

Plays in the Packet:

HOME
ILE
THE SCULPTOR'S FUNERAL
WORST EPISODE EVER
HOMER'S ENEMY

HOME
a drama in one-act
by Maurice Maeterlinck

The following one-act play is reprinted from *The Plays of Maurice Maeterlinck*. Trans. Richard Hovey. Chicago: Stone and Kimball, 1896. It is now in the public domain and may therefore be performed without royalties.

CHARACTERS

THE OLD MAN
THE STRANGER
FATHER
MOTHER
TWO YOUNG GIRLS
CHILD
MARY
MARTHA
CROWD OF PEASANTS

[An old garden, planted with willows. At the back, a house in which three windows on the ground-floor are lighted. A family, sitting up under the lamp, is seen rather distinctly. The father is seated by the fireside. The mother, one elbow on the table, is staring into space. Two young girls, clad in white, embroider, dream, and smile in the quiet of the room. A child lies asleep with his head under the mother's left arm. Whenever one of them rises, walks, or makes a gesture, his movements seem to be grave, slow, rare, and, as it were, spiritualized by the distance, the light, and the vague veil of the windows.]

[The old man and the stranger enter the garden cautiously.]

THE OLD MAN: We are in the part of the garden behind the house. They never come here. The doors are on the other side. They are closed, and the shutters are up. But there are no shutters on this side, and I saw a light.... Yes; they are sitting up still under the lamp. It is fortunate they have not heard us; the mother or the young girls would have come out, perhaps, and then what should we have done?...

THE STRANGER: What are we going to do?

THE OLD MAN: I should like to see, first, if they are all in the room. Yes, I see the father sitting in the chimney-corner. He waits, with his hands on his knees;... the mother is resting her elbow on the table.

THE STRANGER: She is looking at us....

THE OLD MAN: No; she doesn't know where she is looking; her eyes do not wink. She cannot see us; we are in the shade of great trees. But do not go any nearer.... The two sisters of the dead girl are in the room too. They are embroidering slowly; and the little child is asleep. It is nine by the clock in the corner.... They suspect nothing, and they do not speak.

THE STRANGER: If one could draw the father's attention, and make him some sign? He has turned his head this way. Would you like me to knock at one of the windows? One of them ought to be told before the others....

THE OLD MAN: I don't know which one to choose.... We must take great precautions.... The father is old and ailing.... So is the mother; and the sisters are too young.... And they all loved her with such love as will never be again.... I never saw a happier household.... No, no, do not go near the window; that would be worse than anything else.... It is better to announce it as simply as possible,--as if it were an ordinary event,--and not to look too sad; for otherwise their grief will wish to be greater than yours and will know of nothing more that it can do.... Let us go on the other side of the garden. We will knock at the door and go in as if nothing had happened. I will go in first: they will not be surprised to see me; I come sometimes in the evening, to bring them flowers or fruit, and pass a few hours with them.

THE STRANGER: Why must I go with you? Go alone; I will wait till I am called.... They have never seen me.... I am only a passer-by; I am a stranger....

THE OLD MAN: It is better not to be alone. A sorrow that one does not bring alone is not so unmixed nor so heavy.... I was thinking of that as we were coming here.... If I go alone, I shall have to be speaking from the first minute; in a few words they will know everything, and I shall have nothing more to say; and I am afraid of the silence following the last words that announce a woe.... It is then the heart is rent.... If we go in together, I shall tell them, for example, after going a long way about, "She was found so.... She was floating in the river, and her hands were clasped." ...

THE STRANGER: Her hands were not clasped; her arms were hanging down along her body.

THE OLD MAN: You see, one speaks in spite of oneself.... And the sorrow is lost in the details;... but otherwise, if I go in alone, at the first words, knowing them as I do, it would be dreadful, and God knows what might happen.... But if we speak in turn, they will listen to us and not think to look the ill news in the face.... Do not forget the mother will be there, and that her life hangs by a thread.... It is good that the first wave break on some unnecessary words.... There should be a little talking around the unhappy, and they should have people about them.... The most indifferent bear unwittingly a part of the grief.... So, without noise or effort, it divides, like air or light....

THE STRANGER: Your clothes are wet through; they are dripping on the flagstones.

THE OLD MAN: It is only the bottom of my cloak that dipped in the water. You seem to be cold. Your chest is covered with earth.... I did not notice it on the road on account of the darkness....

THE STRANGER: I went into the water up to my waist.

THE OLD MAN: Was it long after you found her when I came?

THE STRANGER: A few minutes, barely. I was going toward the village; it was already late, and the bank was getting dark. I was walking with my eyes fixed on the river because it was lighter than the road, when

I saw something strange a step or two from a clump of reeds.... I drew near and made out her hair, which had risen almost in a circle above her head, and whirled round, so, in the current.

[In the room, the two young girls turn their heads toward the window.]

THE OLD MAN: Did you see the two sisters' hair quiver on their shoulders?

THE STRANGER: They turned their heads this way.... They simply turned their heads. Perhaps I spoke too loud. *[The two young girls resume their former position.]* But they are already looking no longer.... I went into the water up to my waist and I was able to take her by the hand and pull her without effort to the shore.... She was as beautiful as her sisters are.

THE OLD MAN: She was perhaps more beautiful.... I do not know why I have lost all courage....

THE STRANGER: What courage are you talking of? We have done all man could do.... She was dead more than an hour ago....

THE OLD MAN: She was alive this morning!... I met her coming out of church.... She told me she was going away; she was going to see her grandmother on the other side of the river where you found her.... She did not know when I should see her again.... She must have been on the point of asking me something; then she dared not and left me abruptly. But I think of it now.... And I saw nothing!... She smiled as they smile who choose to be silent, or who are afraid they will not be understood.... She seemed hardly to hope.... Her eyes were not clear and hardly looked at me....

THE STRANGER: Some peasants told me they had seen her wandering on the river-bank until nightfall.... They thought she was looking for flowers.... It may be that her death....

THE OLD MAN: We cannot tell.... What is there we can tell?... She was perhaps of those who do not wish to speak, and every one of us bears in himself more than one reason for no longer living.... We cannot see in the soul as we see in that room. They are all like that.... They only say trite things; and no one suspects aught.... You live for months by some one who is no longer of this world and whose soul can bend no longer; you answer without thinking; and you see what happens.... They look like motionless dolls, and, oh, the events that take place in their souls!... They do not know themselves what they are.... She would have lived as the rest live.... She would have said up to her death: "Monsieur, Madame, we shall have rain this morning," or else, "We are going to breakfast, we shall be thirteen at table," or else: "The fruits are not yet ripe." They speak with a smile of the flowers that have fallen, and weep in the dark.... An angel even would not see what should be seen; and man only understands when it is too late.... Yesterday evening she was there, under the lamp like her sisters, and you would not see them as they should be seen, if this had not occurred.... I seem to see her now for the first time.... Something must be added to common life before we can understand it.... They are beside you day and night, and you perceive them only at the moment when they depart forever.... And yet the strange little soul she must have had; the poor, naïve, exhaustless little soul she had, my son, if she said what she must have said, if she did what she must have done!...

THE STRANGER: Just now they are smiling in silence in the room....

THE OLD MAN: They are at peace.... They did not expect her tonight....

THE STRANGER: They smile without stirring;... and see, the father is putting his finger on his lips....

THE OLD MAN: He is calling attention to the child asleep on its mother's heart....

THE STRANGER: She dares not raise her eyes lest she disturb its sleep....

THE OLD MAN: They are no longer working.... A great silence reigns...

THE STRANGER: They have let fall the skein of white silk....

THE OLD MAN: They are watching the child....

THE STRANGER: They do not know that others are watching them....

THE OLD MAN: We are watched too....

THE STRANGER: They have lifted their eyes....

THE OLD MAN: And yet they can see nothing....

THE STRANGER: They seem happy; and yet nobody knows what may be--...

THE OLD MAN: They think themselves in safety.... They have shut the doors; and the windows have iron bars.... They have mended the walls of the old house; they have put bolts upon the oaken doors.... They have foreseen all that could be foreseen....

THE STRANGER: We must end by telling them.... Some one might come and let them know abruptly.... There was a crowd of peasants in the meadow where the dead girl was found.... If one of them knocked at the door ...

THE OLD MAN: Martha and Mary are beside the poor dead child. The peasants were to make a litter of leaves; and I told the elder to come warn us in all haste, the moment they began their march. Let us wait till she comes; she will go in with me.... We should not have looked on them so.... I thought it would be only to knock upon the door; to go in simply, find a phrase or two, and tell.... But I have seen them live too long under the lamp....

[Enter MARY.]

MARY: They are coming, grandfather.

THE OLD MAN: Is it you? -- Where are they?

MARY: They are at the foot of the last hills.

THE OLD MAN: They will come in silence?

MARY: I told them to pray in a low voice. Martha is with them....

THE OLD MAN: Are they many?

MARY: The whole village is about the bearers. They had brought lights. I told them to put them out....

THE OLD MAN: Which way are they coming?

MARY: They are coming by the footpaths. They are walking slowly....

THE OLD MAN: It is time....

MARY: You have told them, grandfather?

THE OLD MAN: You see plainly we have told them nothing.... They are waiting still under the lamp.... Look, my child, look! You will see something of life....

MARY: Oh, how at peace they seem!... You would say I saw them in a dream....

THE STRANGER: Take care, I saw both sisters give a start....

THE OLD MAN: They are getting up....

THE STRANGER: I think they are coming to the windows....

[At this moment, one of the two sisters of whom they speak draws near the first window, the other near the third, and, pressing their hands at the same time against the panes, look a long while into the darkness.]

THE OLD MAN: No one comes to the window in the middle....

MARY: They are looking.... They are listening....

THE OLD MAN: The elder smiles at what she does not see.

THE STRANGER: And the other has eyes full of fearfulness....

THE OLD MAN: Take care; we do not know how far the soul extends about men....

[A long silence. MARY cowers against the old man's breast and kisses him.]

MARY: Grandfather!...

THE OLD MAN: Do not weep, my child.... We shall have our turn....

[A silence.]

THE STRANGER: They are looking a long while....

THE OLD MAN: They might look a hundred thousand years and not perceive anything, the poor little sisters.... The night is too dark.... They are looking this way; and it is from that way the misfortune is coming....

THE STRANGER: It is fortunate they look this way.... I do not know what that is coming toward us, over by the meadows.

MARY: I think it is the crowd.... They are so far away you can hardly make them out....

THE STRANGER: They follow the undulations of the path.... Now they appear again on a hillside in the moonlight...

MARY: Oh, how many they seem!... They had already run up from the suburbs of the city when I came.... They are going a long way around....

THE OLD MAN: They will come in spite of all; I see them too.... They are on the march across the meadowlands.... They seem so small you hardly make them out among the grasses.... They look like children playing in the moonlight; and if the girls should see them, they would not understand.... In vain they turn their backs; those yonder draw near with every step they take, and the sorrow has been growing

these two hours already. They cannot hinder it from growing; and they that bear it there no longer can arrest it.... It is their master too, and they must serve it.... It has its end and follows its own road.... It is unwearied and has but one idea.... Needs must they lend their strength. They are sad, but they come.... They have pity, but they must go forward....

MARY: The elder smiles no longer, grandfather....

THE STRANGER: They leave the windows....

MARY: They kiss their mother....

THE STRANGER: The elder has caressed the curls of the child without waking him....

MARY: Oh! the father wants to be kissed too....

THE STRANGER: And now silence....

MARY: They come back beside the mother....

THE STRANGER: And the father follows the great pendulum of the clock with his eyes....

MARY: You would say they were praying without knowing what they did....

THE STRANGER: You would say that they were listening to their souls....

[A silence.]

MARY: Grandfather, don't tell them tonight!...

THE OLD MAN: You see, you too lose courage.... I knew well that we must not look. I am nearly eighty-three years old, and this is the first time the sight of life has struck me. I do not know why everything they do seems so strange and grave to me.... They wait for night quite simply, under their lamp, as we might have been waiting under ours; and yet I seem to see them from the heights of another world, because I know a little truth which they do not know yet.... Is it that, my children? Tell me, then, why you are pale, too? Is there something else, perhaps, that cannot be told and causes us to weep? I did not know there was anything so sad in life, nor that it frightened those who looked upon it.... And nothing can have occurred that I should be afraid to see them so at peace.... They have too much confidence in this world.... There they are, separated from the enemy by a poor window.... They think nothing will happen because they have shut the door, and do not know that something is always happening in our souls, and that the world does not end at the doors of our houses.... They are so sure of their little life and do not suspect how many others know more of it than they; and that I, poor old man,--I hold here, two steps from their door, all their little happiness, like a sick bird, in my old hands I do not dare to open....

MARY: Have pity, grandfather....

THE OLD MAN: We have pity on them, my child, but no one has pity on us....

MARY: Tell them tomorrow, grandfather; tell them when it is light.... They will not be so sorrowful....

THE OLD MAN: Perhaps you are right, my child.... It would be better to leave all this in the night. And the light is sweet to sorrow.... But what would they say to us tomorrow? Misfortune renders jealous; they whom it strikes, wish to be told before strangers; they do not like to have it left in the hands of those they do not know.... We should look as if we had stolen something....

THE STRANGER: There is no more time, besides; I hear the murmur of prayers already....

MARY: There they are.... They are passing behind the hedges....

[Enter MARTHA.]

