

*(SAM has recovered from the kick and shoots LUIGI in the leg sending him to the stage floor.)*

LUIGI: (with an Italian accent) Motherfuck! (the pain hitting) Ahh! You crazy!

*(SAM approaches LUIGI with the gun trained on him.)*

*(He is whimpering in pain and starting to go into shock.)*

SAM: IF ANYONE ATTEMPTS TO TREAD UPON MY STAGE AGAIN I WILL KILL THE CLOWN!

*SPIELER: (through his mic from offstage) Sam, stop this! You've scared the shit out of everyone...*

*(SPIELER's voice is only partly concealing his panic.)*

*(SAM is shaking and about to burst simultaneously. He almost seems afraid of himself.)*

*(When SAM answers SPIELER's voice, he does it to different wings of the stage unsure where SPIELER actually is.)*

SAM: Good!

SPIELER: Sam...

SAM: SHUTUP Spieler!

SPIELER: (after a beat) Sam... (beat) Sam. You are in a lot of trouble. (beat) You realize that, don't you.

SAM: So are you, if you come out here, Spieler!

SPIELER: Luigi is your friend!

SAM: What does that even mean?

SPIELER: He's a friend to all of us.

SAM: Oh?

SPIELER: You've made a mistake. That's all. We understand that. We all have. (beat) Stop this now. Don't make more.

SAM: If you bring your gimp ass out here I will shoot both of you.

SPIELER: Why are you doing this?

SAM: For the first time in life, I want to feel... normal. Right in this world.

SPIELER: That's not — right.

SAM: Not to people who can't see the world as it is. As it wants to be.

SPIELER: Look, you've had your say...

SAM: No, I've had only words. The action's just beginning.

SPIELER: (sternly) You think you've proved something?

SAM: What does that mean?

SPIELER: Do you think we've learned something from you?

SAM: The hell's that supposed to mean?

SPIELER: It means we're only thinking you're a bitter person.

SAM: Fuck you.

SPIELER: You're just bitter, Sam. Pathetic and bitter.

SAM: FUCK YOU!

SPIELER: And you got your heart broken. Big deal.

SAM: That's not...

SPIELER: Oh, and you've worked hard to prove yourself but haven't gotten anywhere... and you don't think you fit in.

*(SAM wanders a few steps from LUIGI to shout into the wings.)*

SAM: Shut up!

SPIELER: So what! Life's not easy. Do you think any of us are dancing in rose gardens by day?

*(SAM is disoriented by not knowing where SPIELER's voice is.)*

SAM: I didn't say I had it harder than...

SPIELER: That's brilliant, Sam. For your own frustrations you dare take my stage

hostage?

SAM: That's not all I...

SPIELER: For that you take the life of my stage manager? And for that you wound our friend?

SAM: That's simplifying...

SPIELER: A circus is not chaos. Chaos is not drama, Sam. That's not theatre. That's pathetic.

*(SAM points the gun into the wings.)*

SAM: You're simpli...

SPIELER: No I'm not. I'm telling you that you've let me down. You've let us all down.

SAM: Stop it!

SPIELER: I expected more of you, boy. I expected at least a little insight. After all of the shows we've done together.

*(SAM storms toward the wings with the gun leading him.)*

SAM: If you don't shut it...

SPIELER (cont'd): Now, boys!

*(The set wall collapses on SAM, revealing NICHOLAS and the LION TAMER.)*

*(The gun falls just downstage of the wall.)*

*(SPIELER hobbles out onto the stage with his cane.)*

*(As SAM tries to crawl out from under the wall his hand reaches out for the gun and SPIELER knocks it away with the cane.)*

## ACT 2 / SCENE 4

*(The rest of the cast emerges, all with their characters dropped.)*

*(SPIELER points to the gun with his cane.)*

SPIELER: Farrah, take that away.

*(FARRAH/ELYSE retrieves the gun and exits holding it like it might bite her.)*

SPIELER: Handy, have your men carry Luigi to the green room — and call an ambulance... and the police.

*(HANDY directs two STAGEHANDS to lift LUIGI — who moans incoherently.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Carefully!

*(The two exit the wings carrying LUIGI as HANDY gets out his cell phone. He wanders into the wings as he puts the phone to his ear.)*

*(SPIELER looks at the shocked faces of his cast.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Bentley. Charles. Take our dear stage manager to the lobby and wait for the police.

NICHOLAS: But... can we move a victim of...?

SPIELER: I WILL NOT HAVE MY AUDIENCE STARING AT A DEAD BODY!

