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*Poodles, Postmen &  
Pastrami*

A Comedy by

**Rusty Harding, Matthew Gunther &  
James Prince**

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# Poodles, Postmen, and Pastrami

by Rusty Harding, Matt Gunther & James Prince

## CHARACTERS:

ANNIE LIPSKI; *F, 20-30*

LEO LIPSKI; *M, 50-70*

ANDY SUMMERS; *M, teens*

CLARENCE “SLICK” WALLACE; *M, 30-50*

HANK “BILLY JOEL” AARON; *M, 30-50*

LEON “GREASY” LEONARD; *M, teens*

## SYNOPSIS:

Annie Lipski, “dog groomer to the Hollywood stars”, has returned to her hometown to discover her parents’ cherished business, “The Surf, Turf, and Liverwurst” (a combination sushi bar, feed store, and Kosher deli), has been trashed by the evil “Slick” Wallace, as part of Slick’s ruthless attempt to take over the store for his employer; Scarbucks. To make matters worse, Annie’s parents themselves have been killed in an accidental (or was it..?) collapse of a fertilizer bin. Annie’s only allies are her uncle Leo, a relentlessly talkative teenager named Andy, and a somewhat reclusive (and totally clueless) “hero” named Hank Aaron (or is it Billy Joel?); a homeless former Postal carrier who is hiding the scars of a traumatic encounter with a horde of miniature canines (“them!”). Can Annie escape the clutches of the evil Slick? Can Hank overcome his fear of “them” long enough to save the day? Will Annie’s parents’ beloved business become just another frivolous font of flavored Frappuccinos? And – most importantly – does anyone even care..???

## SCENES:

### ACT I:

- Scene 1: The Lipski’s store
- Scene 2: Hank’s tent
- Scene 3: The Lipski’s store
- Scene 4: Slick’s lair
- Scene 5: The Lipski’s store

### ACT II:

- Scene 1: The Lipski’s store
- Scene 2: Slick’s lair
- Scene 3: Hank’s tent
- Scene 4: Street corner
- Scene 5: Slick’s lair
- Scene 6: The Lipski’s store

## PRODUCTION NOTES & SET:

“Poodles” is throwback to the old-fashioned melodrama, complete with hero, villain, and damsel in distress. As such, it should be played as broadly as possible for laughs. The set can be as elaborate or as sparse as the theater’s budget and/or resources permit. There are four settings; Annie’s parents’ store, Slick’s “lair”, Hank’s tent, and a “street corner”. Being a melodrama, the emphasis is on the action & comedy, therefore the set can be open to the director’s interpretation. (What does a combination “sushi bar, feed store, and Kosher deli” look like, anyway?) The "store" should consist of – at minimum – a counter, some shelves, and one or two folding table(s) and chairs. More elaborate props could include fake/plastic food (sushi, deli meat, etc.). Slick’s “lair” can be anything from a barroom to a basement, and Hank’s tent only requires a small section of stage. Costumes can be ordinary street clothes, although – if possible – “Hank” should wear a postal carrier’s uniform and/or shorts, and “Slick” should wear a mismatch of outdated fashions. Throughout the play, “Hank” should sing snippets of popular “oldies” songs; preferably from the 60’s & 70’s. Any tune(s) the actor is familiar with will suffice.

### PROPS:

"Store" items:  
     Boxes  
     pet food/seed bags  
     plates  
     cake/pastry dishes  
 Cappuccino (or similar coffee-making) machine  
 Broom  
 Mechanical toy poodle (preferably that barks)  
 Wallet  
 Framed photograph of elderly couple  
 Cereal (simulating pet food)  
 Collapsible pup tent  
 Electronic key fob  
 Official-looking document  
 Hand-held taser  
 Cloth restraints (cord, blindfold, gag)  
 Cell phone  
 Coffee mug(s)  
 “Scarbucks” coupon

### SPECIAL EFFECTS:

Sound of entrance bell  
 Sound of thunder  
 Sound of car alarm chirp  
 Sound of hissing steam  
 Sound of electrical stun gun  
 Sound of a door crashing open  
 Strobe light (to simulate lightning)

“**Poodles, Postmen, and Pastrami**” had its world premiere at the Core Theatre in Richardson, TX, July of 2012 directed by James Prince and produced by The Core Theatre with the following cast & Crew:

<i>Annie Lipski</i> .....	Katya Jonas
<i>Leo Lipski</i> .....	Jim Finger
<i>Andy Summers</i> .....	Kevin Bissell
<i>Clarence "Slick" Wallace</i> .....	James Prince
<i>Hank "Billy Joel" Aaron</i> .....	Matt Gunther
<i>Leon "Greasy" Leonard</i> .....	Steven Prince
<i>Lighting &amp; Sound</i> .....	Joshua Prince
<i>Set &amp; Property Manager</i> .....	B.J. Blackburn

Poodles, Postmen & Pastrami  
by Harding, Gunther & Prince

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

**SETTING:** *The scene is the interior of a small store. A sign on the wall reads "LIPSKI'S SURF, TURF, AND LIVERWURST". The store is a shambles; fallen merchandise and broken furniture lay strewn everywhere. Obviously a great calamity has occurred.*

**AT RISE:** *ANNIE LIPSKI enters, carrying a broom. She is obviously sad and depressed, and she SNIFFLES as she begins to try and clean up the mess. She sees a photograph lying in the rubble and picks it up, then begins to SOB BITTERLY. UNCLE LEO enters.*

LEO: Annie..?

ANNIE: Uncle Leo!

LEO: Annie, my sweet, sweet niece!

ANNIE: Oh, Uncle Leo! I'm so glad you're here. Uncle Leo, Mama and Papa, they're...they're...

LEO: I know, child, I know. They've been cruelly taken from us.

ANNIE: I've lost my parents, Uncle Leo!

LEO: Yes, yes, I know. You're an orphan, Annie.

*They embrace and SOB together.*

LEO: But don't despair, my dear. Everything will be fine. After all, the sun will come out tomorrow.

ANNIE: *(Puzzled)* Where have I heard that before? *(Gestures at the store)* Look at their store, Uncle Leo. They were so proud of it.