MARTHA: Here I am. I have brought them this far. I have told them to wait on the road. *[Cries of children heard.]* Ah! The children are crying again.... I forbade their coming.... But they wanted to see too, and the mothers would not obey.... I will go tell them.... No; they are silent. -- Is everything ready? -- I have brought the little ring that was found on her.... I have some fruit, too, for the child.... I laid her out myself on the litter. She looks as if she were asleep.... I had a good deal of trouble; her hair would not obey.... I had some marguerites plucked.... It is sad, there were no other flowers.... What are you doing here? Why are you not by them?... *[She looks at the windows.]* They do not weep?... They ... you have not told them?

THE OLD MAN: Martha, Martha, there is too much life in your soul; you cannot understand....

MARTHA: Why should I not understand?... *[After a silence and in a tone of very grave reproach.]* You cannot have done that, grandfather....

THE OLD MAN: Martha, you do not know....

MARTHA: I will tell them.

THE OLD MAN: Stay here, my child, and look at them a moment.

MARTHA: Oh, how unhappy they are!... They can wait no longer.

THE OLD MAN: Why?

MARTHA: I do not know;... it is no longer possible!...

THE OLD MAN: Come here, my child....

MARTHA: How patient they are!

THE OLD MAN: Come here, my child....

MARTHA: *[Turning.]* Where are you, grandfather? I am so unhappy I cannot see you any more.... I do not know what to do myself any more....

THE OLD MAN: Do not look at them any more; till they know all....

MARTHA: I will go in with you....

THE OLD MAN: No, Martha, stay here.... Sit beside your sister, on this old stone bench, against the wall of the house, and do not look.... You are too young; you never could forget.... You cannot know what a face is like at the moment when death passes before its eyes.... There will be cries, perhaps.... Do not turn round.... Perhaps there will be nothing.... Above all, do not turn if you hear nothing.... One does not know the course of grief beforehand.... A few little deep-rooted sobs, and that is all usually.... I do not know myself what I may do when I shall hear them.... That belongs no longer to this life.... Kiss me, my child, before I go away....

[The murmur of prayers has gradually drawn nearer. Part of the crowd invades the garden. Dull steps heard, running, and low voices speaking.]

THE STRANGER: *(To the crowd)* Stay here;... do not go near the windows.... Where is she?...

A PEASANT: Who?

THE STRANGER: The rest ... the bearers?...

THE PEASANT: They are coming by the walk that leads to the door.

[The old man goes away. Martha and Mary are seated on the bench, with their backs turned to the windows. Murmurs in the crowd.]

THE STRANGER: S--t!... Do not speak.

[The elder of the two sisters rises and goes to bolt the door....]

MARTHA: She opens it?

THE STRANGER: On the contrary, she is shutting it.

[A silence.]

MARTHA: Grandfather has not entered?

THE STRANGER: No.... She returns and sits down by her mother.... The others do not stir, and the child sleeps all the time....

[A silence.]

MARTHA: Sister, give me your hands....

MARY: Martha!...

[They embrace and give each other a kiss.]

THE STRANGER: He must have knocked.... They have all raised their heads at the same time;... they look at each other....

MARTHA: Oh! oh! my poor little sister!... I shall cry too!...

[She stifles her sobs on her sister's shoulder.]

THE STRANGER: He must be knocking again.... The father looks at the clock. He rises.

MARTHA: Sister, sister, I want to go in too.... They cannot be alone any longer....

MARY: Martha! Martha!...

[She holds her back.]

THE STRANGER: The father is at the door.... He draws the bolts.... He opens the door prudently....

MARTHA: Oh!... you do not see the ...

THE STRANGER: What?

MARTHA: Those who bear....

THE STRANGER: He hardly opens it.... I can only see a corner of the lawn; and the fountain.... He does not let go the door;... he steps back.... He looks as if he were saying: "Ah, it's you!" ... He raises his arms.... He shuts the door again carefully.... Your grandfather has come into the room....

[The crowd has drawn nearer the windows. Martha and Mary half rise at first, then draw near also, clasping each other tightly. The old man is seen advancing into the room. The two sisters of the dead girl rise; the mother rises as well, after laying the child carefully in the armchair she has just abandoned; in such a way that from without the little one may be seen asleep, with his head hanging a little to one side, in the centre of the room. The mother advances to meet the old man and extends her hand to him, but draws it back before he has had time to take it. One of the young girls offers to take off the visitor's cloak and the other brings forward a chair for him; but the old man makes a slight gesture of refusal. The father smiles with a surprised look. The old man looks toward the windows.]

THE STRANGER: He dares not tell them.... He has looked at us....

[Rumors in the crowd.]

THE STRANGER: S...t!...

[The old man, seeing their faces at the windows, has quickly turned his eyes away. As one of the young girls continues to offer him the same armchair, he ends by sitting down and passes his right hand across his forehead several times.]

THE STRANGER: He sits down....

[The other people in the room sit down also, while the father talks volubly. At last the old man opens his mouth, and the tone of his voice seems to attract attention. But the father interrupts him. The old man begins to speak again, and little by little the others become motionless. All at once, the mother starts and rises.]

MARTHA: Oh! the mother is going to understand!...

[She turns away and hides her face in her hands. New murmurs in the crowd. They elbow each other. Children cry to be lifted up, so that they may see too. Most of the mothers obey.]

THE STRANGER: S...t!... He has not told them yet....

[The mother is seen to question the old man in anguish. He says a few words more; then abruptly all the rest rise too and seem to question him. He makes a slow sign of affirmation with his head.]

THE STRANGER: He has told them.... He has told them all at once!...

VOICES IN THE CROWD: He has told them!... He has told them!...

THE STRANGER: You hear nothing....

[The old man rises too, and, without turning, points with his finger to the door behind him. The mother, the father, and the two young girls throw themselves on this door, which the father cannot at once succeed in opening. The old man tries to prevent the mother from going out.]

VOICES IN THE CROWD: They are going out! They are going out!...

[Jostling in the garden. All rush to the other side of the house and disappear, with the exception of the stranger, who remains at the windows. In the room, both sides of the folding-door at last open; all go out at the same time. Beyond can be seen a starry sky, the lawn and the fountain in the moonlight, while in the middle of the abandoned room the child continues to sleep peacefully in the armchair.--Silence.]

THE STRANGER: The child has not waked!...

[He goes out also.]

CURTAIN

ILE
a play in one-act
by Eugene O'Neill

The following one-act play is reprinted from *The Atlantic Book of Modern Plays*. Ed. Sterling Andrus Leonard. Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1921. It is now in the public domain and may therefore be performed without royalties.

CHARACTERS

STEWARD
BEN
CAPTAIN KEENEY
SECOND MATE
MRS. KEENEY
JOE
OTHER CREW

[CAPTAIN KEENEY'S cabin on board the steam whaling ship Atlantic Queen--a small, square compartment, about eight feet high, with a skylight in the centre looking out on the poop deck. On the left (the stern of the ship) a long bench with rough cushions is built in against the wall. In front of the bench, a table. Over the bench, several curtained portholes.]

[In the rear, left, a door leading to the captain's sleeping-quarters. To the right of the door a small organ, looking as if it were brand-new, is placed against the wall.]

[On the right, to the rear, a marble-topped, sideboard. On the sideboard, a woman's sewing-basket. Farther forward, a doorway leading to the companion way, and past the officers' quarters to the main deck.]

[In the centre of the room, a stove. From the middle of the ceiling a hanging lamp is suspended. The walls of the cabin are painted white.]

[There is no rolling of the ship, and the light which comes through the skylight is sickly and faint, indicating one of those gray days of calm when ocean and sky are alike dead. The silence is unbroken except for the measured tread of someone walking up and down on the poop deck overhead.]

[It is nearing two bells--one o'clock--in the afternoon of a day in the year 1895.]

[At the rise of the curtain there is a moment of intense silence. Then the STEWARD enters and commences to clear the table of the few dishes which still remain on it after the CAPTAIN'S dinner. He is an old, grizzled man dressed in dungaree pants, a sweater, and a woolen cap with ear-flaps. His manner is sullen and angry. He stops stacking up the plates and casts a quick glance upward at the skylight; then tiptoes over to the closed door in rear and listens with his ear pressed to the crack. What he hears makes his face darken and he mutters a furious curse. There is a noise from the doorway on the right, and he darts back to the table.]

[BEN enters. He is an over-grown, gawky boy with a long, pinched face. He is dressed in sweater, fur cap, etc. His teeth are chattering with the cold and he hurries to the stove, where he stands for a moment shivering, blowing on his hands, slapping them against his sides, on the verge of crying.]

THE STEWARD: *(in relieved tones--seeing who it is)* Oh, 'tis you, is it? What're ye shiverin' 'bout? Stay by the stove where ye belong and ye'll find no need of chatterin'.

BEN: It's c-c-old. *(Trying to control his chattering teeth--derisively)* Who d' ye think it were--the Old Man?

THE STEWARD: *(He makes a threatening move--BEN shrinks away.)* None o' your lip, young un, or I'll learn ye. *(More kindly)* Where was it ye've been all o' the time--the fo'c's'le?

BEN: Yes.

THE STEWARD: Let the Old Man see ye up for'ard monkey-shinin' with the handstand ye'll get a hidin' ye'll not forget in a hurry.

BEN: Aw, he don't see nothin'. *(A trace of awe in his tones--he glances upward.)* He just walks up and down like he didn't notice nobody--and stares at the ice to the no'th'ard.

THE STEWARD: *(the same tone of awe creeping into his voice)* He's always starin' at the ice. *(In a sudden rage, shaking his fist at the skylight)* Ice, ice, ice! Damn him and damn the ice! Holdin' us in for nigh on a year--nothin' to see but ice--stuck in it like a fly in molasses!

BEN: *(apprehensively)* Sssh! He'll hear ye.

THE STEWARD: *(raging)* Aye, damn him, and damn the Arctic seas, and damn this stinkin' whalin' ship of his, and damn me for a fool to ever ship on it! *(Subsiding, as if realizing the uselessness of this outburst--shaking his head--slowly, with deep conviction)* He's a hard man--as hard a man as ever sailed the seas.

BEN: *(solemnly)* Aye.

THE STEWARD: The two years we all signed up for are done this day. Blessed Christ! Two years o' this dog's life, and no luck in the fishin', and the hands half starved with the food runnin' low, rotten as it is; and not a sign of him turnin' back for home! *(Bitterly)* Home! I begin to doubt if ever I'll set foot on land again. *(Excitedly)* What is it he thinks he's goin' to do? Keep us all up here after our time is worked out till the last man of us is starved to death or frozen? We've grub enough hardly to last out the voyage back if we started now. What are the men goin' to do 'bout it? Did ye hear any talk in the fo'c's'le?

BEN: *(going over to him--in a half-whisper)* They said if he don't put back south for home to-day they're goin' to mutiny.

THE STEWARD: *(with grim satisfaction)* Mutiny? Aye, 'tis the only thing they can do; and serve him right after the manner he's treated them--'s if they weren't no better nor dogs.

BEN: The ice is all broke up to s'uth'rd. They's clear water's far's you can see. He ain't got no excuse for not turnin' back for home, the men says.

THE STEWARD: (*bitterly*) He won't look nowheres but no'th'rd where they's only the ice to see. He don't want to see no clear water. All he thinks on is gittin' the ile--'s if it was our fault he ain't had good luck with the whales. (*Shaking his head*) I think the man's mighty nigh losin' his senses.

BEN: (*awed*) D' you really think he's crazy?

THE STEWARD: Aye, it's the punishment o' God on him. Did ye hear ever of a man who wasn't crazy do the things he does? (*Pointing to the door in rear*) Who but a man that's mad would take his woman--and as sweet a woman as ever was--on a stinkin' whalin' ship to the Arctic seas to be locked in by the rotten ice for nigh on a year, and maybe lose her senses forever--for it's sure she'll never be the same again.

BEN: (*sadly*) She useter be awful nice to me before--(*his eyes grow wide and frightened*) she got--like she is.

THE STEWARD: Aye, she was good to all of us. 'T would have been hell on board without her; for he's a hard man--a hard, hard man--a driver if there ever was one. (*With a grim laugh*) I hope he's satisfied now--drivin' her on till she's near lost her mind. And who could blame her? 'T is a God's wonder we're not a ship full of crazed people--with the damned ice all the time, and the quiet so thick you're afraid to hear your own voice.

BEN: (*with a frightened glance toward the door on right*) She don't never speak to me no more--jest looks at me's if she didn't know me.

THE STEWARD: She don't know no one--but him. She talks to him--when she does talk--right enough.

BEN: She does nothin' all day long now but sit and sew--and then she cries to herself without makin' no noise. I've seen her.

THE STEWARD: Aye, I could hear her through the door a while back.

BEN: (*tiptoes over to the door and listens*) She's cryin' now.

THE STEWARD: (*furiously--shaking his fist*) God send his soul to hell for the devil he is!

[*There is the noise of someone coming slowly down the companionway stairs. THE STEWARD hurries to his stacked-up dishes. He is so nervous from fright that he knocks off the top one, which falls and breaks on the floor. He stands aghast, trembling with dread. BEN is violently rubbing off the organ with a piece of cloth which he has snatched from his pocket, CAPTAIN KEENEY appears in the doorway on right and comes into the cabin, removing his fur cap as he does so. He is a man of about forty, around five-ten in height, but looking much shorter on account of the enormous proportions of his shoulders and chest. His face is massive and deeply lined, with gray-blue eyes of a bleak hardness, and a tightly clenched, thin-lipped mouth. His thick hair is long and gray. He is dressed in a heavy blue jacket and blue pants stuffed into his sea-boots.*]

[*He is followed into the cabin by the SECOND MATE, a rangy six-footer with a lean, weatherbeaten face. The MATE is dressed about the same as the captain. He is a man of thirty or so.*]

KEENEY: (*Comes toward the STEWARD--with a stern look on his face. The STEWARD is visibly frightened and the stack of dishes rattles in his trembling hands. KEENEY draws back his fist and the STEWARD shrinks away. The fist is gradually lowered and KEENEY speaks slowly.*) 'T would be like hitting a worm. It is nigh on two bells, Mr. Steward, and this truck not cleared yet.