*(Pause.)*

NICHOLAS: (weakly) Sorry, Spieler.

*(GIL and NICHOLAS go into the aisle, lift the dead weight of the STAGE MANAGER awkwardly, and exit the house door.)*

SPIELER: Handy!

HANDY: Hang on, I'm on the phone.

SPIELER: I need the tape!

HANDY: What kind?

SPIELER: The... 'wall' tape.

*(After a beat, a roll of black tape is thrown in from offstage and SPIELER catches it.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Lift the wall quickly.

*(One CLOWN rushes over and takes NICHOLAS' place at the wall. The LION TAMER and CLOWN lift the wall abruptly.)*

*(SPIELER quickly shoves his good knee into the semi-conscious SAM's back — his injured leg straightened out behind him.)*

*(SPIELER pulls SAM's arms behind his body and tapes his wrists together.)*

*(He then tapes SAM's feet.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Gregor, Frederico. Take this broken spirit to the dressing room.

*(SPIELER tosses the tape offstage and awkwardly returns to his feet with the help of his cane.)*

*(SPIELER looks at everyone again, thinking it through. After a beat:)*

SPIELER: (gently) The rest of you go to the green room and keep Luigi in good spirits. Except Isobel. You wait in the wings. I will address the audience, and then you will go on as usual.

*(Various murmurs of solemn agreement, and everyone exits.)*

## ACT 2 / SCENE 5

*(SPIELER hobbles downstage center.)*

*(He begins speaking, but the excitement and fire is gone.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Ladies and... (bows his head) Ladies and gent...

*(He plops down with difficulty and sits on the edge of the stage.)*

*(Pause.)*

*(He removes his top hat and sets it on the stage. He then puts his head in his hands, and runs his fingers through his hair.)*

*(He looks up and takes an apologetic sigh, trying to smile.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): I don't... I...

*(Then, despite every effort, he begins weeping.)*

*(After awhile, ISOBEL walks out and studies him.)*

*(She makes her way to him, crouches down, and gently strokes his head.)*

ISOBEL: (lovingly) Don't Spielers. (beat) It's all right.

SPIELER: (sobbing) But...

ISOBEL: Don't. It's okay.

SPIELER: No, it's not.

ISOBEL: It is.

SPIELER: (regaining composure) We try so hard, dear girl. But what's it all for?

ISOBEL: (still calm and warm - almost flippant) You can't say that.

SPIELER: I can.

ISOBEL: You shouldn't.

SPIELER: But I do. Because I don't know the answer anymore, Isobel. I thought I did. That's why none of you have seen me break. But I just don't know...

*(She takes his whistle, still around his neck, and puts it to her lips.)*

*(She blows a soft "coo" sound through it.)*

ISOBEL: Don't know what?

*(She lets the whistle drop back to bounce on his chest.)*

SPIELER: I don't know if we make any difference.

ISOBEL: Of course we do.

*(She tucks his hair behind his ear lovingly with her fingertips.)*

SPIELER: Does the theatre itself mean anything anymore?

ISOBEL: Of course it does.

SPIELER: But why?

*(As she speaks she straightens and smooths his moustache and adjusts his tie.)*

ISOBEL: Oh Spieler. You're such a sweet man. A noble man. You are. You really, really are.

SPIELER: But what am I accomplishing? Isobel, we've lost it. The theatre. It's... it's falling apart.

*(ISOBEL gets on her knees, moves behind him, and pushes his shoulders up.)*

*(She leans over his shoulder and raises his chin.)*

ISOBEL: No it's not Spieler. It will always be here. We will always survive. (beat) We must.

SPIELER: Do they really need us?

ISOBEL: Of course. Of course they do.

SPIELER: I don't know anymore.

ISOBEL: They do.

SPIELER: But everything we have to say... (sweeping gesture to indicate the audience) ... they are the ones who already know. Who already... feel.

ISOBEL: That's all the more reason.

SPIELER: What do you mean?

ISOBEL: Let me tell you something, Spieler. Something that happened to me.

*(She takes his handkerchief from his breast pocket and wipes his cheeks.)*

*(She folds it neatly and returns it to the pocket.)*

ISOBEL: Can I tell you?

SPIELER: Do as you wish, Isobel. You're a good girl, and I appreciate what your trying to do for me. But sometimes a man... cries, my dear.

ISOBEL: But you don't need to Spieler.