LEO: I know. Your father spent his whole life creating this dream; a combination sushi bar, feed store, and Kosher deli.

ANNIE: Yes. A place where man, animal, and raw food enthusiasts could find sustenance.

LEO: And very lean pastrami.

ANNIE: I came as soon as I heard the news, but I never expected things to be this terrible. How did they die, Uncle Leo?

LEO: *(Hesitant, struggling for the right words)* They were both, that is, they were...they were... *(A beat)* They were smothered.

ANNIE: Smothered? How? By what?

LEO: It's difficult to explain, child. They were unloading a freight truck out back, when the storage bin next to the store suddenly collapsed. Your parents were buried under several tons of...

ANNIE: Yes, yes, several tons of what? Tell me, Uncle Leo, please!

LEO: Several tons of fertilizer.

ANNIE: Fertilizer?

LEO: Yes. Organic fertilizer. *(A beat)* From horses.

ANNIE: *(Horrificed)* You don't mean..?

LEO: Yes, child, I do. They were smothered by horse poop.

*ANNIE begins to wail inconsolably. LEO tries to calm her.*

LEO: They died quickly, Annie. I'm sure they felt no pain. What they must have smelled, on the other hand...

ANNIE: Who found them?

LEO: That's a long story. Suffice it to say the smell kept everyone away for quite some time.

ANNIE: Oh, Uncle Leo, what am I going to do?

LEO: What do you mean, Annie?

ANNIE: I was working in Los Angeles when I got the news. I had finally found my dream job.

LEO: Annie, you mean you finally opened your Hollywood salon?

ANNIE: Yes! On Rodeo Drive. Everyone comes to my shop, Uncle Leo! My styles and cuts are the rage among the elite. Last week Meryl Streep came in with Brittany, then Kiera Knightly came in with Paris, and then Kevin Spacey came in with Liza...

LEO: Liza Minelli?

ANNIE: No, Liza, his cocker spaniel. You know, nice coat, drooling? I'm now the dog groomer to the Hollywood stars, Uncle Leo!

LEO: That's wonderful, child!

ANNIE: But how can I go back? How can I leave Mama and Papa's dream in such ruins?

LEO: They would want you to be happy, Annie.

ANNIE: I couldn't be happy, Uncle Leo, not until I know they're at peace.

LEO: What do you plan to do?

ANNIE: I don't know.

*SFX: SOUND OF AN ENTRANCE BELL*

*ANDY, a disheveled teenager, swiftly enters. Andy is very hyperactive and extremely talkative.*

ANDY: *(Speaking very rapidly)* Hey! I saw your sign and it said you sell organic pet food and I really need to get some food for my pet gerbils. I have four gerbils, you know? Actually, I used to have five, but one of them died and the others ate him. It was really gross, but it was kind of cool, too, you know? I didn't know gerbils were cannibals. Did you know gerbils were cannibals? I also have three dogs, four cats, and a chameleon named Lewis, but I can never find him. Get it? He's a chameleon, and I can never find him. Do you have chameleon food, too?

*ANNIE and LEO just stare at ANDY silently. What planet has he fallen from and landed head-first?*

ANNIE: Um, I don't know. We may have gerbil food in the back. Let me check. *(Starts to exit)*

LEO: Annie, where are you going?

ANNIE: To find the pet food.

LEO: Why?

ANNIE: Because that's what Papa would have done. After all, this is still his store. *(To ANDY, exiting)* I'll be right back.

ANDY: Cool.

*ANDY looks at LEO and grins.*

ANDY: She's nice. And pretty, too. Is she your daughter? I mean, I'm only asking because she's way too young to be your wife, you know? Not that you're really old, dude, but let's be honest; you're not exactly a chick magnet.

LEO: What's your name, son?

ANDY: Andy. Andy Summers.



LEO: How old are you, Andy?

ANDY: Fifteen.

LEO: You want to be sixteen?

*ANNIE re-enters. She holds a bag of pet food.*

ANNIE: Believe it or not, we actually had gerbil food.

ANDY: Great! Is it organic? I really want the organic stuff. That junk you get in the supermarket is cheap, but it gives them the runs. Gets all over the cage and everywhere, you know?

LEO: Thank you so much for sharing that.

ANDY: How much do I owe you?

ANNIE: Forget it. I don't think the cash register is working anyway. Thank you for coming in to my parent's store.

ANDY: You mean it's free? How cool is that! Thanks! *(Looks around)* Wow! This place is really trashed! You need some help cleaning up?

LEO: You're volunteering?

ANDY: Sure! I mean, if I don't have to pay for the food, it's the least I could do, right? *(Picks up the broom and eagerly starts to sweep)* Never let it be said that Andy Summers was ungrateful. Although my Dad says I'm an unappreciative sass-mouth, whatever that means. He also says I eat him out of house and home, and that I spend too much time playing video games. At least I think that's what he says. He yells so loud the words all tend to just run together, you know?

*ANDY shrugs and continues to sweep away happily.*

ANNIE: What a nice boy.

LEO: *(Shaking his head sadly)* The future of America.

**SFX: SOUND OF ENTRANCE BELL**

*SLICK WALLACE suddenly enters.  
SLICK is a reject from the 70's. And the  
80's. And the 90's. No culture or time  
period could ever have embraced him,  
despite his over-ambitious attempt to  
look "cool". SLICK looks around  
appraisingly as he approaches ANNIE  
and LEO.*

ANNIE: Can I help you?

SLICK: I'm looking for the Lipskis.

ANNIE: I'm Annie Lipski. The Lipskis were my parents.

SLICK: *(Awestruck)* Shake and bake! I never knew they had a daughter. Especially one that looked like you! Where they been keeping you, doll face?

LEO: *(Impatient)* What business do you have with the Lipskis, Mr...?

SLICK: Name's...wait. *(Reaches into his pocket and pulls out wallet)* Wallace. Clarence Eugene Wallace. But my friends call me Slick.

LEO: You need to check your ID to remember your name?

SLICK: Yeah, well, I got hit by lightning a while back. Haven't been able to remember a lot since then.

LEO: *(Snidely)* Must have been a shocking experience.

SLICK: What was?

LEO: Forget it.