THE STEWARD: *(stammering)* Y-y-yes, sir.

KEENEY: Instead of doin' your rightful work ye've been below here gossipin' old woman's talk with that boy. *(To BEN fiercely)* Get out o' this, you! Clean up the chartroom. *(BEN darts past the MATE to the open doorway.)* Pick up that dish, Mr. Steward!

THE STEWARD: *(doing so with difficulty)* Yes, sir.

KEENEY: The next dish you break, Mr. Steward, you take a bath in the Bering Sea at the end of a rope.

THE STEWARD: *(tremblingly)* Yes, sir.

[He hurries out. The SECOND MATE walks slowly over to the CAPTAIN.]

MATE: I warn't 'specially anxious the man at the wheel should catch what I wanted to say to you, sir. That's why I asked you to come below.

KEENEY: *(impatiently)* Speak your say, Mr. Slocum.

MATE: *(unconsciously lowering his voice)* I'm afeard there'll be trouble with the hands by the look o' things. They'll likely turn ugly, every blessed one o' them, if you don't put back. The two years they signed up for is up to-day.

KEENEY: And d'you think you're tellin' me somethin' new, Mr. Slocum? I've felt it in the air this long time past. D'you think I've not seen their ugly looks and the grudgin' way they worked?

[The door in rear is opened and MRS. KEENEY stands in the doorway. She is a slight, sweet-faced little woman primly dressed in black. Her eyes are red from weeping and her face drawn and pale. She takes in the cabin with a frightened glance and stands as if fixed to the spot by some nameless dread, clasping and unclasping her hands nervously. The two men turn and look at her.]

KEENEY: *(with rough tenderness)* Well, Annie?

MRS. KEENEY: *(as if awakening from a dream)* David, I--*(She is silent. The MATE starts for the doorway.)*

KEENEY: *(turning to him--sharply)* Wait!

MATE: Yes, sir.

KEENEY: D'you want anything, Annie?

MRS. KEENEY: *(after a pause, during which she seems to be endeavoring to collect her thoughts)* I thought maybe--I'd go up on deck, David, to get a breath of fresh air.

[She stand's humbly awaiting his permission. He and the MATE exchange a significant glance.]

KEENEY: It's too cold, Annie. You'd best stay below to-day. There's nothing to look at on deck--but ice.

MRS. KEENEY: *(monotonously)* I know--ice, ice, ice! But there's nothing to see down here but these walls.

[She makes a gesture of loathing.]

KEENEY: You can play the organ, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY: *(dully)* I hate the organ. It puts me in mind of home.

KEENEY: *(a touch of resentment in his voice)* I got it jest for you.

MRS. KEENEY: *(dully)* I know. *(She turns away from them and walks slowly to the bench on left. She lifts up one of the curtains and looks through a porthole; then utters an exclamation of joy.)* Ah, water! Clear water! As far as I can see! How good it looks after all these months of ice! *(She turns round to them, her face transfigured with joy.)* Ah, now I must go upon deck and look at it, David.

KEENEY: *(frowning)* Best not to-day, Annie. Best wait for a day when the sun shines.

MRS. KEENEY: *(desperately)* But the sun never shines in this terrible place.

KEENEY: *(a tone of command in his voice)* Best not to-day, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY: *(crumbling before this command--abjectly)* Very well, David.

[She stands there staring straight before her as if in a daze. The two men look at her uneasily.]

KEENEY: *(sharply)* Annie!

MRS. KEENEY: *(dully)* Yes, David.

KEENEY: Me and Mr. Slocum has business to talk about--ship's business.

MRS. KEENEY: Very well, David.

[She goes slowly out, rear, and leaves the door three quarters shut behind her.]

KEENEY: Best not have her on deck if they's goin' to be any trouble.

MATE: Yes, sir.

KEENEY: And trouble they's goin' to be. I feel it in my bones. *(Takes a revolver from the pocket of his coat and examines it.)* Got yourn?

MATE: Yes, sir.

KEENEY: Not that we'll have to use 'em--not if I know their breed of dog--jest to frighten 'em up a bit. *(Grimly)* I ain't never been forced to use one yit; and trouble I've had by land and by sea's long as I kin remember, and will have till my dyin' day, I reckon.

MATE: *(hesitatingly)* Then you ain't goin'--to turn back?

KEENEY: Turn back! Mr. Slocum, did you ever hear o' me pointin' s'uth for home with only a measly four hundred barrel of ile in the hold?

MATE: *(hastily)* No, sir--but the grub's gittin' low.

KEENEY: They's enough to last a long time yit, if they're careful with it; and they's plenty o' water.

MATE: They say it's not fit to eat--what's left; and the two years they signed on fur is up to-day. They might make trouble for you in the courts when we git home.

KEENEY: To hell with 'em! Let them make what law trouble they kin. I don't give a damn 'bout the money. I've got to git the ile! (*Glancing sharply at the MATE*) You ain't turnin' no damned sea lawyer, be you, Mr. Slocum?

MATE: (*flushing*) Not by a hell of a sight, sir.

KEENEY: What do the fools want to go home fur now? Their share o' the four hundred barrel wouldn't keep 'em in chewin' terbacco.

MATE: (*slowly*) They wants to git back to their folks an' things, I s'pose.

KEENEY: (*looking at him searchingly*) 'N' you want to turn back, too. (*THE MATE looks down confusedly before his sharp gaze.*) Don't lie, Mr. Slocum. It's writ down plain in your eyes. (*With grim sarcasm*) I hope, Mr. Slocum, you ain't agoin' to jine the men agin me.

MATE: (*indignantly*) That ain't fair, sir, to say sich things.

KEENEY: (*with satisfaction*) I warn't much afeard o' that, Tom. You been with me nigh on ten year and I've learned ye whalin'. No man kin say I ain't a good master, if I be a hard one.

MATE: I warn't thinkin' of myself, sir--'bout turnin' home, I mean. (*Desperately*) But Mrs. Keeney, sir-- seems like she ain't jest satisfied up here, ailin' like--what with the cold an' bad luck an' the ice an' all.

KEENEY: (*his face clouding--rebukingly but not severely*) That's my business, Mr. Slocum. I'll thank you to steer a clear course o' that. (*A pause.*) The ice'll break up soon to no'th'rd. I could see it startin' to-day. And when it goes and we git some sun, Annie'll perk up. (*Another pause--then he bursts forth*) It ain't the damned money what's keepin' me up in the Northern seas, Tom. But I can't go back to Homeport with a measly four hundred barrel of ile. I'd die fust. I ain't never come back home in all my days without a full ship. Ain't that truth?

MATE: Yes, sir; but this voyage you been ice-bound, an'--

KEENEY: (*scornfully*) And d' you s'pose any of 'em would believe that--any o' them skippers I've beaten voyage after voyage? Can't you hear 'em laughin' and sneerin'--Tibbotts 'n' Harris 'n' Simms and the rest--and all o' Homeport makin' fun o' me? "Dave Keeney what boasts he's the best whalin' skipper out o' Homeport comin' back with a measly four hundred barrel of ile?" (*The thought of this drives him into a frenzy, and he smashes his fist down on the marble top of the sideboard.*) Hell! I got to git the ile, I tell you. How could I figger on this ice? It's never been so bad before in the thirty year I been a-comin' here. And now it's breakin' up. In a couple o'days it'll be all gone. And they's whale here, plenty of 'em. I know they is and I ain't never gone wrong yit. I got to git the ile! I got to git it in spite of all hell, and by God, I ain't a-goin' home till I do git it!

[*There is the sound of subdued sobbing from the door in rear. The two men stand silent for a moment, listening. Then KEENEY goes over to the door and looks in. He hesitates for a moment as if he were going to enter--then closes the door softly. JOE, the harpooner, an enormous six-footer with a battered, ugly face, enters from right and stands waiting for the captain to notice him.*]

KEENEY: (*turning and seeing him*) Don't be standin' there like a gawk, Harpooner. Speak up!

JOE: (*confusedly*) We want--the men, sir--they want send a depitation aft to have a word with you.

KEENEY: *(furiously)* Tell 'em to go to--*(checks himself and continues grimly)* Tell 'em to come. I'll see'em.

JOE: Aye, aye, sir.

[He goes out.]

KEENEY: *(with a grim smile)* Here it comes, the trouble you spoke of, Mr. Slocum, and we'll make short shift of it. It's better to crush such things at the start than let them make headway.

MATE: *(worriedly)* Shall I wake up the First and Fourth, sir? We might need their help.

KEENEY: No, let them sleep. I'm well able to handle this alone, Mr. Slocum.

[There is the shuffling of footsteps from outside and five of the crew crowd into the cabin, led by JOE. All are dressed alike--sweaters, sea-boots, etc. They glance uneasily at the CAPTAIN, _twirling their fur caps in their hands.]

KEENEY: *(after a pause)* Well? Who's to speak fur ye?

JOE: *(stepping forward with an air of bravado)* I be.

KEENEY: *(eyeing him up and down coldly)* So you be. Then speak your say and be quick about it.

JOE: *(trying not to wilt before the CAPTAIN'S glance and avoiding his eyes)* The time we signed up for is done to-day.

KEENEY: *(icily)* You're tellin' me nothin' I don't know.

JOE: You ain't p'intin' fur home yit, far's we kin see.

KEENEY: No, and I ain't agoin' to till this ship is full of ile.

JOE: You can't go no further no'the with the ice afore ye.

KEENEY: The ice is breaking up.

JOE: *(after a slight pause during which the others mumble angrily to one another)* The grub we're gittin' now is rotten.

KEENEY: It's good enough fur ye. Better men than ye are have eaten worse.

[There is a chorus of angry exclamations from the crowd.]

JOE: *(encouraged by this support)* We ain'ta-goin' to work no more 'less you puts back fur home.

KEENEY: *(fiercely)* You ain't, ain't you?

JOE: No; and the law courts 'll say we was right.

KEENEY: To hell with your law courts! We're at sea now and I'm the law on this ship. *(Edging up toward the harpooner.)* And every mother's son of you what don't obey orders goes in irons.

[There are more angry exclamations from the crew. MRS. KEENEY appears in the doorway in rear and looks on with startled eyes. None of the men notices her.]

JOE: *(with bravado)* Then we're a-goin' to mutiny and take the old hooker home ourselves. Ain't we, boys?

[As he turns his head to look at the others, KEENEY'S fist shoots out to the side of his jaw. JOE goes down in a heap and lies there. MRS. KEENEY gives a shriek and hides her face in her hands. The men pull out their sheath knives and start a rush, but stop when they find themselves confronted by the revolvers of KEENEY and the MATE.]

KEENEY: *(his eyes and voice snapping)* Hold still! *(The men stand huddled together in a sullen silence. KEENEY'S voice is full of mockery.)* You've found out it ain't safe to mutiny on this ship, ain't you? And now git for'ard where ye belong, and *(he gives JOE'S body a contemptuous kick)* drag him with you. And remember, the first man of ye I see shirkin' I'll shoot dead as sure as there's a sea under us, and you can tell the rest the same. Git for'ard now! Quick! *(The men leave in cowed silence, carrying JOE with them. KEENEY turns to the MATE with a short laugh and puts his revolver back in his pocket.)* Best get up on deck, Mr. Slocum, and see to it they don't try none of their skulkin' tricks. We'll have to keep an eye peeled from now on. I know 'em.

MATE: Yes, sir.

[He goes out, right. KEENEY hears his wife's hysterical weeping and turns around in surprise--then walks slowly to her side.]

KEENEY: *(putting an arm around her shoulder--with gruff tenderness)* There, there, Annie. Don't be afeard. It's all past and gone.

MRS. KEENEY: *(shrinking away from, him)* Oh, I can't bear it! I can't bear it any longer!

KEENEY: *(gently)* Can't bear what, Annie?

MRS. KEENEY: *(hysterically)* All this horrible brutality, and these brutes of men, and this terrible ship, and this prison cell of a room, and the ice all around, and the silence.

[After this outburst she calms down and wipes her eyes with her handkerchief.]

KEENEY: *(after a pause during which he looks down at her with a puzzled frown)* Remember, I warn't hankerin' to have you come on this voyage, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY: I wanted to be with you, David, don't you see? I didn't want to wait back there in the house all alone as I've been doing these last six years since we were married--waiting, and watching, and fearing--with nothing to keep my mind occupied--not able to go back teaching school on account of being Dave Keeney's wife. I used to dream of sailing on the great, wide, glorious ocean. I wanted to be by your side in the danger and vigorous life of it all. I wanted to see you the hero they make you out to be in Homeport. And instead--*(her voice grows tremulous)* all I find is ice--and cold--and brutality!

[Her voice breaks.]

KEENEY: I warned you what it'd be, Annie. "Whalin' ain't no ladies' tea party," I says to you, "and you better stay to home where you've got all your woman's comforts." *(Shaking his head)* But you was so set on it.