SPIELER: I'll rise again. Of course. I know that's what you're trying to say. I know we're fighters, dear girl. Everyone in the theatre is a phoenix. We have to be. But we also have to face many deaths to have something to return from. (pause) Let us simply lay this circus to rest, Isobel. I think it's time to move on.

ISOBEL: Spieler. Let me tell you a story. One more story.

*(SPIELER doesn't react.)*

ISOBEL (cont'd): You may lie down if you'd like. Close your eyes. I'll speak to you like a dream. Like you're dreaming.

SPIELER: I suppose... I suppose I'd like that, my dear.

*(SPIELER lies on his side.)*

ISOBEL: Yes. Forget everything. Forget the difficulties, the tragedies, the audience...

SPIELER: Dear lord... the audience!

*(SPIELER starts to sit up.)*

*(ISOBEL pushes him back down.)*

ISOBEL: Forget them, Spieler. Just this once. Take this moment for you. The audience will be fine.

SPIELER: But what they've had to endure: bloodshed, missed beats, poor pacing, mutiny, technical diffi...

ISOBEL: You said it yourself, Spieler. They are cut from the same cloth as you and I. They'll make it through this night.

SPIELER: Are you certain?

ISOBEL: They'll be fine.

SPIELER: If you're certain.

ISOBEL: I'm certain.

SPIELER: If you're abso...

ISOBEL: (warm, but terse) Spieler. Lie down.

*(SPIELER curls up into a fetal position as at the beginning of the play.)*

## ACT 2 / SCENE 6

*(ISOBEL sits beside SPIELER and begins her story to comfort him, but still sharing with the audience.)*

ISOBEL (cont'd): I want to tell you about this day. This one day. I'm driving and it's hot. Not a good hot. An uncomfortable hot. I'm going to my crap job with it's crap pay. It's early and it's already hot.

SPIELER: (dreamily) Have you told me this before?

ISOBEL: Spieler. Please. Just listen to me. (closes her eyes in reflection) It's early and it's already hot.

*(The LIGHTS burn a hot yellow.)*

ISOBEL (cont'd): And as I'm inching along in the thick traffic I'm wondering why I didn't go to grad school for something else. Anything but theatre. Anything that would have allowed me to own a home and take vacations at exotic, sunny resorts with a brilliant blonde, debating who would be artificially inseminated and when to start. (gets worked up) But I'm right here, well aware that I will always have to have a crap job. A crap job to survive so that I may have the chance to do great things. A crap job and I'm already grown up, but I don't want to grow up. I'm not ready to be a grown up. (deep breath) Traffic is stop-and-go. My CD is scratched so I'm listening to some bullshit on the radio. Talk radio. The kind that depresses you because you hear the most unenlightened, insipid callers. But every button I push leads to music that hurts my brain or commercials that are shockingly ridiculous.

*(She sits beside SPIELER.)*

ISOBEL (cont'd): This one caller is so dramatically offensive that I've got the phone in my hand with the digits pressed, hovering over the 'send' key. All the while stopping and going. Stopping and going. A flash of light shoots off the windshield of the car in my rearview, a billboard confuses me, the car in front of me has no license plate, no anything, and I wonder how you can do that. Is it legal? A truck beside me spews out black clouds of exhaust that smell so awful and so strong that I have to roll up my driver's side window despite the heat. This hot, hot heat. I turn down the volume just in time to hear squeaking during the stop. I'm not sure if it's me, or a car beside me.

*(She does the action.)*

ISOBEL (cont'd): I time my stops a little later, or a little earlier to see if it's me. I can't tell.