ANNIE: What do you want with my parents, Mr. Wallace?

SLICK: I really need to talk to them. Like really bad.

LEO: The Lipskis are dead, Mr. Wallace.

SLICK:        (*Genuinely surprised*) Dead? Like, how?

LEO:           They were killed when their storage bin collapsed.

SLICK:        No way! You mean that stuff fell on them? Freaky! Who knew that poop was lethal?

ANNIE:        You know something about their deaths?

SLICK:        Who? Me? No. I mean, well, maybe I do, and maybe I do. Let's just say I was only trying to scare them.

LEO:           Scare them?

SLICK:        Well, yeah. I mean, I tried to get Mr. Lipski to sell me this place, but he wouldn't listen to reason. So, I figured maybe I'd knock a few things over to try and, you know, persuade him. Who knew he'd be standing under that bin?

ANNIE:        (*Horrificed*) You killed my parents!

SLICK:        Hey, I didn't mean to. It was just sort of... (*A beat*) ...serendipitous.

LEO:           Why were you trying to buy this store?

SLICK:        Not me, the people I work for. They want this place. It's got potential. You know what they say; location, location, location.

LEO:           And just who do you work for?

SLICK:        Big people. Powerful people. Some of the most powerful people in the entire world. People who take what they want, when they want, and where they want. They're in every city, every neighborhood, every street corner; anyplace you go, they're already there.

ANNIE:        You mean, the Mafia?

SLICK:        No. Scarbucks. (*A beat, framing the room with his hands*) Oh, yeah, in two short weeks, this will be another coffee drinker's paradise. Frappaccinos, lattes, triple shot espressos; the whole ball of earwax. Play your cards right, sweetie, and I'll even make you a barista.

LEO: I'm calling the police!

SLICK: (*Scoffs*) Yeah, right, pal. Like the cops are gonna do anything about it. Besides, we got the cops in the palm of our hands. We sell donuts now, remember? (*Reaching in pocket, smiling at ANNIE*) Tell you what, sweetheart, nice guy that I am, I'll make you the same deal I was gonna make your parents. (*Pulls out a folded paper*) All you have to do is sign on the dotted line.

*ANNIE slaps the paper away furiously.*

ANNIE: Get out! Get out now!

SLICK: Hey, doll face, don't get your Spanx in a wad. Just trying to make a business deal.

ANNIE: I'm not making any deals with anyone! This store isn't for sale!

SLICK: That's what your father said, too. I wouldn't be so hasty, sweetheart. (*A beat*) Plenty of poop in the world, if you get my drift...

*SLICK suddenly begins laugh evilly.*

**SFX: FLASHING STROBE LIGHT AND  
SOUND OF THUNDER**

SLICK: Shoot! Not again!

*SLICK cowers from the light as he hurriedly exits. ANNIE turns to LEO, sobbing.*

ANNIE: Oh, Uncle Leo! What are we going to do?

LEO: I don't know, child. I just don't know.

*ANDY stands in a nearby corner, watching with a troubled frown.*

**BLACKOUT**

## ACT I

### Scene 2

**SETTING:** *A collapsible pup tent; the unassuming home of HANK “BILLY JOEL” AARON.*

**AT RISE:** *HANK’S sneakered feet poke out from beneath the door of the tent. HANK is, well, indescribable. He’s simply HANK. HANK sings happily an “oldies” tune.*

*ANDY enters, frowning at the tent curiously as he makes his way closer, yet obviously with some uncertainty.*

ANDY: Hello..?

*The singing stops; sneakers quickly withdraw into the tent. Stark silence.*

ANDY: Hello? Anyone in there?

HANK: *(After a beat)* Who’s asking?

ANDY: Andy Summers.

*A head suddenly pops out of the tent, eyes wide with elation.*

HANK: The guitar player from the Police?

ANDY: No.

HANK: Bummer! I never get to meet anyone famous.

ANDY: Who are you?

HANK: Billy Joel.

ANDY: What?

HANK: Well, my real name used to be Hank Aaron, but I changed it when I started getting all of his fan mail.

ANDY: Aren't you worried about getting Billy Joel's fan mail?

HANK: I do. I didn't know he was famous until after I changed my name.

ANDY: So change it to something different.

HANK: The only other one I could come up with was Justin Bieber, and I'm afraid that one might have been used, too. Has it?

ANDY: I think you should stick with Billy Joel. Listen, I need your help. I saw you on TV.

HANK: *(Suddenly apprehensive)* You saw me on TV? What show? It wasn't America's Most Wanted, was it? I'm pretty sure I haven't done anything that bad, at least recently.

ANDY: No, you were on the news. You knocked out a bank robber.

HANK: *(Incredulous)* I did? When?

ANDY: Last month. Don't you remember? You clocked the guy good and sent him flying.

*HANK crawls out of the tent with a weary sigh.*

HANK: Dude, not that again! Listen, like I told the cops, that whole thing was a misunderstanding. All I did was get up one morning and stretch my arms, like this. *(Holds out both arms with clenched fists)* All of a sudden, some guy comes flying straight into my fist. I still have teeth marks in my knuckles, see? Next thing I know, the cops are all over the place, shaking my hand and calling me a hero. They even tried to give me a reward. *(Scoffs)* Right, like I'd ever take a reward. Do I look stupid or what?

ANDY: I guess that remains to be seen.

HANK: Darn right. In any event, I'm not a hero.

- ANDY: *(Talking very fast again)* But I don't know where else to go. You're the only person I could think of to come to. I mean, this is a very weird situation, and it's gonna take a genuine hero to set it right.
- HANK: *(Frowning, after a beat)* Are you on something?
- ANDY: No, I just talk fast whenever I'm nervous. My father says that I have diarrhea of the mouth, but that sounds really gross.
- HANK: Look, kid, I'm no hero. Heroes don't live in tents on street corners. Although the Hulk did sleep in a cardboard box once, but that was only because he lost the keys to his house when his pants ripped. Why do you need a hero, anyway?
- ANDY: To help the Lipskis.
- HANK: The which keys?
- ANDY: The Lipskis, or at least, their daughter. She took over their deli after her parents died, and now some dude from Starbucks is trying to take it from her.
- HANK: Starbucks? I hate their coffee. Gives me the runs.
- ANDY: Ha! Just like my gerbils.
- HANK: *(Suddenly fascinated)* You have gerbils?
- ANDY: Yeah, four. I had five, but it died.
- HANK: Did the others eat it? You know gerbils are cannibals, right?
- ANDY: You know about gerbils?
- HANK: Of course I do. They're the only animals in the entire world worth caring about. Cute. Cuddly. Quiet. Not like... *(Grimaces)* ...them.
- ANDY: What's them?
- HANK: If you don't know, I'm not going to tell you. Best a boy like you never experiences the things I did. I'm still haunted by my time in the service.
- ANDY: You were in the army?