MRS. KEENEY: *(wearily)* Oh, I know it isn't your fault, David. You see, I didn't believe you. I guess I was dreaming about the old Vikings in the story-books and I thought you were one of them.

KEENEY: (*protestingly*) I done my best to make it as cozy and comfortable as could be. (*MRS. KEENEY looks around her in wild scorn.*) I even sent to the city for that organ for ye, thinkin' it might be soothin' to ye to be playin' it times when they was calms and things was dull like.

MRS. KEENEY: (*wearily*) Yes, you were very kind, David. I know that. (*She goes to left and lifts the curtains from the porthole and looks out--then suddenly bursts forth.*) I won't stand it--I can't stand it--pent up by these walls like a prisoner. (*She runs over to him and throws her arms around him, weeping. He puts his arm protectingly over her shoulders.*) Take me away from here, David! If I don't get away from here, out of this terrible ship, I'll go mad! Take me home, David! I can't think any more. I feel as if the cold and the silence were crushing down on my brain. I'm afraid. Take me home!

KEENEY: (*holds her at arm's length and looks at her face anxiously*) Best go to bed, Annie. You ain't yourself. You got fever. Your eyes look so strange like. I ain't never seen you look this way before.

MRS. KEENEY: (*laughing hysterically*) It's the ice and the cold and the silence--they'd make anyone look strange.

KEENEY: (*soothingly*) In a month or two, with good luck, three at the most, I'll have her filled with ile and then we'll give her everything she'll stand and p'int for home.

MRS. KEENEY: But we can't wait for that--I can't wait. I want to get home. And the men won't wait. They want to get home. It's cruel, it's brutal for you to keep them. You must sail back. You've got no excuse. There's clear water to the south now. If you've a heart at all, you've got to turn back.

KEENEY: (*harshly*) I can't, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY: Why can't you?

KEENEY: A woman couldn't rightly understand my reason.

MRS. KEENEY: (*wildly*) Because it's a stupid, stubborn reason. Oh, I heard you talking with the second mate. You're afraid the other captains will sneer at you because you didn't come back with a full ship. You want to live up to our silly reputation even if you do have to beat and starve men and drive me mad to do it.

KEENEY: (*his jaw set stubbornly*) It ain't that, Annie. Them skippers would never dare sneer to my face. It ain't so much what anyone'd say--but--(*He hesitates, struggling to express his meaning.*) You see--I've always done it--since my first voyage as skipper. I always come back--with a full ship--and--it don't seem right not to--somehow. I been always first whalin' skipper out o' Homeport, and--Don't you see my meanin', Annie? (*He glances at her. She is not looking at him but staring dully in front of her, not hearing a word he is saying.*) Annie! (*She comes to herself with a start.*) Best turn in, Annie, there's a good woman. You ain't well.

MRS. KEENEY: (*resisting his attempts to guide her to the door in rear*) David! Won't you please turn back?

KEENEY: (*gently*) I can't, Annie--not yet awhile. You don't see my meanin'. I got to git the ile.

MRS. KEENEY: It'd be different if you needed the money, but you don't. You've got more than plenty.

KEENEY: (*impatiently*) It ain't the money I'm thinkin' of. D'you think I'm as mean as that?

MRS. KEENEY: (*dully*) No--I don't know--I can't understand--(*Intensely*) Oh, I want to be home in the old house once more and see my own kitchen again, and hear a woman's voice talking to me and be able to talk to her. Two years! It seems so long ago--as if I'd been dead and could never go back.

KEENEY: (*worried by her strange tone and the far-away look in her eyes*) Best go to bed, Annie. You ain't well.

MRS. KEENEY: (*not appearing to hear him*) I used to be lonely when you were away. I used to think Homeport was a stupid, monotonous place. Then I used to go down on the beach, especially when it was windy and the breakers were rolling in, and I'd dream of the fine free life you must be leading. (*She gives a laugh which is half a sob.*) I used to love the sea then. (*She pauses; then continues with slow intensity.*) But now--I don't ever want to see the sea again.

KEENEY: (*thinking to humor her*) 'Tis no fit place for a woman, that's sure. I was a fool to bring ye.

MRS. KEENEY: (*after a pause--passing her hand over her eyes with a gesture of pathetic weariness*) How long would it take us to reach home--if we started now?

KEENEY: (*frowning*) 'Bout two months, I reckon, Annie, with fair luck.

MRS. KEENEY: (*counts on her fingers--then murmurs with a rapt smile*) That would be August, the latter part of August, wouldn't it? It was on the twenty-fifth of August we were married, David, wasn't it?

KEENEY: (*trying to conceal the fact that her memories have moved him--gruffly*) Don't you remember?

MRS. KEENEY: (*vaguely--again passes her hand over her eyes*) My memory is leaving me--up here in the ice. It was so long ago. (*A pause--then she smiles dreamily.*) It's June now. The lilacs will be all in bloom in the front yard--and the climbing roses on the trellis to the side of the house--they're budding.

[*She suddenly covers her face with her hands and commences to sob.*]

KEENEY: (*disturbed*) Go in and rest, Annie. You're all wore out cryin' over what can't be helped.

MRS. KEENEY: (*suddenly throwing her arms around his neck and clinging to him*) You love me, don't you, David?

KEENEY: (*in amazed embarrassment at this outburst*) Love you? Why d'you ask me such a question, Annie?

MRS. KEENEY: (*shaking him--fiercely*) But you do, don't you, David? Tell me!

KEENEY: I'm your husband, Annie, and you're my wife. Could there be aught but love between us after all these years?

MRS. KEENEY: (*shaking him again--still more fiercely*) Then you do love me. Say it!

KEENEY: (*simply*) I do, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY: (*Gives a sigh of relief--her hands drop to her sides. KEENEY regards her anxiously. She passes her hand across her eyes and murmurs half to herself.*) I sometimes think if we could only have had a child. (*KEENEY turns away from her, deeply moved. She grabs his arm and turns him around to face her--intensely.*) And I've always been a good wife to you, haven't I, David?

KEENEY: (*his voice betraying his emotion*) No man ever had a better, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY: And I've never asked for much from you, have I, David? Have I?

KEENEY: You know you could have all I got the power to give ye, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY: (*wildly*) Then do this, this once, for my sake, for God's sake--take me home! It's killing me, this life--the brutality and cold and horror of it. I'm going mad. I can feel the threat in the air. I can hear the silence threatening me--day after gray day and every day the same. I can't bear it. (*Sobbing*) I'll go mad, I know I will. Take me home, David, if you love me as you say. I'm afraid. For the love of God, take me home!

[She throws her arms around him, weeping against his shoulder. His face betrays the tremendous struggle going on within him. He holds her out at arm's length, his expression softening. For a moment his shoulders sag, he becomes old, his iron spirit weakens as he looks at her tear-stained face.]

KEENEY: (*dragging out the words with an effort*) I'll do it, Annie--for your sake--if you say it's needful for ye.

MRS. KEENEY: (*with wild joy--kissing him*) God bless you for that, David!

[He turns away from her silently and walks toward the companionway. Just at that moment there is a clatter of footsteps on the stairs and the SECOND MATE enters the cabin.]

MATE: (*excitedly*) The ice is breakin' up to no'th'rd, sir. There's a clear passage through the floe, and clear water beyond, the lookout says.

[KEENEY straightens himself like a man coming out of a trance. MRS. KEENEY looks at the MATE with terrified eyes.]

KEENEY: (*dazedly--trying to collect his thoughts*) A clear passage? To no'th'rd?

MATE: Yes, sir.

KEENEY: (*his voice suddenly grim with determination*) Then get her ready and we'll drive her through.

MATE: Aye, aye, sir.

MRS. KEENEY: (*appealingly*) David!

KEENEY: (*not heeding her*) Will the men turn to willin' or must we drag 'em out?

MATE: They 'll turn to willin' enough. You put the fear o' God into 'em, sir. They're meek as lambs.

KEENEY: Then drive 'em--both watches. (*With grim determination*) They's whale t' other side o' this floe and we're going to git 'em.

MATE: Aye, aye, sir.

[He goes out hurriedly. A moment later there is the sound of scuffing feet from the deck outside and the MATE'S voice shouting orders.]

KEENEY: (*speaking aloud to himself--derisively*) And I was a-goin' home like a yaller dog!

MRS. KEENEY: (*imploringly*) David!

KEENEY: *(sternly)* Woman, you ain't a-doin' right when you meddle in men's business and weaken 'em. You can't know my feelin's. I got to prove a man to be a good husband for ye to take pride in. I got to git the ile, I tell ye.

MRS. KEENEY: *(supplicatingly)* David! Aren't you going home?

KEENEY: *(ignoring this question--commandingly)* You ain't well. Go and lay down a mite. *(He starts for the door.)* I got to git on deck.

[He goes out. She cries after him in anguish, "David!" A pause. She passes her hand across her eyes--then commences to laugh hysterically and goes to the organ. She sits down and starts to play wildly an old hymn. KEENEY reënters from the doorway to the deck and stands looking at her angrily. He comes over and grabs her roughly by the shoulder.]

KEENEY: Woman, what foolish mockin' is this? *(She laughs wildly, and he starts back from her in alarm.)* Annie! What is it? *(She doesn't answer him. KEENEY'S voice trembles.)* Don't you know me, Annie?

[He puts both hands on her shoulders and turns her around so that he can look into her eyes. She stares up at him with a stupid expression, a vague smile on her lips. He stumbles away from her, and she commences softly to play the organ again.]

KEENEY: *(swallowing hard--in a hoarse whisper, as if he had difficulty in speaking)* You said--you was agoin' mad--God!

[A long wail is heard from the deck above: "Ah bl-o-o-o-ow!" A moment later the MATE'S face appears through the skylight. He cannot see MRS. KEENEY.]

MATE: *(in great excitement)* Whales, sir--a whole school of 'em--off the starb'd quarter 'bout five mile away--big ones!

KEENEY: *(galvanized into action)* Are you lowerin' the boats?

MATE: Yes, sir.

KEENEY: *(with grim decision)* I'm a-comin' with ye.

MATE: Aye, aye, sir. *(Jubilantly)* You'll git the ile now right enough, sir.

[His head is withdrawn and he can be heard shouting orders.]

KEENEY: *(turning to his wife)* Annie! Did you hear him? I'll git the ile. *(She doesn't answer or seem to know he is there. He gives a hard laugh, which is almost a groan.)* I know you're foolin' me, Annie. You ain't out of your mind--*(anxiously)* be you? I'll git the ile now right enough--jest a little while longer, Annie--then we'll turn hom'ard. I can't turn back now, you see that, don't ye? I've got to git the ile. *(In sudden terror)* Answer me! You ain't mad, be you?

[She keeps on playing the organ, but makes no reply. The MATE'S face appears again through the skylight.]

MATE: All ready, sir.

[KEENEY turns his back on his wife and strides to the doorway, where he stands for a moment and looks back at her in anguish, fighting to control his feelings.]

MATE: Comin', sir?

KEENEY: *(his face suddenly grown hard with determination)* Aye.

[He turns abruptly and goes out. MRS. KEENEY does not appear to notice his departure. Her whole attention seems centred in the organ. She sits with half-closed eyes, her body swaying a little from side to side to the rhythm of the hymn. Her fingers move faster and faster and she is playing wildly and discordantly as the Curtain falls.]

END of PLAY

THE SCULPTOR'S FUNERAL

by: Willa Cather

adapted for the stage by Walter Wykes

CHARACTERS

ARMY MAN
BANKER PHELPS
BANKER ELDER
SHERIFF
CATTLEMAN
COAL-AND-LUMBER DEALER
RAILROAD MAN
BOSTON MAN
MINISTER
LAWYER
OTHER TOWNSPEOPLE

TIME 1905

[The parlor of a naked, weather-beaten frame house. A group of local townspeople have gathered to pay respects to one of their own—a man who now lies in the coffin in the center of the room. A golden palm leaf lies across the black cover of the coffin. The only person who stands out in this crowd is the BOSTON MAN. In his city clothes, he sits a little apart from the others—outside the circle. Silence.]

ARMY MAN: S'pose there'll be a will, Phelps?

[BANKER PHELPS laughs disagreeably and begins trimming his nails with a pearl-handled pocketknife.]

BANKER PHELPS: There'll scarcely be any need for one, will there?

ARMY MAN: Why, the ole man says Harve's done right well lately.

BANKER ELDER: I reckon he means by that Harve ain't asked him to mortgage any more farms lately so he could go on with his education.

ARMY MAN: Seems like my mind don't reach back to a time when Harve wasn't bein' edycated.

[There is a general chuckle. The BOSTON MAN seems surprised and alarmed by this. The MINISTER takes out his handkerchief and blows his nose loudly. BANKER PHELPS closes his knife with a snap.]

BANKER PHELPS: It's too bad the old man's sons didn't turn out better.

SHERIFF: Never did hang together—did they?

BANKER PHELPS: He spent money enough on Harve to stock a dozen cattle farms and he might as well have poured it into Sand Creek.

BANKER ELDER: If Harve had stayed home, helped nurse what little they had—

BANKER PHELPS: —gone into stock on the old man's bottom farm, they might all have been well fixed. But the old man had to trust everything to tenants.

SHERIFF: He was cheated right and left, too.

CATTLEMAN: Harve never could have handled stock none.

ARMY MAN: He didn't have it in him to be sharp.