(pause, then more level-headed) I'm going crazy. Stir crazy in my car. I'm feeling angst. Frustration. Alone in a world that disagrees with me. That I disagree with. Something. Like that. (beat) Then a car beside me veers over and smashes right into me. Seriously! As if I simply weren't there. As if I had come out of nowhere, as if I had an invisible car. Of course I had been sitting there all along, in a visible car, rolling a few inches. A few inches every few minutes. Yet this jerk-off starts flicking his hand impatiently like I need to hurry up and pull over so we can discuss what I've done. What I've done. Like it was me. Like I've inconvenienced him! And I'm sitting there going "Who the hell do you think you are to act mad at me? You... fucker." So I pull over and he pulls over ahead of me. (exasperated sigh) Without hesitation — serious — I'm barely able to get my door open, and he's at my car screaming, asking what my problem was... Why I can't stay in my own lane? (breath) "What the hell, mister," I say. "You drifted right into me! I didn't go anywhere." (beat) Bullshit. That's all he's got to say. Like I'm the one full of shit. The cars are only moving inches at a time, so I run up beside a few. Try to get someone, anyone, who saw it to pull over and be witness. Nobody will acknowledge me or roll down their window. Not one. No wait... one. Cracked his window and said, "Hey, sorry lady, I can't be late. Not today." But, whatever. (beat) When I come back, defeated, out of breath, pissed off, still in shock, and... well, he's called the cops on his cell and they're on their way. I still can't believe that this guy is such an ass. Really. Talking to him just makes my temperature rise in the sweltering heat and I know my cheeks are flushed. I stutter... well, not exactly. I'm, you know...? Not stuttering, that one word... (searching) Dammit. (beat) Stammering. Jesus. (beat) Anyway, I just can't make my point with him. I can't speak. And I'm mad at myself for it. I'm too emotional. Pissed at myself for never knowing how to behave in the dramatic situations of my real, unscripted life. (beat) In this traffic the cops aren't going to get there anytime soon — even if they cared to hurry. So I fold my arms and lean back on my car facing away from the traffic, as much as I really wanted people to, you know, gawk at me. 'Cuz that's great. And I take inventory of just how much this screws up my life — just as some guys start laughing at me while their car inches by. The laughter turns to cat calls. It's annoying, but it hits me that these jokers might be useful. So I walk around my car and ask if they saw what happened. (sighs) There was no "Oh, you need help?" Or "Yes, I saw it... and I won't let that asshole screw you over." No. No, instead I hear: "Yo Ray, this bitch wants to suck our cocks." Because evidently, "Did you see what happened?" translated into fraternity Greek is a sexual advance. Clearly it was my mistake, so I just return to my vast oven retreat, fold my arms back up, and breathe in the burnt oil air while the sun gets all aggressive with me. (beat) But then... I just break. My eyes narrow beneath my sunglasses, my teeth clench and I think, "Why the hell do I do it?" Why. Why do I bother struggling in my life just to fight for and sometimes, rarely, get the opportunity to try — to try — to enrich the lives of others. (beat) I always thought I could handle this lifestyle because deep down I really did want to help people, teach people, entertain people. But it suddenly punches me square in the gut that maybe... maybe.... just maybe... I don't actually like people.

*(She takes a deep audible breath.)*

ISOBEL (cont'd): Maybe I only exist as an actress to create a distance from myself and my own... humanness. Maybe I'm really just pompous. Doing this to feel superior. Maybe. Maybe it's all ego. Maybe I'm sick, or scared, and yet — still furious. (weakly) And I suddenly didn't know anymore. Where I fit. Why those radio callers are so freakin' idiotic. Or why this lying piece of shit had to hit my car. Why men have to be so brash and disgusting. And why I have to care that I'm going to be late for a grease-soaked job as a servant to over-sized Americans. Americans parking themselves at the trough to shove too large portions of food into their gaping lie holes. (beat) Or why I have to endure all of this so that I may, exhausted — but gratefully — race to the theatre that night and rehearse for five hours of real usefulness to... (serious) ... to rehearse a tale of the human side of revolting characters because I got swept up in the romantic ideals of a charming, razzmatazz ringmaster. (sardonic) A tale with only two female characters in it. And the other actress is straight. So instead of wasting my fives and tens flirting, I'm taking five and ten minute naps every hour and a half — and each time I wake, I debate taking up smoking again so it feels like I really took a break. (beat) That's what I'm thinking under the engine rumbles and brake squeaks. That's what I wrestle with as freckles start blossoming on my nose and shoulders and I'm dehydrating. Actually feel myself drying up inside. (beat) And then I see it. (smiles) This flower. This imperfect, little crap highway flower. Probably part weed, cast out of the daisy family many generations ago. It's tiny, slim stalk bent by the weight of a bottle cap, making it lean like it's in a yoga stretch. This was not some impossibly beautiful flower arrogantly reeking perfection. This was just a simple, beautiful misfit — craning its neck in a sea of trash. Out among gravel, weeds, fry boxes, cigarette butts, plastic bags, shredded tires. Not even able to stand tall, but standing nonetheless. The most hostile environment imaginable, and there she was. Surviving. Offering her little splash of color and organic beauty to a sickly world of sun-stained dirt and patches of gray. And there was another one — maybe ten feet away. I counted seven in all within, I don't know — a five yard radius. (beat) And I cried. I don't know why exactly I cried in that moment. I'm not a crier. So why so strong a reaction to that? Especially when it took me awhile to unfold my thoughts on it? Why was it exactly what I needed to see? I think — I thought... I saw myself in her. The myself I forget at work, in traffic, on the dark nights of the theatre. (joyously) She was not alone. And she was not worthless. Not wasted. It didn't matter that most of the day cars were zipping by not noticing. Days, weeks go by and she's unnoticed. But when she's needed — there she is. Carrying on. Enduring the heat, the exhaust, the bullying. A symbol of life among the shit. And others like her stand proudly, too, three thousand obnoxious weeds away from her bottle cap embrace. (very excitedly) And that... that's what we are, Spieler. (the audience) That's what they are. (the stage) That's what the theatre is. As we climb the chain of life, the patterns remain the same. We are the flowers among shit, resisting the weeds and bringing beauty. Maybe the only ones who notice are just like us. Maybe only the other flowers pay us any attention... but does that make it a waste of time? The weeds could overrun that one little flower easily enough. But something stopped them. Maybe the beauty... or at least the conviction and persistence. So maybe we, too, can pry open a few closed minds. But even if we don't, Spieler, what's wrong with what we do? What's wrong with the theatre acting as a meeting place for the flowers of the Earth to gather? All of us