HANK: Worse. (*A beat*) The Postal Service. Eighteen years, kid. Eighteen years of carrying letters for Uncle Sam. I've seen it all, been through it all: rain, snow, sleet, hail, flash floods, even a sandstorm. I've seen things that should never even make it into nightmares: mad dogs, angry homeowners, old women in bikinis. (*Taps head, shuddering*) Horrible things! It's all right here, and It's never gonna leave.

ANDY: But, what are them?

HANK: (*Growing agitated*) Don't ask me that! Don't ever ask me that! I can't go back there again, do you understand me? I can't! I can't!

ANDY: Hank, calm down! I won't mention them anymore! I promise!

HANK: (*Calming*) Sorry, kid. Not your fault. Sometimes I just flash back for no reason.

ANDY: PTSD?

HANK: Spell that.

ANDY: Never mind. Look, Hank—

HANK: Billy.

ANDY: Whoever. This girl really needs your help.

HANK: I told you kid, I'm not a hero. A hero ain't nothin' but a sandwich. Speaking of which, I'm hungry. (*Turns to crawl back into tent*) Find someone else.

ANDY: But she needs you. This Scarbucks guy killed her parents. He may try to kill her!

HANK: Not my problem.

ANDY: She's really pretty!

HANK: (*Stops halfway in the tent, then crawls back out*) How pretty?

ANDY: Really pretty.



HANK: Does she own gerbils?

ANDY: *(Holds up bag of food)* She sells gerbil food.

HANK: Organic! Why didn't you tell me this in the first place? *(Stands up, straightens clothes)* All right, then. Let's get going. Like we use to say in the Postal Service; you can't deliver the mail unless you open the box.

ANDY: What does that mean?

HANK: I have absolutely no idea.

*The two of them start to exit, then HANK suddenly stops.*

HANK: Wait a second.

*HANK pulls an electronic car key fob from his pocket and aims it at the tent.*

**SFX: SOUND OF CAR ALARM CHIRP**

HANK: You can never be too careful in this neighborhood.

*HANK puts his arm around ANDY and begins to sing another "oldies" tune as the two of them quickly exit.*

**BLACKOUT**

## ACT I

### Scene 3

**SETTING:** The Lipski Store. ANNIE has straightened & cleaned and it looks halfway usable once again.

**AT RISE:** ANNIE is busy stocking shelves as a customer, GREASY, pretends to look around. GREASY is SLICK's toady assistant, and fully lives up to his name.

*SFX: SOUND OF ENTRANCE BELL*

*HANK and ANDY enter the shop. GREASY sees them and hurriedly turns away, but it's obvious he's eavesdropping.*

HANK: *(Glancing around curiously)* I know this place. They sell really lean pastrami.

ANDY: And sushi, too.

HANK: Suzie who?

ANDY: Never mind.

*ANNIE sees them and smiles.*

ANNIE: Andy! What brings you back so soon?

ANDY: I brought a friend, Annie. He's gonna help you with the Starbucks guy. This is Hank--

HANK: Billy.

ANDY: Whoever. This is Annie Lipski. Annie, this is Hank Aaron.

ANNIE: Hello, Hank.

HANK: Billy.

ANNIE: Excuse me?

HANK: My name is Billy. Billy Joel.

ANNIE: But, he just said your name was Hank.

HANK: It is. Was. May still be. (*A beat*) But you can call me whatever you like.

ANNIE: Uh, yes, thank you, I'm sure. And how exactly can I help you, Mr...Aaron-Joel?

ANDY: He's here to help you, Annie. Hank punched out a bank robber. He's gonna help you get rid of the Scarbucks guy.

HANK: I hate Scarbucks. Never had those on my route. Only Waffle House and Dunkin Donuts. Talk about great coffee.

ANNIE: Your route? You mean you were a mailman?

HANK: Postal carrier. A mailman works behind a counter and sells stamps. I was in the trenches; six days a week, fifty-two weeks a year, not counting Sundays and holidays. And sometimes even then, for special deliveries. Some guys used a truck, but not me. I carried that bag on foot, all hundred and twelve pounds of official U.S. Mail, day, after day, after day.

ANNIE: Fascinating. You make it sound so...

HANK: Grueling?

ANNIE: I was going to say tedious, but that will work, too.

ANDY: We need to make a plan, Annie. That Scarbucks guy said he'd be back. You need to be ready when he gets here.

ANNIE: Uncle Leo is taking care of all that, Andy. He's seeing a lawyer today.

HANK: Lawyer? (*Scoffs*) Only thing lawyers are good for is generating paperwork that weighs a ton. (*Rubbing shoulder*) I should know; I carried enough of it.

ANDY: He's right, Annie. Lawyers can't help. Scarbucks has lawyers, too, lots of them. You need someone like Hank—

HANK: Billy.

ANDY: —who can really clean Slick’s clock!

HANK: I don’t know anything about clock repair.

ANDY: Work with me, Hank. I meant take him out. You know, bust his chops, bring him down, kick his butt!

HANK: You mean employ violence?

ANDY: Why not? You’re a postal worker. It comes with the territory.

HANK: (*Indignant*) That is an unwarranted stigma, brought about by the unfortunate actions of an irrational few. Contrary to popular belief, a postal worker is a person of peace and tranquility. (*A beat*) As long as he stays away from firearms.

ANNIE: Look, both of you, I know you’re only trying to help, but I’m not even sure I want to keep this place. This was my parents’ business. I have my own life back in LA.

HANK: You’re from Louisiana? Cool.