CATTLEMAN: You remember when he bought Sander's mules for eight-year-olds, when everybody in town knew that Sander's father-in-law give 'em to his wife for a wedding present eighteen years before, an' they was full-grown mules then.

[Again everyone chuckles, and the ARMY MAN rubs his knees with a spasm of childish delight. The LAWYER sits quietly, his head down.]

COAL-AND-LUMBER DEALER: Harve never was much account for anything practical.

RAILROAD MAN: He shore was never fond of work.

COAL-AND-LUMBER DEALER: I mind the last time he was home; the day he left, when the old man was out to the barn helpin' his hand hitch up to take Harve to the train, and Cal Moots was patchin' up the fence, Harve, he come out on the step and sings out, in his ladylike voice: "Cal Moots, Cal Moots! please come cord my trunk."

RAILROAD MAN: That's Harve for you.

ARMY MAN: I kin hear him howlin' yet when he was a big feller in long pants and his mother used to whale him with a rawhide in the barn for lettin' the cows git foundered in the cornfield when he was drivin' 'em home from pasture.

CATTLEMAN: He killed a cow of mine that-a-way onc't—a pure Jersey and the best milker I had, an' the ole man had to put up for her. Harve, he was watchin' the sun set acros't the marshes when the animal got away; he argued that sunset was oncommon fine.

[Laughter.]

BOSTON MAN: *[Standing.]* I'm sorry, I ... I know I don't belong here ... I mean, I'm not one of you ... I don't know anything about your town, and I don't mean to speak out of turn, but ... I feel obligated to ask ... is it possible that ... that you don't *realize* ... that you aren't *aware* ... that the palm on that coffin means nothing to you? *[He looks around incredulous.]* Harvey Merrick was a great sculptor. I was one of his students. He was highly respected in the world of art.

[Pause.]

BANKER PHELPS: Where the old man made his mistake was in sending the boy East to school. That was where he got his head full of traipsing to Paris and all such folly.

BOSTON MAN: But ... his work is housed in some of the finest museums in Europe .

BANKER ELDER: What Harve needed, of all people, was a course in some first-class Kansas City business college.

BOSTON MAN: *Business college?* I ... I don't think you understand—

BANKER PHELPS: Oh, we understand well enough.

BOSTON MAN: But—

CATTLEMAN: Forty's young for a Merrick to cash in; they usually hang on pretty well.

SHERIFF: Probably he helped it along with whisky.

BOSTON MAN: He was no drunkard!

MINISTER: His mother's people were not long-lived, and Harvey never had a robust constitution.

CATTLEMAN: Nevertheless, there is no disputin' that Harve frequently looked upon the wine when it was red, also variegated, and it shore made an oncommon fool of him.

[Again, there is general laughter. Suddenly, the LAWYER stands and smashes his fist into the parlor door. His face has grown red and is convulsed with anger. The others start involuntarily.]

LAWYER: I've been with you gentlemen before, when you've sat by the coffins of boys born and raised in this town; and, if I remember rightly, you were never any too well satisfied when you checked them up. What's the matter, anyhow? Why is it that reputable young men are as scarce as millionaires in Sand City? It might almost seem to a stranger that there was some way something the matter with your progressive town. Why did Ruben Sayer, the brightest young lawyer you ever turned out, after he had come home from the university as straight as a die, take to drinking and forge a check and shoot himself? Why did Bill Merrit's son die of the shakes in a saloon in Omaha? Why was Mr. Thomas's son, here, shot in a gambling house? Why did young Adams burn his mill to beat the insurance companies and go to the pen? I'll tell you why. Because you drummed nothing but money and knavery into their ears from the time they wore knickerbockers; because you carped away at them as you've been carping here tonight, holding our friends Phelps and Elder up for models, as our grandfathers held up George Washington and John Adams. But the boys, worse luck, were young and raw at the business you put them to; and how could they match coppers with such artists as Phelps and Elder? You wanted them to be successful rascals; they were only unsuccessful ones—that's all the difference. There was only one boy ever raised in this borderland between ruffianism and civilization who didn't come to grief, and you hated Harvey Merrick more for winning out than you hated all the other boys who got under the wheels. Lord, Lord, how you did hate him! Phelps, here, is fond of saying that he could buy and sell us all out any time he's a mind to; but he knew Harve wouldn't have given a tinker's damn for his bank and all his cattle farms put together; and a lack of appreciation, that way, goes hard with Phelps. Old Nimrod, here, thinks Harve drank too much; and this from such as Nimrod and me! Brother Elder says Harve was too free with the old man's money—fell short in filial consideration, maybe. Well, we can all remember the very tone in which brother Elder swore his own father was a liar, in the county court; and we all know that the old man came out of that partnership with his son as bare as a sheared lamb. But maybe I'm getting personal, and I'd better be driving ahead at what I want to say. Harvey Merrick and I went to school together, back East. We were dead in earnest, and we wanted you all to be proud of us some day. We meant to be great men. Even I, and I haven't lost my sense of humor, gentlemen, I meant to be a great man. I came back here to practice, and I found you didn't in the least want me to be a great man. You wanted me to be a shrewd lawyer—oh, yes! Our veteran here wanted me to get him an increase of pension, because he had dyspepsia; Phelps wanted a new county survey that would put the widow Wilson's little bottom farm inside his south line; Elder wanted to lend money at five percent a month and get it collected; old Stark here wanted to wheedle old women up in Vermont into investing their annuities in real estate mortgages that aren't worth the paper they're written on. Oh, you needed me hard enough, and you'll go on needing me; and that's why I'm not afraid to plug the truth home to you this once. Well, I came back here and became the damned shyster you wanted me to be. You pretend to have some sort of respect for me; and yet you'll stand up and throw mud at Harvey Merrick, whose soul you couldn't dirty and whose hands you couldn't tie. Oh, you're a discriminating lot of Christians! There have been times when the sight of Harvey's name in some Eastern paper has made me hang my head like a whipped dog; and, again, times when I liked to think of him off there in the world, away from all this hog wallow, doing his great work and climbing the big, clean upgrade he'd set for himself. And we? Now that we've fought and lied and sweated and stolen, and hated as only the disappointed strugglers in a bitter, dead little Western town know how to do, what have we got to show for it? Harvey Merrick wouldn't have given one sunset over your marshes for all you've got put together, and you know it. It's not for me to say why, in the inscrutable wisdom of God, a genius should ever

have been called from this place of hatred and bitter waters; but I want this Boston man to know that the drivel he's been hearing here tonight is the only tribute any truly great man could ever have from such a lot of sick, side-tracked, burnt-dog, land-poor sharks as the here-present financiers of Sand City—upon which town may God have mercy!

[The LAWYER thrusts his hand out to the BOSTON MAN as he passes him—then catches up his overcoat and disappears into the hallway. The BOSTON MAN stands there uncertainly for a moment.]

BOSTON MAN: The ... the day he died ... after the congestion of both lungs had shut off any possibility of recovery ... Mr. Merrick asked me to make arrangements—to have his body sent home. “It’s not a pleasant place to be lying while the world is moving and doing and bettering,” he said, “but it rather seems as though we ought to go back to the place we came from in the end.” He told me you would come in for a look at him and that after you’d had your say he wouldn’t have much to fear from the judgment of God. I didn’t understand what he meant at the time—I couldn’t comprehend it. Unfortunately, I see that he was right.

[Exit BOSTON MAN. Silence.]

ARMY MAN: It's too bad he didn't belong to some lodge or other. I like an order funeral myself. They seem more appropriate for people of some reputation.

[Lights slowly fade.]

* * *

“Worst Episode Ever” script

After Comic Book Guy suffers a near-fatal heart attack, Bart and Milhouse take over running the Android's Dungeon, while Homer tries to help Comic Book Guy to be friendly & outgoing.

Episode [CABF08](#), Season 12

First aired Feb 04, 2001

Written by Larry Doyle

Directed by Matthew Nastuk

ACT ONE

The Simpsons family are in the kitchen, gathered for breakfast.

BART

Mmm, good pancakes, Mom!

MARGE

Oh, thank you, honey! They come in a squeeze bottle now.

Marge squeezes the bottle, and it makes a flatulent noise.

MARGE

Woo! Oh, I'd better put the silencer on.

She screws on the silencer, and the bottle now makes a 'zapping' noise.

LISA

You know what would be good with these, is some Ms. Butterworth.

She opens the fridge and takes out the bottle, but then notices something at the back. She pulls out an old box.

LISA

Eww! How long has this baking soda been in here?

MARGE

I don't know, it came with the house.

BART

Hey Dad, bet you five bucks you can't eat the whole box.

HOMER

Five? Why don't we make it fifty?

He slaps a fifty dollar bill on the table.

HOMER

Ho ho, you're going to regret this!

LISA

I'll call poison control. *(She dials the phone.)* Fran, it's me. Just a heads-up.

HOMER

Wow, the absorbed odors of a million meals. *(He eats a spoonful of it.)* So many flavors! All those tasty memories flooding back! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

Homer has visions of several different foods, set to sound bites of American history. First we hear "If it doesn't fit, you must acquit" spoken by Johnny Cochran, with a hamburger and fries. Next is part of Nixon's resignation speech, "Therefore, I shall resign the presidency" with a pie. Finally, a meatball sandwich accompanies Neil Armstrong's moon landing, "That's one small

step for man, one giant leap for mankind." We cut back to the kitchen, where Homer's head rests on the table with foam coming out of his mouth and nostrils.

LISA

Uh-oh, Dad's having another antacid trip.

BART

And I won fifty bucks!

He takes the money and leaves.

Bart is walking down the street, with an excited Milhouse dancing in circles around him.

MILHOUSE

Can I see the fifty Bart? Can I? Huh?

BART

Milhouse, my friend, you and I are going on a spending spree.

MILHOUSE

My doctor says I'm not supposed to go on sprees.

BART

What about jags?

MILHOUSE

Jags are fine.

BART

Wonderful!

The boys enter the Kwik-E-Mart. Bart walks up to the counter, holding out the bill and coughing.

APU

(gasps) A fifty dollar bill! *(He runs to the door and locks it.)* Gentlemen. Let us shop.

Apu and the boys walk down an aisle.

APU

Our wide variety of gum comes in both stick and ball.

BART

I'm not really about gum, but I like the whole chewing thing.

APU

Are you averse to crispy centers, sir?

BART
Not at all.

APU
Then we have much to discuss.

The boys sit outside the store.

BART
(groaning) Oh, too much raw bacon.

MILHOUSE
Come on, Bart, we can't stop spending now. There's one thing I've always wanted to do.

Cut to a Laundromat, where Bart and Milhouse stand in their underwear.

MILHOUSE
My mom doesn't believe in fabric softener - but she's not around! Hahaha!

BART
I'm picking the next thing.

Back on the street again.

BART
Looks like we're down to our last ten bucks. Hello!

He sees a Radioactive Man comic, #1000 for sale. They go inside. Bart places the bill on the counter.

BART
Radioactive Man number one thousand, please.

COMIC BOOK GUY
Ten dollars? I laugh at you. Please to note that this is no ordinary comic book, it is in perma-mint condition. If you spill soda on it, the drops fly off harmlessly onto lesser comics.

Comic Book Guy demonstrates. His drink flies off onto a Bongo comic book. The boys gasp.

COMIC BOOK GUY
Yes, you are quite right to gasp. Also note the price - twenty five dollars.

BART
(to Milhouse) We had to buy lunch for that homeless guy.

Mrs. Prince walks into the store, holding a box of stuff.

MRS. PRINCE

While my son's at Fat Camp, I cleaned out his room. How much will you give me for this?

COMIC BOOK GUY

Probably nothing, but let us see... oh! A handwritten script for Star Wars by George Lucas? Princess Leia's anti-jiggle breast tape? Film reel labelled, "Alternate ending - Luke's father is Chewbacca"?! Oh!! Oh!! (*calmly*) I'll give you five dollars for the box.

MRS. PRINCE

Sold!

BART

Don't do it, lady, that stuff's worth thousands!

MILHOUSE

Yeah, he's ripping you off!

MRS. PRINCE

Well, if this stuff is valuable, then back to the leaky basement it goes. Hmph!

She walks out. Comic Book Guy holds up a camera to the boys.

COMIC BOOK GUY

Smile, please.

The boys smile, and Comic Book Guy takes a picture, and places it under a "Banned For Life" sign, next to Sideshow Bob, Nelson, and Matt Groening.

COMIC BOOK GUY

Thank you.

Back at home, Homer comforts Bart.

HOMER

Son, I know it hurts. I still remember my first lifetime banning.

We see Homer's recollection. He is at a Gallagher show. Gallagher is about to hit a melon on a stool, but someone takes it at the last minute, and the mallet rebounds and hits him in the face.

GALLAGHER

Ow! Hey, where's my melon?

We see Homer is eating it. The scene then cuts to Homer being thrown out.

GALLAGHER

...and you are banned for life from all of my performances, and TV specials!

HOMER

But I can still see your movies, right?

Gallagher growls angrily and slams the door. Homer starts crying, and we dissolve back into the present, where Homer is also crying.

HOMER

(he sniffs) And I never saw Gallagher again.

Lisa is reading the "Daily Set-Up"

LISA

Ooh, it says here that special effects wiz Tom Savini is going to be appearing at the comic book store tonight.

HOMER

Tom Savini?

MARGE

Yes. It says here he's the movie magician behind Creepshow, Friday The 13th, and Dawn Of The Dead.

BART

Oh, I can't believe I'm gonna miss that.

HOMER

Don't worry your spiky little head. I've got it all planned out.

BART

How could you have it planned out, you just heard about the problem.

HOMER

You're right! Give me a minute. Hmm...

It is the evening. A very tall Homer walks along the sidewalk. His long coat opens to reveal that he is standing on Bart's shoulders, who is in turn standing on Milhouse's shoulders.

MILHOUSE

Mr. Simpson, it hurts!

BART

Yeah, and why did we have to do this all the way from home?

HOMER

For once in my life, I'm tall! Don't take that away from me!

He closes his coat as he approaches Comic Book Guy.

HOMER

(in a posh voice) Hello, I'm Shaquille O'Neal. Let us in, please.

Comic Book Guy yanks off the long coat to reveal Bart and Milhouse.

COMIC BOOK GUY

You two are not welcome!

Homer gets off their shoulders.

HOMER

I'm sorry, son.

COMIC BOOK GUY

(giving Homer a wad of cash) Thanks for the tip-off.

HOMER

No problem.

Inside the store, Comic Book Guy introduces Tom Savini.

COMIC BOOK GUY

Appearing exclusively here at the Android's Dungeon - take that, Monsieurs Barnes and Noble - the king of splatter, Tom Savini.

The audience applauds.

TOM SAVINI

Good evening. *(he burps)* Sorry, I had a really big dinner.

HOMER

Woo! Dinner!

TOM SAVINI

But I'm sure one more French fry wouldn't hurt.

He eats the French fry, swells up like a balloon, and his belly explodes, covering the audience with 'blood and guts'. The audience applauds. Outside, Bart and Milhouse try to see through the window.

MILHOUSE

Oh, we missed the "Gut-buster".

BART

Yeah, that should be us covered with blood.

Back in the store, Savini is sitting down, with his head on a table next to him.

TOM SAVINI

Sure, computer technology is here to stay, but there'll always be a place for the practical special effects wizard.

Savini puts his head back on. The audience applaud, except for Comic Book Guy.

HOMER

I love the theatre.

COMIC BOOK GUY

Oh, please. I saw Paul Lynde do that same hackneyed trick on Bewitched. *(He picks up a cookie and eats it.)* Try to explode this out of my belly.

TOM SAVINI

That's not a cookie, it's a time-release blood pack.

Blood pours out of Comic Book Guy's mouth. He wipes it off on his shirt.

TOM SAVINI

You, sir, are a perfect patsy. Let me shake your hand.

Savini shakes his hand. The hand comes off.

COMIC BOOK GUY

(not impressed) For the gag, I will give a D plus. As for the workmanship on the hand...

Suddenly, the hand comes to life. It runs up his arm and down his back, and gives him a wedgie.

COMIC BOOK GUY

Ooh! Ooh! That's not right!

The audience laugh.

COMIC BOOK GUY

You mocking me!? Oh, that is rich!

The hand pulls him off stage, and he crashes into a stand of wizard hats. He emerges with two hats stuck to his chest as if he has breasts. The audience laugh even harder.

COMIC BOOK GUY

Stop your laughing! You're all banned! Banned, I tell you!

He reaches out, but stops to clutch his chest.

COMIC BOOK GUY

Ooh! Ooh! Breath... short! Left arm... numb! Can't go on... describing symptoms much longer!

He collapses. Tom Savini rushes over and puts his ear to his chest.

TOM SAVINI

I think he's had a heart attack!

The audience gasp.

ACT TWO

Comic Book Guy is in Springfield General Hospital. Dr. Hibbert, Homer, Bart and Milhouse are at his bedside.

DR. HIBBERT

Young man, you've had what we call a "cardiac episode."

COMIC BOOK GUY

Worst episode ever.

DR. HIBBERT

Oh, not even close. If these boys hadn't called 911, I'd be wearing that watch right now. *(He chuckles)* I'm just kidding. But you would be dead.

COMIC BOOK GUY

You saved my life?

BART

Yeah, after you were so mean to us.

COMIC BOOK GUY

Oh. So now we're even.

DR. HIBBERT

My prognosis... or is it diagnosis? Whichever. You need to avoid stress. What kind of work do you do?

COMIC BOOK GUY

I run a comic book store.

DR. HIBBERT

Oh dear Lord! We call that profession "The Widow-maker" - or we would, if any of the proprietors were married. You should close down the store for a while.

COMIC BOOK GUY

But I'd lose all my business to Frodo's of Shelbyville!

DR. HIBBERT

Well, get a friend to run it for you. You do have friends, don't you?

COMIC BOOK GUY

Well, the Super Friends.

DR. HIBBERT

You should get some friends who aren't printed on paper.

COMIC BOOK GUY

What, you mean action figures?

MILHOUSE

We'll run the store for you!

COMIC BOOK GUY

Two ten-year-olds running my store? Wh-what is this, Bizzaro-World?

DR. HIBBERT

Calm down! Don't make me put a dog heart in there!

The boys end up running the store. They turn up the next day.

MILHOUSE

Can you believe it, Bart? We're actually running a comic book store!

BART

(looking at the "Banned for Life" section) Looks like our lifetime ban just expired.

He takes his photo off the wall, but an alarm sounds. He quickly puts it back.

BART

Sorry, sorry!

MILHOUSE

Okay, here's Comic Book Guy's instructions: A carton of malted-milk balls, one box confectioners' sugar, a can of chocolate frosting...

BART

That's just his shopping list.

MILHOUSE

No, it's his instructions.

BART

Well, we're going to make a few changes around here. This store's going to be run by kids, for kids.

MILHOUSE

You said it, partner.

The next day. A banner is hung up outside the store, reading "Under New Management." Cut to inside the store, where Bart chats up the customers.

BART

Ah nice to see ya. How about that Bloodzilla? (*laughing*) Vampire dinosaur? You can't make that stuff up.

Nelson reads a comic.

NELSON

"The Death of Sad Sack". This better not be another fake-out.

Ralph tries to enter the adult section.

BART

Uh-uh. You gotta be forty inches tall for the adult section.

RALPH

Please?

BART

Okay, get on your tippy-toes.

He does as Bart says, and goes in.

RALPH

Everybody's hugging!

MILHOUSE

Hey, Bart. I finished organizing the stock room.

BART

Mark down the Poochie crap, and then un-stick all the Supergirls.

MILHOUSE

You know, if we're partners, maybe you should do some of the work.

BART

Less barking, more marking.

MILHOUSE

Yes sir, partner!

As he begins, Bart can be seen walking home in the window, with a coat and hat on.

Homer is outside Moe's with Comic Book Guy.

HOMER

Now, when you've got a bum ticker like we do, you need all the friends you can get. And Moe's is the friendliest place in the rum district.

He opens the door to reveal Moe pointing a shotgun at one of the bar flies.

MOE

Get out! And take your Sacajawea dollars with you! I'll give you till three. One...

He pulls the trigger. He notices Homer and Comic Book Guy standing in the doorway.

MOE

Hey Homer, who's the manatee?

The bar flies laugh.

HOMER

Aw, be nice Moe, This guy just got out of the hospital.

MOE

Oh, sorry. Lemme buy ya a drink.

COMIC BOOK GUY

Very well. I will have a shot of cranberry schnapps. *(He points to bottles on the shelf.)*

MOE

Uh, these, they're just painted on there. Your choices are beer and egg soakings.

COMIC BOOK GUY

I'll pass. Beer is the nectar of the nitwit.

CARL

Hey, you knockin' beer?

LENNY

Nobody badmouths Duff!

He tries to smash the end off a bottle, but it completely disintegrates.

LENNY

Aw, piece of crap.

HOMER

Come on! You're here to make friends.

COMIC BOOK GUY

Oh, please. If I wanted to listen to mindless droning, I'd... befriend an air conditioner.

MOE

Now he's ragging on air conditioners!

CARL

Hey, they keep us cool in the summer, pal!

LENNY

Get him!

Moe, Lenny and Carl throw him out the door. He slides into the gutter.

MOE

And stay out!

COMIC BOOK GUY

Is there a word in Klingon for loneliness? *(looks in a pocket book)* Ah, yes: Gardachk!

Lisa visits The Androids Dungeon. Milhouse is behind the counter.

LISA

Milhouse, I'm impressed. The store is so busy, you and Bart are great businessmen.

MILHOUSE

Well, I'm really the brains. Bart's just the eye-candy.

A man walks into the store.

SALESMAN

Hi. Derek Reynolds, Plan Nine Comics. Is the manager here?

MILHOUSE

I'm kinda the co-manager.

Milhouse imagines himself in a film-noir, with Lisa as the femme-fatale character.

LISA

Tough break toots. I need a man who answers to noone. A full manager.

MILHOUSE

Achie-machie!

The vision dissolves back to reality.

MILHOUSE

I can help you sir. And I answer no no-one.

He winks at Lisa, who doesn't understand.

SALESMAN

Well then, you'll want to stock up on our new superhero.

MILHOUSE

Would you say he's the ultimate superhero?

SALESMAN

Oh, very ultimate indeed. Point your peepers... *(he pulls a comic out of his briefcase)* at Biclops!

MILHOUSE

(gasp) A superhero with glasses!

SALESMAN

Yeah, thick glasses... kinda like yours. So how many copies can I put you down for? Five hundred? Six hundred?

MILHOUSE

Six hundred sounds good.

SALESMAN

Oh, too bad, there's a price break at a thousand.

MILHOUSE

Oh, man!

Milhouse thinks, looking at a photo of Bart frowning on the counter. Finally, he puts it face down on the counter.

MILHOUSE

I'll take two thousand!

Comic Book Guy is standing at the door to a classroom, about to enroll in a "How To Make Friends" class.

COMIC BOOK GUY

Human contact... the final frontier.

He reaches out for the handle, when Agnes Skinner pushes past him.

AGNES

Out of the way, tubby!

COMIC BOOK GUY

Oh, pardon me, Oldie Hawn.

AGNES

Why, you ill-mannered sack of crap!

COMIC BOOK GUY

Oh, goody. Now I know whatever happened to Baby Jane.

AGNES

You are the rudest man who ever... *(suggestively)* bought me dinner.

COMIC BOOK GUY

Correction! I do not believe I have ever bought you... *(realizes)* Oh.

They both smile at each other.

Kearney walks into the store.

MILHOUSE

So, how many issues of Biclops would you like?

KEARNEY

Biclops? Who's his girlfriend, Lois Lane?

MILHOUSE

He's kinda afraid of girls.

Kearney tries to hit him over the head with the comic, but it crumples.

KEARNEY

Aw, it doesn't even smack good.

He leaves, and Bart enters.

BART

How could you spend all of our money on a comic book published by Lenscrafters? We'll never sell these. Birds won't even use them in their nests.

A bird flies into the store carrying an issue of the comic. It scratches it to pieces and flies off.

MILHOUSE

Okay, so I made one bad decision.

BART

Oh, It's my fault for leaving you in charge. Sometimes I forget how young you are.

MILHOUSE

I'm only three months younger than you.

BART

Oh look, you're getting cranky - you haven't had your juice.

MILHOUSE

Well, my straw broke off in the carton... that's not the point! We're supposed to be partners, and you're pushing me around, like a play-school corn-popper.

BART

(sniggers) It's a vacuum cleaner, Milhouse.

MILHOUSE

Whatever! I demand respect! I have feelings! I'm a human boy, just like you!!

BART

Shhh. Use your indoor voice.

MILHOUSE

Okay, that's it!

He steps back and removes his glasses. Realizing he cannot see anything, he puts them back on, and lunges at Bart. The scene freezes as a frame from a comic book. Milhouse is in the air, with a speech bubble saying "AIEEEE!" Bart is looking to the side, with a smaller bubble saying "SIGH..." Both of them are drawn with muscles.

ACT THREE

The scene continues. The frame from the comic book unfreezes, and Milhouse kicks Bart into a shelf on the other side of the store. Bart picks up a Transformer robot toy, and transforms it into an axe.

BART

On guard!

Milhouse also picks up a Transformer toy. However, this one transforms into... a watering can.

MILHOUSE

Oh...

The boys begin fighting. Soon, Milhouse has Bart cornered.

MILHOUSE

Eat watering can, partner!

Just as he swings his weapon, they both fall through a poster on the wall, down a flight of stairs, into a secret room, filled with video tapes. There is a chair in the middle of the room, and a television and VCR on one wall, amongst the shelves.

BART
Whoa!

MILHOUSE
Comic Book Guy's secret stash!

BART
Look at all these bootleg videos! (*reading the labels*) "Alien Autopsy", "Illegal Alien Autopsy", "Godfather III - Good version".

MILHOUSE
He's got the tape of Kent Brockman picking his nose. (*he puts the tape into the VCR*) Look! He's picking his nose!

Comic Book Guy is at Principal Skinner's house, waiting for Agnes.

AGNES
(*from upstairs*) I'll be right down! 'm just putting on my witch-hazel. Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow!

COMIC BOOK GUY
(*to Skinner*) So... your mother tells me you go to Springfield Elementary.

SKINNER
Exactly what is your interest in my mother?

COMIC BOOK GUY
She makes me laugh.

AGNES
Here I come!

She slides down the banister.

SKINNER
Good lord mother! I can see your... (*covering his mouth*) figure.

AGNES
Oh, you see more when you do my daily mole check.

SKINNER
(*aside, to Agnes*) What I do for my allowance money is (*indicating Comic Book Guy*) nobody's business.

AGNES

He's not nobody. He might even be your new daddy.

Agnes and Comic Book Guy walk out, laughing. Skinner is left blubbering.