giving each other strength to go back out there and shine... right in the middle of shit.

## ACT 2 / SCENE 7

*(SPIELER sit up and turns to look ISOBEL in the eye.)*

*(He takes her hands in his.)*

SPIELER: Isobel?

*ISOBEL: (bright eyed and full of hope) Yes?*

SPIELER: Was that your audition monologue?

*(Pause.)*

ISOBEL: That's not the point.

SPIELER: You were reciting a rehearsed monologue!

ISOBEL: Only bits of it... and I changed the end-end! And it's really relevant.

*(SPIELER shakes his head sadly.)*

SPIELER: Look at us. Real flesh parading a few feet from the faces of these kind souls, yet there is nothing real about us.

ISOBEL: That's not true!

SPIELER: Even your argument to repair my damaged determination, is mere invention.

ISOBEL: No it's not. The story itself exists and that makes it real. It came from someone's mind. A real tale leads to a real idea. And real ideas can be made reality, Spieler, if its audience will allow it.

SPIELER: Would I could believe in these fairy tales once more, dear girl, but blood has been spilt upon my stage. Ruffians wish to reclaim a set that can no longer stand on it's own. And I find dissent in my troupe. What more is to be done?

ISOBEL: Magic. Magic is to be done.

SPIELER: Our power has been stripped from us, my dear.

ISOBEL: You've forgotten yourself. You've forgotten that you are a man who spits in the face of adversity. There is no limit to what you ask us to do. And that teaches us to perform for you without limitations. This is a house of magic... A place where my hot sun can turn to moonlight...

*(She looks up at the booth and gives them a silent message with her eyes.)*

*(The lights gently transition to night, midnight blue and cyan glow while the moon illuminates in the distance.)*

ISOBEL (cont'd): ... upon your command. And we will accept it. Yes, of course we will accept this. No, on your stage our minds would allow us to shiver under a light paper snow.

*(She gives the booth another signal.)*

*(Fake snow softly falls upon the stage bouncing light majestically.)*

ISOBEL (cont'd): Because you believe. So strongly do you believe, that we will follow you there.

*As the snow gathers on their shoulders and heads, they hold themselves as though they are getting colder.*

ISOBEL (cont'd): Isn't it beautiful Spieler?

SPIELER: Yes. Yes it is.

ISOBEL: First snows. Our first snow in the cloak of night. No tracks but our own. This is our world. Our blanket to cover with only our prints.

*(ISOBEL leaps to her feet and spreads her arms out and drops her head back.)*

ISOBEL (cont'd): Can you feel it?

SPIELER: Yes.

ISOBEL: It's hope. Raining down upon us.

*(ISOBEL gives another nod to the booth and MUSIC plays.)*

*(ISOBEL dances with an invisible partner.)*

ISOBEL (cont'd): Inspiration. Beautiful yearning. And it's infectious. (still dancing) Come. Come dance with me, Spieler.

SPIELER: Of course, my dear, of course.

*(SPIELER gets to his feet, removes his leg splint with a Velcro rip and tosses it aside.)*

*(He holds up his hands with a flourish.)*

*(ISOBEL fluidly falls into him and it turns into an elegant dip.)*

*(They rise back up and dance for a spell.)*

*(As they dance:)*

ISOBEL: Oh Spieler. Life can be grand if we make it so.

SPIELER: It is, dear girl, it is grand. And it seems that it is only when our backs are to the wall that our spirit truly prevails.