ANNIE: No, I meant Los Angeles. I have a dog grooming business in Hollywood.

HANK: (*Suddenly alarmed*) Dogs? You work with... (*Growing more terrified*) ...dogs?

ANNIE: Yes. Is that a problem?

HANK: What...what kind of dogs?

ANNIE: All kinds. Schnauzers, terriers, labs, poodles—

HANK: (*Completely losing it*) Poodles! No! Them! Them! Them...!!!

*HANK falls to the floor in a fetal position, screaming and crying. ANNIE and ANDY look at each other incredulously. Even GREASY frowns curiously.*

ANDY: Hank! Billy! Whoever you are! Snap out of it, man!

HANK: Were you out there?

ANDY: Out where?

HANK: Out there. On Crabapple Street. That day in May. That terrible, horrible day in May. (*Musing*) It was a beautiful day, a perfect day; the kind of day every carrier lives for. The sun was shining, the birds were singing, I was singing (*Sings snippet of "oldies" tune*), when I got to 322. (*A beat*) Beulah Carcinoma's house.

ANNIE: Beulah Carcinoma?

HANK: The Dog Lady. Everybody knew she loved dogs, but nobody knew how many she owned. At least, I didn't know. If I had, I would never have gone near the place. She had a special delivery letter, from PetSmart. Something about being a platinum customer. So I rang the doorbell. Still singing. I was just doing my job. And then the door opened, and I came face to face with... (*A beat*) ...them!

ANDY: Poodles?

HANK: Five hundred poodles! They charged out of that door and rolled over top of me like a barking sea of white! All I could see were pink tongues and cotton ball tails! I went down, hard, letters flying everywhere, screaming for my life. I tried to call for help, but my cries were drowned out by that awful, high-pitched yapping! They wouldn't stop licking me; my hands, my face, even my eyes! I still can't see that well out of one eye. I was soaked to the skin with dog slobber! I remember watching my entire life flash in front of me, along with rabies tags and tiny ribbons. I thought I was going to die! (*Buries his face in his hands*) The horror! The horror!

*ANNIE and ANDY stare at him in confusion as Uncle Leo enters.*

LEO: *(Frowning at HANK)* Who's that?

ANNIE: I'm not sure. Some kind of hero.

LEO: Right. Annie, I think everything is going to be all right. I was able to file an injunction against Starbucks. This Slick fellow will have a long and difficult legal fight if he tries to continue.

ANNIE: But, what about mama and papa?

LEO: That's the weird part. I told the police what Slick said, and at first they were extremely intrigued. But then, when I told them he was building a Starbucks, they suddenly seemed to lose interest. Said they'd 'look into it'. But at least we have the injunction. *(Nodding at HANK, who is still curled up on the floor sobbing)* Can we do something about that? Maybe call someone?

ANNIE: Like who?

LEO: Department of sanitation?

ANDY: No! Hank's here to help!

HANK: *(Through his hands)* Billy.

LEO: Kid, he needs help. *(A beat, grimacing)* Whew! And a bath!

*ANNIE crouches down next to HANK.*

ANNIE: You poor thing. How about if I make you something to eat? Maybe a sandwich?

HANK: *(Glancing up quickly)* Pastrami?

ANNIE: Sure.

HANK: Extra lean, with Swiss cheese and spicy mustard?

ANNIE: I think we can do that.

HANK: Cool. *(Quickly stands up)* And maybe a dill pickle on the side? I love dill pickles.

*ANNIE and ANDY lead HANK to a nearby chair and help him sit down. GREASY quickly exits.*

LEO: Sure you don't want a *hero* sandwich?

HANK: No, pastrami's fine.

LEO: (*Shaking his head*) Oy, vey.

**BLACKOUT**

**ACT I**

**Scene 4**

**SETTING:** *SLICK's lair. Enough said.*

**AT RISE:** *GREASY plays with a cappuccino machine as SLICK paces anxiously back and forth.*

SLICK: An injunction! Can you believe that? The nerve of some people! Nobody's ever slapped me with an injunction before. How do they expect me to get my job done? How do they expect me to steal their property?

GREASY: I don't know, boss.

SLICK: This will not stand! I will not be cheated out of what's illegally mine! We have to take action. Oh, yes. We can't waste time with the courts. I have a schedule to meet. I have—

*SFX: SOUND OF STEAM HISSING*

GREASY: Cool!

SLICK: As I was saying, I have deadlines and commitments, things to leave in, things to leave out—

*SFX: SOUND OF STEAM HISSING*

SLICK: Will you stop that!

GREASY: Just trying to make some coffee, boss.

SLICK: Forget the coffee. One thing we've got plenty of is coffee. What we don't have is real estate. Land is at a premium these days, Greasy. People want to hold on to what they've got in this economy. They forget that huge corporations are people, too. We need to survive just like everyone else. (*A beat*) Are you listening to me?

GREASY: Am I supposed to?

SLICK: You're supposed to be learning. What good is having a protégée if he doesn't learn? When I was your age, I learned a lot.

GREASY: Like what?

SLICK: I don't know; I got hit by lightning and forgot it all. But the point is, I learned. So pay attention!

GREASY: Okay, boss.

SLICK: The lawyers I can deal with, but this Annie girl, she's another issue altogether.

GREASY: She's another issue altogether.

SLICK: Why are you repeating me?

GREASY: Isn't that what you just said to do?

SLICK: This isn't Airplane, you idiot. Where was I?

GREASY: Annie.

SLICK: Right, Annie. Stubborn, just like her parents. Okay, I took care of them. Maybe a little too strongly, but that's beside the point. And she's much too pretty to kill. I've got to think of something else. But what? What?

GREASY: I don't know. I don't know.