Bart and Milhouse settle down for more bootleg video viewing.

MILHOUSE

"Police Informant Tape"? These are never supposed to leave the station!

The tape shows Ned Flanders sitting at in an interrogation room with Chief Wiggum.

FLANDERS

I really hate to be a snitch.

WIGGUM

Don't worry. Your yellow-bellied ratting will be held in the strictest of confidence.

FLANDERS

Well, in that case, my neighbor Homer released a radioactive ape into my house. It's taken over the whole top floor!

BART

(explaining to Milhouse) It wasn't Dad's fault, the ape tricked him. What's next?

MILHOUSE

"Mr. Rogers" drunk.

He put the tape in. Mr. Rogers' voice is heard.

MR. ROGERS

(slurring his speech) What do you mean I can't take of my sweater? I'm hot!

MILHOUSE

You know, I'll bet kids would pay to see this stuff. We could have a midnight screening right here is the store.

BART

(gasps) That's actually a great idea, Milhouse.

MILHOUSE

Really? Well, I was due.

BART

I'll say... partner.

Homer and Marge visit the Squidport.

MARGE

So many restaurants.

HOMER

Oh, I can't decide! I throw myself upon the mercy of the food court!

MARGE

(approaching one) Um, I guess I'll have the Chicken Tandoori.

HOMER

(at a different stall) And I'll have the Beef Wellington.

We see that underneath the stalls, a man puts the same "All-Purpose Meat" onto different ramps, serving each restaurant. Back up top, Homer and Marge meet Comic Book Guy and Agnes.

MARGE

Oh, look at you two. You look so "couple-y"

COMIC BOOK GUY

Yes, well we're a perfect match. Her sneer just lights up my day.

AGNES

And we're always finishing each other's insults.

Their date is played out to "Puppy Love" by Paul Anka. Comic Book Guy and Agnes take a walk, destroying fun of children wherever they go. Comic Book Guy turns off an open fire hydrant in which kids are playing, and skims a stone over a lake, sinking a boy's toy boat. They then sit looking at the sunset.

AGNES

Sunsets. Thank God there's only one of these a day.

COMIC BOOK GUY

Could it be any more orange?

A banner outside The Androids Dungeon reads "Forbidden Film Festival - \$5". Inside, dozens of kids gather for the screening.

BART

I must warn you that when this next tape starts, it will not stop... because that button is broken.

MILHOUSE

Let's watch.

The video is a black and white defense briefing. A general is sat at a desk.

GENERAL

If you're watching this tape, you are the President of the United States. Hello, sir, or ma'am. Hopefully sir.

BART

Got that right!

He high-fives Milhouse. On the tape, the general walks over to a map of Springfield.

GENERAL

Springfield has been classified "NWB," for "Nuclear Whipping Bhoy." In the first moments of a nuclear war, Springfield will be bombed at will by all friendly nations to calibrate their missiles. *(the kids cheer)* Now for total security, I will terminate the cameraman.

He pulls out a pistol, and shoots the cameraman.

CAMERAMAN

Thanks a lot, Steve!

He falls off camera. The kids cheer, but not for long. Suddenly, the police enter the room through the poster.

WIGGUM

All right, this is a raid!

Several kids try to dive out of the room by running into posters on the wall, but just hit their heads.

WIGGUM

Well, well, well! This place has got more pirated tapes than a...

LOU

A Chinese K-Mart?

WIGGUM

Well, that'll have to do. Are these yours, son?

MILHOUSE

No sir. We're just exhibiting them for profit without permission.

WIGGUM

Fair enough. But the owner is in more hot water than...

LOU

A Japanese tea bag?

WIGGUM

Why don't you lay off the Asians, Lou?

Comic Book Guy and Agnes make love in his apartment.

COMIC BOOK GUY

Well, you've changed me, Agnes. Maybe there is room in my store for romance comics.

AGNES

Nobody will buy those. Your store smells. Now kiss me, funny face.

The police break down the door.

WIGGUM

All right... oh! Dear God! Cover your eyes boys!

Eddie turns away and throws up. Lou comforts him.

LOU

It's okay, man. It doesn't affect you. You're not human.

WIGGUM

Comic Book Guy, you're under arrest for the possession of illegal videos. *(covering his eyes)* But we'll reduce your sentence if you put your pants on - fast! God!

LOU

Come on, Romeo.

COMIC BOOK GUY

They can't lock me up for long, Agnes. Will you wait for me?

AGNES

Are you crazy? My bones are half dust!

The Androids Dungeon is cordoned off. Bart and Milhouse walk down the street.

MILHOUSE

Well, we may not have the store, but at least we're friends again.

BART

Yup. And, we haven't been to school in days and days and days.

MILHOUSE

Oh well, looks like everything's back to normal.

Just then, Flanders' car passes them. Ned is driving, with the radioactive ape in the passenger's seat. The ape smacks him.

FLANDERS

Look, if you want me to turn, just point. *(the ape smacks him again)* Ow! It's one way! *(another smack)* Ow! Now what was that for? *(smack)* Ow! *(smack)* Ow! *(smack)* Ow!

Fade to credits.

“Homer's Enemy” script

A new employee at the power plant, Frank Grimes, takes a dislike to Homer's laziness and ineptitude, which turns to hate when he sees that Homer is more of a success than he is.

Episode [4F19](#), Season 8

First aired May 04, 1997

Written by John Swartzwelder

Directed by Jim Reardon

ACT ONE

Kent Brockman delivers the news.

KENT

(chuckling) ...which if true, means death for us all. And now, "Kent's People!" Tonight's inspiring story is about Frank Grimes, a thirty-five-year-old Springfieldianite who's earned everything the hard way, but never let adversity get him down.

We see a young boy in the back seat of a car.

KENT

Abandoned by his parents at age four, Frank never got to go to school.

In fact, Grimes is not in the car, he is stood behind as the car drives off. More pictures accompany the story.

KENT

He spent his childhood years as a delivery boy, delivering toys to more fortunate children. Then, on his eighteenth birthday, he was blown up in a silo explosion.

We see a Grimes running into a silo, which then explodes. Cut to Grimes in hospital, bandaged from head to toe.

KENT

During his long recuperation he taught himself to hear and feel pain again. As the years passed, he used his few leisure moments each day to study science by mail. And, last week, Frank Grimes, the man who had to struggle for everything he ever got, received his correspondence school diploma in nuclear physics -- with a minor in determination.

An eagle tries to take the diploma from Grimes, but he fights it off. We see Mr. Burns is watching the show.

BURNS

That's the kind of man I need on my team, Smithers. A real scrapper. A self-made man, like me. Bring this Grimes fellow to me. I want to make him my Executive Vice President.

SMITHERS

Yes, Sir.

The next day, Burns watches television again. Smithers brings in Frank Grimes.

BURNS

Smithers, I've just seen the most heroic dog on television. He pulled a toddler from the path of a speeding car, then pushed a criminal in front of it. Find this dog. I want to make him my Executive Vice President.

SMITHERS

Uh, yes sir. In the meantime, here's Frank Grimes. *(Burns stares blankly.)* The self-made man?

BURNS

What? Oh, yes, that fellow. Mmm, put him somewhere out of the way, and find that dog!

SMITHERS

Yes sir.

At his workstation, Homer is spinning around in his swivel chair. Lenny and Carl enter.

HOMER

Chair goes round, chair goes round.

LENNY

Hey Homie, you busy?

HOMER

Yes.

CARL

There's a new guy at the plant. Uh, maybe we oughta say hi to him.

HOMER

Oh, I don't know. I'm kinda dizzy. I should probably go home sick.

In his office, Grimes arranges his belongings. Homer, Lenny, and Carl press their faces against the office window, then walk in.

CARL

You new?

GRIMES

Yes. My name is Frank Grimes.

LENNY

I'm Lenny. This is Carl and Homer. I'm Lenny.

GRIMES

How do you do.

Homer picks up one of Grimes' pencils, spilling the rest of them on the desk.

HOMER

Wow, you've got pencils with your name on them, just like a pencil company executive. I'd give anything for one of these.

GRIMES

(taking the pencil back) Any office supply company can have them made up for you.

HOMER

Can I have this one?

GRIMES

No.

HOMER

Can... *(thinks)* Lenny have it?

GRIMES

No.

Lenny and Carl look at Grimes' diploma.

GRIMES

Oh, that's my degree in nuclear physics. I'm sure you all have one.

LENNY

Oh yeah, Carl and I each have a masters. Of course, old Homer, he didn't need a degree. He just showed up the day they opened the plant.

HOMER

I didn't even know what a nuclear panner plant was.

GRIMES

(forced laugh) Uh, yeah. Well, listen, I'm sure, you all have a lot of work to do.

Lenny and Carl shrug and leave. Grimes turns around, and sees Homer is still there.

HOMER

Hey, you seem like a great guy, so I'll give you a little tip. If you turn that security camera around, you can sleep and no one will ever know.

GRIMES

Uh, I don't think we're being paid to sleep.

HOMER

Oh yeah, they're always trying to screw ya.

Homer leaves. Grimes shudders.

At the DMV, Marge is trying to get a personalized licensed plate. Bart is with her, looking bored.

MARGE

Marge is already taken! How about Marjorie?

CLERK

Uh. Sorry ma'am.

MARGE

Mmm... how about Mitzy?

CLERK

Nuh-uh. Uh, you can have Nitzy.

MARGE

Hmm... Nitzy.

BART

I'm outta here.

Bart leaves. He walks into an auction of Tax Seizures.

AUCTIONEER

Ladies and gentlemen, our next lot is number seven-fifty-one. How much am I bid for number seven-fifty-one? Seven-five-one. Nothing? No bids for item seven-fifty-one?

BART

A buck!

AUCTIONEER

I got a buck, I got a dollar here, one dollar there... *(continues talking very quickly in typical auctioneer-style)* Sold, for a buck.

BART

Cool, what'd I buy?

AUCTIONEER
35 Industry Way.

Bart turns up at the property, which is an old factory.

BART
Looks like my years of hard work have finally paid off.

It is lunchtime at the power plant. Homer is in the canteen, when Grimes enters.

HOMER
Hiya Stretch, what's the good word?

GRIMES
My name is Grimes, uh, Simpson. Frank Grimes. I took the trouble to learn your name, so the least you could do is learn mine.

HOMER
Okay, Grimey.

GRIMES
Uh, you're eating my special diabetic lunch.

HOMER
Huh? *(looks at the bag and chuckles)* Oh, I'm sorry.

GRIMES
The bag was clearly marked. Please be more careful in the future.

HOMER
Check.

Homer takes a few more bites before handing it back to Grimes. Grimes tosses the remainder in the trash and walks away. Homer reaches out to retrieve it, but stops and looks innocent when Grimes turns around to look. Grimes then returns to his office, where he finds his pencils have been chewed.

GRIMES
Simpson, do you know who chewed my--

He sees Homer chewing several, and using one to clean his ears. Grimes walks off, growling.

Meanwhile, Bart looks round his factory. It is very big and empty.

BART
Wow. It's filthy, and it's mine, haha.

Bart picks up a bolt and aims it towards a window on the far side of the room. It lands on the other side of the room. Bart then sees an old swivel chair, and a fire extinguisher. He wheels the chair into position, sits down, and uses the fire extinguisher to jet-propel himself across the factory floor and into the wall.

BART
Whewwwwww!

Back at the power plant, Homer enters Grimes' office.

HOMER
So, how's it going, Grimey?

GRIMES
I... I'd appreciate it if you'd stay out of my office, Simpson.

HOMER
(laughing) Wish I had a nickel every time I've heard that.

Homer idly wanders around the office, whistling and making annoying sounds.

HOMER
(singing) Take me out to the ball-game, take me out to the ball... Ah, what's new, Grimey?

Suddenly, an alarm goes off and lights flash in Homer's workstation next door.

GRIMES
Simpson, you've got a five-thirteen.

Homer looks at his watch.

GRIMES
No, a five-thirteen. In your procedures manual... a five-thirteen?

Homer looks at his watch again.

GRIMES
(pointing) Look at your control panel!

HOMER
(looks) Oh, a five THIR-teen. I'll handle it.

Homer goes to his workstation, takes a bucket of water and pours it on the console. This shorts it out and silences the alarms

HOMER
That got it.

Grimes looks on in disbelief.

Bart sits in an office in his factory. Milhouse walks past. Bart leans out of the window and whistles to him.

BART

Hey, Milhouse! You want a job in my factory?

MILHOUSE

You don't have a factory!

BART

Hey, I'm a busy man. You want a job or not?

MILHOUSE

Okay!

Homer wolfs down his lunch. Grimes looks on in disbelief.

GRIMES

God, he eats like a pig.

LENNY

I dunno. Pigs tend to chew. I'd say he eats more like a duck.

GRIMES

Well, some kind of farm animal anyway. And earlier today, I saw him asleep inside a radiation suit. Heh, can you imagine that, he... he was hanging from a coat hook.

LENNY

He had three beers at lunch. That would make anybody sleepy.

GRIMES

I've never seen him do any work around here ... what, what is his job?

LENNY

Safety inspector.

GRIMES

That irresponsible oaf? A man who by all rights should have been killed dozens of times by now?

LENNY

Three hundred and sixteen times by my count.

GRIMES

That's the man who's in charge of our safety? It... it boggles the mind.

CARL

It's best not to think about it.

Homer reaches out for a drink, but picks up a beaker of sulphuric acid. He is about to drink it when Grimes smashes it out of his hand and into a wall, causing the wall to dissolve.

GRIMES

Aah! You idiot! You nearly drank a beaker full of sulphuric acid!

HOMER

Acid, eh? Jeez, that would've been stupid! *(laughs)* Boy would my face have been red. *(laughs more)*

GRIMES

Stop laughing, you imbecile! Don't you realize how close you just came to killing yourself?!

Mr. Burns and a dog, wearing a sash labeled "Executive Vice President" walk by. Burns sees the hole in the wall.

BURNS

Who did this to my wall?

HOMER

(pointing to Grimes) He did.

BURNS

Is this true?

GRIMES

Well, uh, technically it is true, sir, but--

BURNS

Come with me.

HOMER

(whispering to Grimes) He likes you.

Homer gives Grimes the thumbs up. Cut to outside Burn's office, where we hear the conversation. The dog barks.

BURNS

How dare you destroy my valuable wall! And spill my priceless acid! Did you really think you were going to get away with it?

GRIMES

I wasn't--

BURNS

Silence! I am going to give you one more chance... at a reduced salary. So straighten up and fly right!

GRIMES

But sir if I c--

The dog barks again. Grimes confronts Homer at his work station.

HOMER

Hi Grimey, old buddy.

GRIMES

I'm not your buddy, Simpson. I don't like you. In fact, I hate you! Stay the hell away from me, because from now on, we're enemies!

HOMER

(quietly) Okay. Do I have to do anything?

GRIMES

Grrr!

He shudders and leaves.

ACT TWO

Homer is at Moe's.

HOMER

Oh, I can't believe it, I got an enemy. Me, the most beloved man in Springfield.

MOE

Ah, it's a weird world, Homer. As hard as it is to believe, some people don't care for me, neither.

HOMER

No, I won't accept that.

MOE

Nah, it's true. I got their names written down right here on what I call my, uh, "enemies list."

Moe reaches under the bar and brings out a piece of paper. Barney reads it.

MARGE

Calm down, Homer! Calm down, answer the door.

Homer answers the door.

HOMER

(nervously) Welcome to the Simpson residence or "casa de Simpson," as I call it, heh heh.

GRIMES

Yeah, what did you want to see me about, Simpson? This better be important.

HOMER

It is, it is, but first, let me introduce you to my family, my perfect family. This is my wife Marge...

MARGE

Hello.

HOMER

And our beautiful baby... *(Maggie sucks her pacifier)* ...my daughter Lisa, IQ a hundred and fifty six.

LISA

(curtsies) Hi.

HOMER

See? And my son Bart... *(Bart winks)* He owns a factory downtown.

GRIMES

How do you do. Uh, look Homer, I'm, I'm late for my night job at the foundry so if you don't mind telling me--

He stop as he notices the house.

GRIMES

Good Heavens! Th-this is a palace! How c-- how can, how in the world can you afford to live in a house like this, Simpson?

HOMER

I dunno. Don't as me how the economy works.

GRIMES

Yeah, but look at the size of this place! I... I live in a single room above a bowling alley and *(muttering)* below another bowling alley.

HOMER

Wow!

Grimes notices some pictures on the wall.

GRIMES

I'm sorry, isn't that--

HOMER

Yes, that's me alright. And the guy standing next to me is President Gerald Ford. (*pointing to the other photos*) And this is when I was on tour with the Smashing Pumpkins. Oh! And here's a picture of me in outer space.

GRIMES

You? Went into outer space? You?

HOMER

Sure. You've never been? Would you like to see my Grammy award? (*holds it up*)

GRIMES

No! I wouldn't! God, I've had to work hard every day of my life, and what do I have to show for it? This briefcase, and this haircut! And what do you have to show for your lifetime of sloth and ignorance?

HOMER

What?

GRIMES

Everything! A dream house! Two cars! A beautiful wife! A son who owns a factory! Fancy clothes and (*sniffs air*) lobsters for dinner! And do you deserve any of it? No!

HOMER

(*gasps*) What are you saying?

GRIMES

I'm saying you're what's wrong with America, Simpson. You coast through life, you do as little as possible, and you leech off of decent, hardworking people like me. Heh, if you lived in any other country in the world, you'd have starved to death long ago.

BART

He's got you there, dad.

GRIMES

You're a fraud. A-- a total fraud. (*walks out, pokes his head back round the doorway, and speaks to Marge and the kids*) It was nice meeting you.

Grimes leaves again, slamming the front door.

The next day, Bart and Milhouse are at the factory again.

MILHOUSE

Wow. Adding machines. Industrial waste. What should we do with all this stuff, Bart?

BART

I think we both know the answer to that.

The boys throw the machines into a the barrels of industrial waste, and watch them dissolve. Later, Milhouse mops the floor. He pauses to wipe his brow.

BART

Get to work!

Next, they stand atop a rickety staircase, rocking it.

BART & MILHOUSE

Wacky shack!

MILHOUSE

Better be careful, Bart. Look at those warning signs.

He indicates some sign on the "Wacky Shack." Bart pulls them off and chucks them out the window.

BART

Solve your problem Milhouse?

MILHOUSE

Yep.

Marge walks around the front of the house to find Homer sitting in his car on the driveway. She taps on the window.

MARGE

Homer? *(taps again)* Homer, why aren't you at work?

HOMER

The car won't start. I don't feel very good today. I am at work.

MARGE

You're afraid to go to work because Frank Grimes will be there, aren't you?

HOMER

That's crazy talk. You're crazy, Marge. Get off the road!

He honks the horn. Marge gets in the car.

MARGE

You'll have to face him sometime, and when you do I'm sure he'll be just as anxious to make up as you are.

HOMER

No he won't, he hates me.

MARGE

He doesn't hate you. He just feels insecure because you're getting through life so easily, and it's been so difficult for him.

HOMER

Yeah, yeah, that's his problem, he's a nut! It's not about me being lazy, it's about him being a crazy nut.

MARGE

Well... maybe. But I bet he would be less crazy if you were just a little more, um, professional in your work. (*Homer gasps*) Just a *little* more! Then he won't have any reason to resent you.

HOMER

I'll do it! (*pulls out a bottle of Duff*) To professionalism!

Homer drinks the whole bottle.

At work, Homer eats donuts at his workstation... with a knife and fork. On his wall hangs a picture of him with the words: "Mr. Good Employee" on it. Grimes walks past.

HOMER

Good morning fellow employee. You'll notice that I am now a model worker. We should continue this conversation later during the designated break period. Sincerely, Homer Simpson.

Grimes isn't impressed, and leaves. An alarm sounds at Homer's workstation. Grimes joins Lenny and Carl in the break room.

GRIMES

Can you believe that guy? He's in his office making a pathetic attempt to look professional.

CARL

Hey, what do you got against Homer, anyway?

GRIMES

Are you kidding? Does this whole plant have some disease where it can't see that he's an idiot? Look here. (*points to a graph on the bulletin board*) Accidents have doubled every year since he became safety inspector, and, and meltdowns have tripled. Has he been fired? No. Has he been disciplined? No, no.

LENNY

Eh, everybody makes mistakes. That's why they put erasers on pencils.

CARL

Yeah, Homer's okay. Give him a break.

GRIMES

No! Homer is not okay. And I want everyone in this plant to realize it. I would die a happy man if I could prove to you that Homer Simpson has the intelligence of a six-year-old.

LENNY

(to Carl) So, how are you doing?

Grimes begins to leave, but notices a poster on the bulletin board, advertising a children's contest to build the best model of a new power plant.

GRIMES

Oh, here we go.

Grimes takes the notice to his office, where he carefully cuts away all references to this being a contest for kids. Then he places the notice at Homer's workstation.

HOMER

Oh. Design your own power planet, eh? This is my chance to show everyone how professional I am. *(to a picture of Lenny on his desk)* Lenny, tell Mr. Burns I've gone home to work on the contest.

As Homer gets into his car to leave, Grimes watches through an upstairs window, laughing. Homer backs into Grimes' car.

GRIMES

Oh god.

ACT THREE

At the Simpsons' home. We hear sounds of sawing, hammering, and Homer cussing from the basement. Lisa & Marge are in the kitchen.

LISA

Can I go downstairs and see what Dad's doing?

MARGE

I wouldn't bother him, honey. He's making some kind of model for a contest. He says it's really high-tech stuff that we wouldn't understand.

HOMER

(opens basement door) Marge, do we have any elbow macaroni and glue-on sparkles?

At the factory, Milhouse pounds on a furnace. Bart pulls the traditional steam whistle, indicating the end of the working day, and Milhouse gets ready to leave.

MILHOUSE

Oh boy! Quittin' time!

BART

Just a minute, van Houten. Somebody needs to guard this place tonight so it doesn't get trashed. *(handing him a cap and baton)* How'd you like to be night watchman?

MILHOUSE

I'm sleepy.

BART

Ah, no problemo. Here's a nickel for the coffee machine.

Bart gives him the money and leaves. Milhouse puts the nickel in the machine. It dispenses a cup, then a rat (which runs off), then some coffee. Milhouse drinks the coffee, and gazes around.

MILHOUSE

So this is my life. At least I've done better than Dad.

The next day, Bart heads back to the factory, to find a huge pile of rubble on the spot.

BART

Ah, jeez. Milhouse, how could you let this happen? You were supposed to be the night watchman.

MILHOUSE

I was watchin'. I saw the whole thing. First it started falling over, then it fell over.

BART

Wow. I wonder where all the rats are gonna go?

Dozens of rats run out from under the rubble and into Moe's Tavern. We hear Moe's voice from outside.

MOE

Okay, everybody tuck your pants into your socks.

At the power plant, it's time for the model-building contest in the auditorium. Mr. Burns judges the models.

BURNS

(to the audience of workers) ...and the bold new ideas these tiny tykes unveil for us today could make thousands of jobs like yours... obsolete!

There is some weak applause.

SMITHERS

Our first little genius is Ralph Wiggum.

Ralph comes on stage with a modified Malibu Stacy Dream House.

SMITHERS

It's pretty good sir.

BURNS

Hot tub? Media room? It's supposed to be a power plant not Aunt Beulah's bordello. Thank you. Get out. Next!

Ralph doesn't move. Chief Wiggum calls from off screen.

WIGGUM

Uh, Ralphie, get off the stage sweetheart!

Ralph takes the doll house and leaves. Martin Prince is up next.

MARTIN

Behold, the power plant of the future, today!

BURNS

Yuck. Too cold and sterile. Where's the heart?

MARTIN

But it really generates power. It, it's lighting this room right now.

He turns a knob, dimming the auditorium lights.

BURNS

You lose. Get off my property. Lets have the next child.

Homer brings his model on stage.

GRIMES

(calling from the audience) Look everybody! Simpson's in a contest with children.

LENNY

Hey, shh!

CARL

You're making us miss the contest.

BURNS

Could you explain your model, young man?

GRIMES

What's to explain? He's an idiot!

LENNY

Pipe down!

HOMER

Well basically, I just copied the plant we have now.

BURNS

Mm-hmm.

HOMER

Then, I added some fins to lower wind resistance. (*pointing*) And this racing stripe here I feel is pretty sharp.

BURNS

Agreed. First prize!

Burns gives Homer a blue ribbon and some money.

GRIMES

What?

CARL

Way to go, Homer!

LENNY

You're number one, Homer!

GRIMES

But it, it was contest for children!

LENNY

Yeah. And Homer beat their brains out!

The audience cheers wildly.

GRIMES

Oh, I, I can't stand it any longer. This whole plant is insane. Insane, I tell you! Daahh! Aaah!

Grimes runs out of the auditorium, and into an equipment room.

GRIMES

I can be lazy too!

Grimes takes his tie off, and moons one of the technicians.

GRIMES

Hi, look at me, I am a worthless employee, just like Homer Simpson! Give me a promotion!

Grimes walks into the break room, and grabs two donuts from the box.

GRIMES

Ooh, I eat like a slob, but nobody minds!

Grimes scoffs down the donuts, then heads to the bathroom.

GRIMES

(off screen) I'm peeing on the seat. Give me a raise!

Grimes emerges from the bathroom and waves his hands in Homer's face.

GRIMES

Now I'm returning to work without washing my hands. But it doesn't matter, because I'm Homer Simpson!

Grimes runs to Homer's workstation and spins around in the chair.

GRIMES

I don't need to do my work, 'cause someone else will do it for me. *(slaps himself on the forehead)*
D'oh! D'oh! D'oh!

HOMER

Hey, you okay, Grimey?

GRIMES

I'm better than okay, I'm Homer Simpson.

HOMER

(chuckles) You wish.

Mr. Burns walks in.

GRIMES

Oh, hi, Mr. Burns. I'm the worst worker in the world. Time to go home to my mansion and eat my lobster!

He sees some dangerous-looking wires on the wall.

GRIMES

What's this? *(reads sign)* "Extremely High Voltage"? Well, I don't need safety gloves, because I'm Homer Simp--

Grimes grabs the wires and is electrocuted. The scene cuts to Grimes' tombstone - it is his funeral. Reverend Lovejoy delivers the eulogy.

LOVEJOY

Frank Grimes, or "Grimey," as he liked to be called, taught us that a man can triumph over adversity. And even though Frank's agonizing struggle through life was tragically cut short, I'm sure he's looking down on this right now...

Lovejoy's voice fades as the camera pans to a sleeping Homer.

HOMER

(snores) Change the channel, Marge!

The mourners laugh.

LENNY

That's our Homer!

Everybody laughs as Grimes' coffin is lowered into the ground. Fade to credits.