ISOBEL: I'm tired of the Passionates, Spieler.

SPIELER: I understand.

ISOBEL: I want you to give me a happy ending.

SPIELER: I would gladly.

ISOBEL: Not like that, silly. (slaps his chest) You. We know so little of you.

SPIELER: I don't understand.

ISOBEL: Tell us your dreams. No. Tell us where you find hope.

*(As SPIELER dips her once again, looking down upon her, he says:)*

SPIELER: Gander.

*(They stand up straight and face each other.)*

*(The snow stops.)*

ISOBEL: Gander?

SPIELER: It's a town, a tiny town in Canada.

ISOBEL: There's hope there?

SPIELER: Yes. For me. There is.

ISOBEL: A girl?

SPIELER: Dear lord, no. The theatre is my life. Women will pleasure me for that, but I've yet to find a woman who would love me for it.

ISOBEL: Then what is Gander? *(excitedly)* Oh, is it a monologue?!

SPIELER: No. It is real.

ISOBEL: *(disbelief)* It's real?

SPIELER: Absolutely.

ISOBEL: You mean really, real?

SPIELER: Entirely real.

ISOBEL: Then you must tell it. Yes. How perfect this will be. You can complete this

tragedy with a tale of hope. A true tale. Your tale. Oh you must do it, Spieler. That will put these awful Passionates to rest ever so nicely.

SPIELER: Perhaps you are right, my dear Isobel. Perhaps.

ISOBEL: No perhaps about it. I think it's a wonderful idea. You must do it!

SPIELER: All right then. So I shall.

## ACT 2 / SCENE 8

*(There is a long pause as SPIELER looks intent with preparation, but is frozen.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): I cannot begin.

*(A beat.)*

ISOBEL: You don't know where to start?

SPIELER: Well, no. Not that. *(beat)* I've no one to announce me.

ISOBEL: *(after a moment)* Then I'll do it.

SPIELER: Are you certain?

ISOBEL: If you trust me to do it, I would be honored.

SPIELER: No, it is I who would be honored, m'lady.

*(SPIELER takes her hand and kisses it.)*

*(She curtsies.)*

ISOBEL: Then I shall.

*(She looks about for something.)*

ISOBEL (cont'd): The microphone...

*(She rushes offstage.)*

*(SPIELER calls off to her.)*

SPIELER: On the prop table, dear girl!

ISOBEL: *(from offstage)* Got it!

*(ISOBEL rushes in with the mic in her hand.)*

*(She slows abruptly. Takes a deep breath and walks up to SPIELER.)*

*(She respectfully removes his whistle.)*

*(She puts it around her neck as if she were handling something very delicate.)*

*(Then she picks up his top hat from the stage floor and places it carefully on her head.)*

*(She waves to the booth and a SPOTLIGHT snaps on and then finds her.)*

*(The other LIGHTS lower.)*

SPIELER: (whispering) Confidence my dear. Be bold.

*(ISOBEL takes a deep breath and then unleashes:)*

ISOBEL: Spieler! Step up to the ring!

*(SPIELER steps up to the farthest downstage point.)*

ISOBEL (cont'd): (whispering into the microphone to the audience) Ladies and gentlemen, we now bring you... hope. Or is it... fantasy? A mystical dream... or a fool's delusion? Weep to smile, long and love, for he is the very last... (bigger with free arm reaching high into the air) ... Passionate!

*(The spotlight snaps off and the LIGHTS become rich again.)*

SPIELER: (with a warm sincerity unseen to this point) The Frankfurt airport has soldiers patrol in combat gear with AKs cradled across their chests like infants. You may find its barrel carelessly pass by you at any given moment. (beat) And this was before the great tragedy.

*(He loosens his shirt collar and removes his jacket.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): I was coming home. The first leg ending of what would be a fifty-two hour stretch of travel limbos and progressions. I had run away to grow, learn and discover that the world is not so small and not so very large. I had gone to prove to myself that I could. That I would. And that I really did need to live many lives within this one... at the expense of letting any one of them be full. For these things, I had gone. And I had learned all I felt I needed months before — but still I lingered. And now this was it. I was coming home. (beat) The problem I faced, was that I didn't know what home meant. And if the journey taught me anything, it was that the life I was choosing

meant that I may never know that... in a traditional sense. Unless I found myself ready to one day make the character of self a full one. For the name I carry as birthright means precious little to me. And perhaps someday, I can feel... part of a community that is not so nomadic a tribe. Proudly, be a part of such a thing.

*(He rolls his sleeves.)*

*(For the rest of the monologue, a clown-like dumbshow is performed by the rest of the cast upstage, a montage of the action.)*

*(A YOUNG SPIELER played by a STAGEHAND assumes the role of the traveler.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): There in the airport, I couldn't find my flight. I could see what should be my flight. But the destination for my flight number isn't Chicago. It says Gander.

*(Upstage a CLOWN dashes across with a streamer trailing behind that reads "Gander.")*

SPIELER (cont'd): I understand that places get their names mangled from language to language, but how the hell Chicago could translate to Gander eluded me. At the help desk...

*(YOUNG SPIELER mouths a question to someone playing the AIRLINE EMPLOYEE, who mimes the response.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): I was told the weather conditions and the size of the plane were going to make us run dangerously low on fuel to fly all the way to Chicago. So there was to be a layover in Gander for a refueling.

*(Someone rushes up to YOUNG SPIELER and holds up a speak bubble that reads "Where the heck is Gander?" as SPIELER says it.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Where the heck is Gander?

*(Someone rushes up to the AIRLINE EMPLOYEE and holds up a speak bubble that reads "Canada." as SPIELER says it.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Canada. Hey, what the hell did I care? Why rush the transition? And I could say I'd been to Canada from that day forth.

*(YOUNG SPIELER sits in a chair in profile as if on a plane. Another cast member pushes him slowly across the stage.)*

SPIELER: And so I boarded and we crawled across the skies in a permanent dawn until

we reached Gander. (soaks in the memory for a beat) The day was finally allowed to break as we shuffled down the ladder from the aircraft.

*(YOUNG SPIELER gets out of his chair, takes a few steps and then hugs himself, shivering from the cold.)*

SPIELER: It was the kind of cold that has an immediate effect on your privates and we hustled across the tarmac right into the little, boxy terminal of the Gander Airport.

*(YOUNG SPIELER walks past the cast who smiles and waves to him.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): And there we paraded past a welcoming committee, smiling warm and genuine, welcoming us to Canada. We passed a line of eager eyes that seemed overjoyed to have guests.

*(An OFFICIAL stands behind a podium wearing a shirt with a huge maple leaf.)*

*(YOUNG SPIELER holds up his passport, and passes.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): We then showed our passports to an official at a gate who asked how our flight had been and wished us a pleasant stay. Inside we found a crowd that, almost in unison, greeted us with a "Welcome to Gander."

*(The CAST imitates this moment silently.)*

*(A man steps forward and uses his arms melodramatically to indicate he is making a speech.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): One man stood before the others and announced that though it was mighty cold outside, we were all welcome to a free scoop of ice cream.

*(A woman comes forward and sticks an ice cream cone in SPIELER's hand.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): We would be there for about an hour to an hour and a half. Mill about and relax. Then a band burst out with traditional Newfoundland folk songs.

*(Traditional Newfoundland folk music plays as two cast members pretend to play the guitar and squeeze-box that were thrown to them from offstage.)*

*(YOUNG SPIELER takes a bite of his ice cream.)*

*(Another lip-syncs the singing.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): And walking smiles planted themselves behind every booth, stand, and desk the terminal possessed. I stuck my earphones back in my ears and retreated to my own music's world...

*(The folk music is overtaken by a loop of the opening to "Heroin" by the Velvet Underground — or something like it. One speaker at a time as each earphone go into YOUNG SPIELER's ears.)*

*(YOUNG SPIELER sits and devours the rest of his ice cream.)*

*(The folk "musicians" carry on with what they were doing though it is no longer their song we hear.)*

*(The other cast members mill about smiling, laughing silently, and some eating ice cream.)*

*(As YOUNG SPIELER takes his last bite of ice cream, a friendly person removes the empty cone from his hand and takes it to the garbage for him.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): ... while others laughed, learned, dined, and... what not. I just checked out, right back into my introspection and braced myself for the coming trauma of re-patriating myself.

*(He scratches his cheek absently and looks off.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Well.

*(There is a mimed announcement and many waves of goodbye.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Soon enough the announcement was made, goodbyes, waves, well-wishing and almost a sadness for many.

*(Chairs are arranged to simulate airplane seat rows.)*

*(YOUNG SPIELER sits next to someone, and someone ahead sits alone.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): And then we were off to the plane again, up the ladder, dutifully back to our original seats. Save one. The seat ahead had been occupied by a fellow backpacking adventurer who I noticed was reading Infinite Jest on the first leg of the flight. He never re-boarded. Gander had either claimed a fresh face, or he was running late. There were discussions among the crew.

*(They do the following:)*

SPIELER (cont'd): A flight attendant left and returned. Curtains were pulled. Whispers ensued. The pilot apologized, we'd be off soon, never fear. (beat) And we were off soon. Minus one. And I wondered. I wondered what life would be like in Gander. I wondered then.

*(The CAST gathers in their previous goodbye wave, but they wave slowly and dream-like.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Perhaps a few times shortly after, as I reacquainted myself with my new, old country. And slowly... slowly, Gander was forgotten.

*(They slowly back out through the wings and away.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Years danced by and I bounced around spectacle to show, work to job, company to troupe. Until I woke up one day with something I had never experienced penetrating my ear: the sound of panic in the voice of a radio announcer. Even in drowsy haze I knew this was not right. I sat up quickly, heard another few words and I leapt from my bed, fast shuffled to the living room. I turned on the television seconds before the second plane hit.

*(The CAST returns as backlit silhouettes and walk up to SPIELER as the music plays on.)*

*(The sit and kneel in a half circle around him giving their support — almost like a campfire.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): The vicious had received their call to arms. The masses got their warning. The powerful gained their permission. And the artists got a great big bag of Kryptonite.

*(The house lights come up starkly and the music fades out.)*

*(He looks warmly at his colleagues.)*

*(The MUSIC fades out.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Nearly two years later, long after the effects were wearing off and I was forming a fresh battle plan, I caught the lead-in for one of those news magazine shows. Home away from home. Gander. An uplifting tale of kindness. When we come back. (beat) And I was there at the tube when they came back — you can be certain of that. Frozen in front of the footage of Gander. Sunny green, crisply cold, Gander. Eastern-most province of Newfoundland. A new hot spot for Canadian films and near the beautiful Kittiwake Coast. (beat) Thirty-nine planes were redirected there on September 11th, 2001. Over six thousand passengers, almost five hundred crew. And

while stranded and left adrift in a world that had just been redefined, these thousands would recover from this tragedy more rapidly than many who hid safely within their homes.

*(SPIELER looks around at the faces, almost like a campfire chat.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Coming off the planes in Gander the people were greeted by a horde of yellow school buses. Every last bus the natives could locate. Schools were closed, businesses prepared whatever wares might prove useful. Everyone in Gander and it's surrounding communities... especially Gambo, searched for whatever possessions, talents, or knowledge they could share in this time of crisis and need. Cots were lined up in the churches, the Salvation Army, firehouses, schools and community centers. Homes were opened. Hospitals, markets — everyone came forward to comfort their visitors. In the face of the greatest tragedy of our American lifetimes, the greatest acts of selflessness were born. In Newfoundland. In Gander, and in Gambo. In Canada.

*(He takes a deep breath with his eyes closed.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): It was a unique moment in history where the world, this once, felt for America. Worried for America. Wished to aid America. And within a year we would squander the opportunity and replace it with alienation, arrogance, and at last prove that we really are just annoyed by this diplomacy thing. But it's all so much easier to bear now that I have Gander. I know we'll survive this swing of the pendulum. We can't go much further the direction we're headed — we'll have to swing back to health. But we can survive the furthest point of the swing... I know it. I know it... because there is a Gander. (grins) The people... the people they interviewed, cried with bittersweet longing and appreciation. Some cried at the very mention of the name. Letters are still written between friends made in those five days. If there is a heaven, one bearded man assured the camera, it's Gander. And I believed him. And I felt as though I were an authority on the matter. If I believed him, it must be true... for I have been there. I have seen it with my own eyes. My eyes that sparkled with fight like never before. After I saw the work of our neighbors, I knew I would fight for us all to the end. I'm ready to take on injustice here in the only world I know. I'll kick and claw my way to clear a path to a world like Gander. And if I get to see it happen here, at long last, then I will tip my hat to you America and make my last move, to where it all began.

*(He leaps to his feet.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): So. My dear friends...

*(He walks among them shaking hands warmly with his cast mates.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): ... remember that there is always Gander. Let the ruffians come forward, let the audiences stay away. We chose lives to square up and make the world

think and smile and shine and love and feel. We have to stay and fight... but if ever we need run, you know where to meet me.

*(He reaches FARRAH and plants a huge kiss on her.)*

*(He then spins around and looks up at the booth.)*

SPIELER (cont'd): Now, godspeed that blackout, my friend, we've some bowing to do.

*(BLACKOUT.)*

# END OF PLAY