- SLICK:       *(Pacing rapidly)* Offer more money? No, can't afford it. Already maxed out. And I can't tear up the store again: too much damage already.
- GREASY:      Why don't you kidnap her?
- SLICK:        Shut up, Greasy, I'm trying to think.
- GREASY:      But every time you do that, something bad happens.
- SLICK:        I told you to shut... wait, what did you just say?
- GREASY:      I said every time you think, something bad happens.
- SLICK:        No, before that.
- GREASY:      Why don't you kidnap her?
- SLICK:        Greasy, you magnificent moron! That's brilliant!
- GREASY:      What is?
- SLICK:        Kidnapping! I snatch her away and keep her under lock and key, then I get her stupid uncle to sign over the deed to the store. *(Smirking)* Who knows, I might even get her to fall for me.
- GREASY:      That part's maybe not so brilliant. You know they have a hero, don't you?
- SLICK:        A what?
- GREASY:      Some homeless guy they hired to clean your clock.
- SLICK:        Greasy, what did I tell you about sniffing the espresso beans?
- GREASY:      I'm serious, boss. He was over in the Lipski store this afternoon. Used to be a postal worker.
- SLICK:        A postal worker?
- GREASY:      Yeah. But it's really weird, though; he's afraid of dogs. Especially poodles.

SLICK: *(Elated)* This is great! Finally, a challenge worthy of my... *(A beat, snapping fingers)* Quick, what's that word that means really smart? They use it for people with high IQ's.

GREASY: Genius?

SLICK: Genesis! A challenge worthy of my true genesis! *(Strikes a dramatic pose)* I've waited a lifetime for this moment, Greasy. Soon the entire world will see that I am truly a force to be reckoned with!

GREASY: Dude, really? The entire world?

SLICK: Okay, the entire country!

GREASY: Country?

SLICK: Fine! The entire ten square blocks south of Hill Street and north of downtown! *(Waits for GREASY to reply. After a beat, satisfied)* No one there will ever forget the name of... *(Pauses, reaching to pull out his billfold)* ...Slick Wallace!

*SLICK suddenly begins to laugh evilly.*

*SFX: FLASHING STROBE LIGHT AND  
SOUND OF THUNDER*

*SLICK stops laughing.*

SLICK: *(Glancing around warily)* I really gotta stop doing that...

**BLACKOUT**

**ACT I**

**Scene 5**

**SETTING:** *The Lipski store.*

**AT RISE:** *ANNIE, LEO, and ANDY are stocking shelves. HANK sits by himself and reads the contents of a bag of pet food aloud.*

HANK: Contains 21% protein and less than 5% fat. Less than 5% fat? Hey, this is top notch!

ANNIE: Papa only sold the best. Nothing that wasn't Kosher.

HANK: *(Frowning at the label)* Contains ground wheat, alfalfa, field peas, corn... *(A beat)* I don't see any kosher.

ANNIE: No, that means—

LEO: Don't even try, Annie. For the sake of your own sanity, don't even try.

*HANK continues to read the label intently, then suddenly reaches into the bag and eats a handful of food.*

HANK: Not bad.

LEO: See?

**SFX: SOUND OF ENTRANCE BELL**

*SLICK and GREASY suddenly step inside. GREASY carries a sack over his shoulder. SLICK grins broadly at everyone.*

SLICK: Well, well, the gang's all here. Perfect.

*ANNIE reacts with a gasp of terror. ANDY suddenly runs over to HANK.*

ANDY: That's the guy, Hank!

HANK: What guy?

*LEO steps forward angrily.*

LEO: Out! You hear me, Wallace? Out, now!

SLICK: *(Feigning hurt)* Is that any way to treat a customer? Honestly, the previous owners were never that cruel.

LEO: We've brought an injunction against you. You have any further business here, you bring it up in court.

SLICK: Yeah, about that: I don't think I'll be bothering with courts and lawyers and such. Way too much hassle.

LEO: I don't think you have any choice.

SLICK: Oh, I think I do. Greasy..?

*GREASY starts to step forward and open the bag. ANDY looks at him curiously.*

ANDY: Leon..?

*GREASY stops with a look of surprise.*

SLICK: *(Frowning at Greasy)* You never told me your name is Leon.

GREASY: *(Indignant)* So what? Yours is Clarence.

ANNIE: Andy, you know him?

ANDY: Sure, Leon Leonard. He used to go to my school. Till he was kicked out.

GREASY: I left on my own.

ANDY: Yeah, with a police escort.

GREASY: At least I was cool, and not the class nerd.

SLICK: Forget the reunion! Greasy, take care of the mailman.

HANK: *(Jumping to his feet angrily)* Postal carrier!

SLICK: Sorry, my mistake. I guess should just say chicken!

*GREASY reaches into the bag and pulls out a mechanical toy poodle, flips the switch, and sets it on the floor in front of HANK where it begins to bark. HANK screams in terror, then suddenly races out the door.*

SLICK: So much for the hero. *(Pulls taser from pocket)* And now for something completely different.

*SLICK lunges at LEO, who tries to fight him off, but SLICK quickly overpowers him and zaps LEO with the taser.*

**SFX: SOUND OF ELECTRICAL STUN GUN**

*LEO falls unconscious. ANDY jumps in front of ANNIE as SLICK advances on her, but is also quickly stunned.*

**SFX: SOUND OF ELECTRICAL STUN GUN**

SLICK: *(To ANNIE)* Just you and me, doll face. You want to come peacefully, or do we play zap and go?

ANNIE: I'll never go with you, you villain!

SLICK: A-ha, playing hard to get! That's cool, too!

*SLICK begins to chase ANNIE around the store.*

[**NOTE** – *It is left to the director to stage/choreograph this scene as per his/her discretion. However, the scene should be played as broadly as possible for laughs; knocking over furniture, shelves, throwing objects, etc. The more frenetic the better.*]

*GREASY suddenly rushes up behind ANNIE and throws the empty sack over her head. SLICK throws the struggling ANNIE over his shoulder, then tosses a folded piece of paper on the floor next to LEO.*

**SLICK:** Really hate to leave such a terrific party, pal, but you know what they say: all good things must end. But I'll be seeing you again soon – promise!

*SLICK starts to laugh, then suddenly glances up and shakes his head warily. He and GREASY bundle ANNIE out the door. A few moments later, HANK slowly walks back inside. He sees LEO and ANDY passed out on the floor.*

**HANK:** *(Shaking his head mournfully)* The horror! The horror...

**BLACKOUT**

**End of ACT I**

## ACT II

### Scene 1

**SETTING:** *The interior of the Lipski store.*

**AT RISE:** *LEO and ANDY are struggling to recover.*

ANDY: Ow! My head feels like somebody put it in a blender.

LEO: My entire body feels that way.

ANDY: Yeah, but you're old. You're lucky that shock didn't kill you.

LEO: *(Glaring)* You'll be lucky if I don't kill you.

ANDY: Where's Annie?

*Both of them begin to search frantically, calling for ANNIE. LEO suddenly sees the paper on the floor. He picks it up and begins to read.*

ANDY: What's that?

LEO: A ransom note. That idiot kidnapped Annie! He wants me to sign over the store for her release.

ANDY: You're not going to do it, are you?

LEO: What choice do I have? He'll kill her!

ANDY: We can get Hank! He'll help us get her back!

LEO: *(Incredulously)* You were right, kid; that taser scrambled your brains.

ANDY: I'm serious. He's a hero!

LEO: He's a nut! He ran out of here screaming like a little girl! And because of a toy!

ANDY: Okay, the guy has had some issues in his life, but that doesn't mean he's useless.

LEO: Yes, it does.

ANDY: Leo, what other choice do we have? You said yourself the cops won't help. If we're going to get Annie back, we need all the help we can get.

LEO: No. I'm not going to take a chance with Annie's life.

ANDY: What about what she wants? She said this store was her mom and dad's dream. Would she want you to just throw it away like that? Even for her?

LEO: You're incredibly annoying, you know that?

ANDY: Sure, my dad tells me that all the time. So you'll do it?

LEO: *(Sighing)* I never thought I'd hear myself say these words; but let's go find the nut.

*ANDY and LEO quickly exit.*

**BLACKOUT**

## ACT II

### Scene 2

**SETTING:** *SLICK's lair.*

**AT RISE:** *ANNIE is bound and gagged in a chair, while SLICK sits nearby and eyes her adoringly. GREASY is once again playing with the coffee machine.*

SLICK: Are you okay? Is there anything I can get you?

*ANNIE mumbles incoherently through the gag.*

SLICK: *(Reaching to remove the gag)* Sorry. You were saying?



ANNIE: Let me go, you miserable pig!

SLICK: *(Replacing the gag)* I'll take that as a no. *(A beat)* I hope you won't think me forward, Miss Lipski, but I can't help but be captivated by your beauty. I had it in mind to simply hold you for ransom, but now that I've had a chance to get to know you better, I realize that I may, in fact, be in love with you. I know, I know, you're probably thinking to yourself: what could this incredible genesis ever see in someone like me? Believe me, many women feel the same way. But in reality, I have much more to offer than intelligence and... *(A beat, to GREASY)* Greasy, what's that word that means an overwhelming attractiveness to the opposite sex?

GREASY: Delusional?

SLICK: No, that's not it. No matter. *(To ANNIE)* Suffice it to say that I can provide you with a lifestyle far more extravagant than anything you've been used to. Money, clothes, travel; especially travel. I'm constantly on the move.

GREASY: Being wanted in twelve countries does that.

SLICK: What did you say?

GREASY: Nothing, boss.

SLICK: What do you say, Miss Lipski? May I call you Annie? *(Removes gag again)* Will you consent to spending the rest of your life with moi?

ANNIE: *(Furious)* You arrogant jerk! You killed my parents! What makes you think I would ever have anything to do with an evil, slimy, twisted little weasel like y—?

SLICK: *(Quickly replacing gag)* I understand. You need more time to think about it. Not a problem. In the meantime, let me serenade you with a song that I wrote just for you.

*SLICK strikes a dramatic pose and begins to sing tunelessly and off-key.*

SLICK: *My love is taller than a tall, tall tree  
Deeper than a deep, deep hole  
Wider than a wide, wide house  
Longer than a long, long pole...*

*SLICK reaches out to once again remove  
ANNIE's gag.*

SLICK: There are fourteen more verses, but at least you can see where I'm going.  
(*Eagerly*) What do you say, Annie? Do you feel the love?

*ANNIE stares at him in disbelief, then  
leans to one side and retches violently.*

SLICK: (*Frowning at GREASY*) She might want to check the expiration date on her  
sushi...

**BLACKOUT**

## ACT II

### Scene 3

**SETTING:** *The exterior of HANK's tent. Once again  
his feet poke through beneath the flap.*

**AT RISE:** *HANK mournfully sings an "oldies" tune  
as ANDY and LEO approach.*

ANDY: Hank?

HANK: (*Stops singing*) Who's there?

ANDY: Andy Summers.

*HANK's head pokes out of the tent.*

HANK: The guitar player from the Police? (*A beat, scowling*) Oh, it's you. Go away.

ANDY: Hank—

HANK: Billy.

ANDY: Who cares? Look, we really need your help. Slick has Annie and he's holding her for ransom.

HANK: I told you before, that's not my problem. And I'm not about to go through that terror again.

LEO: It was a toy dog!

HANK: *(Glaring at him)* Were you out there?

LEO: Out where?

ANDY: *(Interrupting)* No! Not again! Ha...Billy, please, Annie's in a lot of trouble. There's no telling what Slick may do. You've got to do this!

HANK: Why? Why should I stick my neck out for someone I barely know?

ANDY: Because, because... *(To LEO)* Help me out, here?

LEO: *(Thinks for a moment)* Because you're a postal carrier.

HANK: So what?

LEO: Well, it's what you do; it's your duty to help people.

HANK: It's my duty to deliver mail.

LEO: Ah, yes, but remember the postman's credo: neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night—

HANK: We never delivered at night.

LEO: Work with me, will you! The point is you're a public servant and you took an oath to be dedicated. My niece is in danger, and I can't rely on the usual authorities.

HANK: Look, I'm sorry about that, but I got my own issues. *(A beat)* And that oath never said anything about dogs.

*HANK disappears back inside the tent. ANDY and LEO stare at each other in frustration.*

LEO: Annie's great grandfather was a postal carrier.

*ANDY frowns at him curiously – is that true? LEO shrugs with a “give me a break” grimace. HANK's head reappears.*

HANK: *(Intrigued)* Really?

LEO: Yep. Chaim Lipski. He was the first Jewish rider for the Pony Express. Once rode three days non-stop through hostile Indian territory just to deliver a single letter. He had a favorite saying: dos matzel hot hatzel in der shook.

HANK: Which means?

LEO: You can't deliver the mail—

HANK: *(Rushing out of the tent)* Unless you open the box! That's where that came from! I'll do it!

ANDY: *(Elated)* Yes!

LEO: Great! But where do we find Slick?

ANDY: *(Smiling)* We don't have to find Slick, we just have to find Leon.

LEO: Good. Let's go!

HANK: Wait a minute.

*HANK takes the job from his pocket and points it at the tent.*

*SFX: SOUND OF CAR ALARM CHIRP*

HANK: Now we're ready.

*LEO looks at ANDY In disbelief. ANDY only shrugs. The two of them follow slowly after HANK.*

**BLACKOUT**

**ACT II**

**Scene 4**

**SETTING:** *A street corner.*

**AT RISE:** *GREASY is walking along by himself, happily whistling. ANDY and LEO suddenly appear in front of him.*

ANDY: Hello, Leon.

*GREASY stops with a look of alarm, then quickly turns around. HANK is right behind him.*

GREASY: *(Turning back to Andy)* Hello, nerd. You don't mind if I call you nerd, do you, nerd?

ANDY: It's your funeral.

GREASY: *(Laughing, but obviously nervous)* Yeah, right.

ANDY: Where can we find Slick?

GREASY: Now why do you think I would ever tell you that?

ANDY: Because of what we'll do to you if you don't.

GREASY: What? Beat the crap out of me?

ANDY: Nope.

GREASY: Have me arrested?

ANDY:       Something even worse.

GREASY:     Like what, nerd?

ANDY:       Something horrible, Leon. Think of the most horrible, painful, inhuman act any person could ever inflict on another.

GREASY:     *(Shrugging)* I don't know. You'll cover me with honey and let the insects eat me alive.

ANDY:       Nope.

GREASY:     *(Growing more eager)* You'll throw me in the river tied up in a sack full of rattlesnakes.

ANDY:       Uh-uh.

GREASY:     *(Practically elated)* You'll drive three inch nails under each fingernail and then throw me in a tub of lemon juice!

LEO:         *(Frowning at him)* Son, you are seriously disturbed.

ANDY:       No, Leon. Leo and I will hold you down, while Hank here sings every single Barry Manilow song ever written. *(A beat)* Twice.

*GREASY looks back at HANK, who only grins.*

GREASY:     *(After a long moment)* Do you want me to just give you the address, or would you prefer I take you there myself..?

**BLACKOUT**

## ACT II

### Scene 5

**SETTING:** *SLICK's lair.*

**AT RISE:** *SLICK continues to sing to a still bound and gagged ANNIE. ANNIE is obviously in torment, shaking her head and struggling.*

**SLICK:** *My love is higher than a flying kite  
Sharper than a sharp, sharp knife  
Brighter than a bright, bright light  
Louder than a nagging wife*

*SLICK finally stops and smiles at ANNIE.*

**SLICK:** I haven't quite decided how to end it, although I'm not sure if fourteen verses are really enough. After all, it's hard to put one's entire feelings into something as trite as a song. Hopefully my sentiment is fully apparent. *(Pulls gag from ANNIE's mouth)* Is it, my sweet?

**ANNIE:** *(Anguished)* The horror! The horror!

**SLICK:** Hey, Apocalypse Now! I loved that movie. See, we have a lot in common. We both like Marlon Brando films.

**ANNIE:** Why don't you just kill me and get it over with, instead of putting me through this endless agony!

**SLICK:** *(Puzzled, thinking for a moment)* I don't remember that line. Was that from the Godfather?

*SFX: SOUND OF DOOR CRASHING  
OPEN*

*HANK, ANDY, LEO, and GREASY all  
enter.*

**SLICK:** Hey! I have a doorbell!

ANNIE: Uncle Leo!

LEO: *(To Slick)* Let her go, you no good—

SLICK: Ah, ah, ah, watch your language, pops. There's a lady present.

ANNIE: Kill him, Uncle Leo! Kill that slimy, worthless, low-life scum!

SLICK: I stand corrected.

LEO: *(Rushing to untie Annie)* Don't worry, child. He's finished.

SLICK: *(Suddenly seeing Greasy)* Greasy? You brought them here? Mi compadre? Mi amigo? Mi hermano? Por que, Greasy? Por que?

GREASY: How do you say 'saving my own neck' in Spanish?

ANDY: It's all over, Slick. You might as well give up.

SLICK: Hey, never let it be said that Slick Wallace didn't know when he was licked. However, let me say just one thing in my defense.

HANK: Which is?

SLICK: I'm outta here!

*SLICK suddenly bolts for the door.*

ANDY: Hank, get him!

*HANK, ANDY, LEO, ANNIE, and  
GREASY all begin to chase after SLICK.*

[NOTE – It is left to the director to stage/choreograph this scene as per his/her discretion. However, the scene should be played as broadly as possible for laughs; knocking over furniture, shelves, throwing objects, etc. The more frenetic the better.]



*SLICK suddenly grabs ANNIE and holds her in front of him like a shield. He has a cell phone in his hand and is holding it close to ANNIE's head. HANK is the closest to them, and stands slightly to one side of SLICK.*

SLICK: Okay, stand back, all of you! Otherwise she gets it!

ANNIE: What are you going to do; talk me to death? I've already endured your singing, so it can't be any worse.

SLICK: *(Frowning at the phone)* Darn! I reached in the wrong pocket. *(Throws the phone aside and pulls out the taser)* Now then, one more move and I zap her!

LEO: Don't you dare hurt her!

SLICK: Sure thing, pops. All you have to do is hand over the store.

ANNIE: No, Uncle Leo! Don't do it!

LEO: What choice do I have, Annie? I can't let him hurt you. *(Slowly begins to pull the paper from his pocket)*

SLICK: See? I knew I'd win. I always win! *(Starts to laugh evilly, then abruptly stops and looks around warily)* I must have a death wish.

ANDY: *(To Hank)* Hank, do something!

HANK: Dude, what do you want me to do?

**This is Not the End of the Play**  
**Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes**