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Small Bites
A Smorgasbord of Comedy

By J.C. Svec

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Cast of Characters

DECISIONS
DEREK; a young man with serious commitment issues
SUSIE; his long-time girlfriend

A CATERED AFFAIR
HULDAH; an event planner/caterer in Jerusalem during a slump in business
TRYPHENA; her young assistant
MARA; a mysterious client

ALL YOU CAN EAT
MANNY; a man suffering from “Buffet Performance Anxiety”

MAMA MARIE’S
ANTONIA; the C.E.O. apparent of “Mama Marie’s”, manufacturer of Italian foods
BONNIE BELLE; a young applicant
ALLIE; the C.E.O. of “Mama Marie’s”
MALE NURSE; assisting to remove Antonia from her position

DECISIONS, DECISIONS
DEREK; still paralyzed by indecision
TARA; the waitress

THE FIRST THANKSGIVING
MILES STANDISH; a Pilgrim
ELIZABETH; his smart, young secretary
WILLIAM BRADFORD; Governor of the Colony

GRAPE JELLY
JOE; a grape jelly person
JEAN; his grape jelly wife

DECISIONS, DECISIONS, DECISIONS
DEREK
SUSIE
TARA
SCENE: A round table and two simple chairs. The table is covered with a kitchen tablecloth. Country tableware is pushed to one edge of the table. A small card and a pen sit isolated on the table.

AT RISE: A young man, DEREK, paces back and forth and around the table. His girlfriend, SUSIE, annoyingly taps her fingers on the card. She looks at her watch, an action which further upsets DEREK.

SUSIE
We’ve been at this for almost forty-five minutes.

DEREK
So.

SUSIE
So?

DEREK
I’m sorry, if I don’t take the decision making process as lightly as you do.

SUSIE
All I’m saying is that it shouldn’t take this long to make this simple decision.

DEREK
Well, thinking about my answers is a routine for me, and that routine takes time, no matter how perturbing it may be to you.

SUSIE
(Confused) All I said was—

DEREK
All you said was, in fact, an attack on my decision making process which I take very seriously.

SUSIE
Oh, my God.

(SUSIE slams down the pen.)

SUSIE, Continued

(Yells) Make up your mind. Now!

DEREK
(Yells) Don’t bully me.
SUSIE
(Shifts tone) Please. I’m begging you.

(DEREK stands incredulous.)

SUSIE, Continued
I mean it. Enough. Decide... now! Or else.

DEREK
Now you’re threatening me?

SUSIE
(Calm) No. No threat. (Placid) C’mon... just sit down. Read it. (Pause) Just check a box!

(SUSIE waits patiently for a moment. When that moment passes, SUSIE slaps the table.)

SUSIE, Continued
(Screams) Just check a box.

(DEREK jumps, grabs the pen and sits. He thinks, puts pen to paper but can’t bring himself to act.)

DEREK
(Breaks) I’m sorry, I need more time.

(SUSIE throws her hands up in disgust.)

SUSIE
You decided your vote for the president in less time.

DEREK
I just can’t do this right now. I need more time.

SUSIE
(Mocks) ‘I need more time, I can’t do this.’ (Explodes) You’ve had weeks. We need to respond before it’s too late.

DEREK
So, send it back.

SUSIE
It’s incomplete.

DEREK
So what?
SUSIE
So... it doesn’t work that way.

DEREK
Says who?

SUSIE
(Thinks) Society. Our society says so. Our culture says so. Books are written on this very subject that explain the hows and whys and the dos and don’ts.

DEREK
And our descendants, our forefathers, our ancestors built this nation, forged a democracy and created a new country by opposing the stringent rules and codes of what... a society that no longer worked for its people.

SUSIE
What the hell are you talking about? We’re not talking about parting ways with the fatherland or seceding from the Union. And in case you forgot, your ancestors grew up in Short Hills, New Jersey and were never oppressed by anyone or anything.

DEREK
I was just trying to make a point.

SUSIE
Why don’t you make a point with that pen in that box.

DEREK
Just answer me something. What’s the big deal if I don’t give them my answer? If I don’t put that little ol’ check in the box, months ahead of time, when my emotional and physical condition will, in all probability, negate what and how I feel and what I do here today.

SUSIE
You’re an idiot.

DEREK
Tell me, will governments tumble? Will organized religions around the world suddenly collapse? Will “American Idol” be canceled? Tell me what will happen if I don’t follow the demands of some arcane cultural regulation, dreamed up by some old biddy in a button up dress and spats a hundred up-teen years ago. Tell me, tell me, tell me? (Beat) What horrific, devastating, ramifications will there be? Huh?

SUSIE
There may not be any food for you and you’ll be hungry and embarrassed.

(SUSIE’S comment stills DEREK.)
SUSIE, Continued
(Emphatic) Check the prime rib. Check the prime rib and be done wit it.

(DEREK picks up the pen.)

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending of Scene Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes
Please Continue to Read the Next Scene

A CATERED AFFAIR

SCENE: At the time a man named Jesus walked the earth. The interior of a simple dwelling in Jerusalem. An animal cloth covers a table. Material swatch books, scrolls and wood bound tablets are strewn atop the table.

AT RISE: A woman, HULDAH, enters and storms to the table. She rummages through the mess. Frustrated she cannot locate whatever it is for which she is looking and drops herself onto the stool behind the desk.

HULDAH
(Yells) Tryphena. Tryphena.

(A young girl, TRYPHENA, scurries into the room. She keeps her head bowed in obvious fear of HULDAH.)

HULDAH, Continued
(Condescending) Tryphena.

TRYPHENA
(Meek) Yes ma’am.

HULDAH
Where is it?

TRYPHENA
(Confused) Where is what, ma’am?

(HULDAH waits a second before rising. She stares at TRYPHENA for several moments before continuing.)
HULDAH

What do you think, Tryphena?

(TRYPHENA hesitates before rushing to the table. She anxiously rummages through the same materials, organizing as she searches.)

HULDAH, Continued

(Shouts) Tryphena!

(TRYPHENA freezes.)

TRYPHENA

Yes, ma’am?

HULDAH

What are you doing?

(TRYPHENA looks frantically between HULDAH, the table and the rest of the room.)

TRYPHENA

(Hysterical) I’m not sure ma’am.

(Silence. TRYPHENA waits for an answer.)

TRYPHENA, Continued

Looking for something?

HULDAH

(Nods) Good. Do you know what you’re looking for?

Silence.

TRYPHENA

(Upset) No, ma’am.

(HULDAH stretches her arms, palms up, before TRYPHENA.)

HULDAH

My morning morsel.

(TRYPHENA remains still.)

HULDAH, Continued

(Retraints) My early snack.

(TRYPHENA turns to leave. She speaks over her shoulder to HULDAH.)
TRYPHENA
(Careful) Ma’am, isn’t it a bit early for meal time?

HULDAH
It’s become quite customary these days for professionals, such as myself, to vary eating times based on occupation. So, there’s no need for reproach, is that clear?

TRYPHENA
(Ashamed) Yes, ma’am.

HULDAH
And besides, it isn’t as if I’m drinking at this time of the day. If that was the case then, I agree, such a sign of degradation would give you cause for concern. (Silence) Now, go.

(TRYPHENA nods nervously and scurries from the room.)

HULDAH, Continued
(To herself) When you’re hungry, you’re hungry.

(HULDAH sits and pushes around the articles atop the desk.)

HULDAH, Continued
(Calls out) Tryphena, where’s today’s agenda?

(TRYPHENA rushes back into the room. She carries a large slice of bread and a wooden, greasy spoon.)

TRYPHENA
(Lost) Ma’am?

HULDAH
The agenda. Today’s agenda. Where is it?

(Hesitates) There isn’t one.

(HULDAH drops her head onto the desk. Silence.)

TRYPHENA, Continued
Will I be getting paid this week, ma’am?

(HULDAH looks up from the table.)

HULDAH
How many times have I told you... it’s about the craft and not about the money. Having pride in your work. Weren’t you listening?
TRYPHENA
Yes, ma’am. I remember you saying that on numerous occasions.

HULDAH
Then...

TRYPHENA
Will I be getting paid this week, ma’am?

(HULDAH sighs a deep, long sigh.)

HULDAH
Don’t you always get paid?

(Silence.)

TRYPHENA
No, ma’am.

HULDAH
Excuse me?

TRYPHENA
I didn’t get paid last week. Or the week before.

(HULDAH sits up at the table.)

TRYPHENA, Continued
I didn’t get paid the second week of last month, nor—

(HULDAH approaches TRYPHENA. She manages to change the subject.)

HULDAH
What are you putting on my bread?

TRYPHENA
(Defensive) Melted butter.

HULDAH
Oh. Fine.

(A confused TRYPHENA stares at the spoon and butter.)

HULDAH, Continued
Go.

(TRYPHENA hurries out of the room.)
HULDAH, Continued

(Calls out) Olives. Bring me some olives. And I’ve changed my mind about the butter. No butter, oil. Oil on my bread. And a glass of wine. (To herself) Try to give someone a chance to advance their position these days. Just try. You get bit in the—

(A young woman, MARA, enters the room. She is provocatively dressed and is adorned with excessive jewelry. Her hair is big and her make-up is heavy. HULDAH stands to greet her.)

HULDAH, Continued

Good morning. Welcome to the House of Figs with locations in Hebron, Shiloh and, needless to say, Jerusalem.

(HULDAH invites MARA into the room.)

HULDAH, Continued

My name is Huldah—

(TRYPHENA enters and interrupts the introduction.)

TRYPHENA

Your meal ma’am.

HULDAH

This is my assistant, Tryphena.

(TRYPHENA, hands full with HULDAH’S meal, responds awkwardly to the moment. She settles on a polite curtsey.)

TRYPHENA

(To HULDAH) What should I do with...?

HULDAH motions to the table. She whispers between clenched teeth.

HULDAH

(To TRYPHENA) Just put it on the table. (Towards MARA) Tryphena, we have a customer. Please...

MARA

Mara.

HULDAH

Mara... please have a seat.

(HULDAH motions to TRYPHENA for a seat. TRYPHENA carries a second stool to the table for MARA.)

HULDAH, Continued
(To MARA) Please, make yourself comfortable.

(HULDAH holds up the plate of food.)

HULDAH, Continued

(To TRYPHENA) If you please.

TRYPHENA

But I thought you wanted—

HULDAH

(Laughs nervously; to MARA) Excuse us for one minute.

(HULDAH drags TRYPHENA away from the table.)

HULDAH, Continued

What is the matter with you? That over there is a customer.

TRYPHENA

But your—

(HULDAH takes a bite of the bread, quickly chews and swallows.)

HULDAH

Want to get paid this week?

(TRYPHENA nods in relief.)

HULDAH, Continued

Then take this out of here, and come right back in here with something to take notes.

(HULDAH turns to MARA and presents the plate of food. The two women pose with the plate.)

HULDAH, Continued

Can we get you something?

MARA

No, it’s a little early in the day for me.

(TRYPHENA looks at HULDAH.)

HULDAH

(To TRYPHENA) Go.

(TRYPHENA exits. HULDAH moves to her seat behind the table.)
HULDAH, Continued

(To MARA) Now, what service can we perform for you today?

MARA

(Uncomfortable) Service?

HULDAH

Yes, service. I assume you’ve come to arrange an event of some type.

(MARA shakes her head in confusion. TRYPHENA enters and joins HULDAH at the table; a charcoal stick in hand, she readies a scroll of paper.)

HULDAH, Continued

(Deliberate with gestures) You’re... here... to make... arrangements... for...

(MARA finally catches on. She pulls a slip of paper from her cleavage. She manipulates the paper, trying to read what’s written with no success. MARA hands it to HULDAH. She has no better luck with the note. MARA motions to her chest.)

MARA

(Giggles) It smeared.

HULDAH

Yes, that’s bound to happen in this climate. Why don’t you just tell us about what you want. I’m sure the details will come back to you.

(HULDAH motions to TRYPHENA who readies herself to write.)

MARA

Oh, okay.

(MARA settles on the stool. HULDAH and TRYPHENA wait for her to speak. And wait. And wait.)

HULDAH

Sweetheart.

MARA

(Smiles) Yes?

HULDAH

The reason you’re here.

MARA

(Giggles) I was waiting for you to ask me questions. I’m not used to starting a conversation. (Pause) Actually, I don’t do much talking at all... if you know what I mean.
(MARA’S implication disturbs HULDAH and TRYPHENA.)

HULDAH
Questions. All right, that’s one way we could handle this. Let’s see, now... Are we celebrating a birth?

MARA
(Indignant) No.

HULDAH
A union?

MARA
(Thinks) No.

HULDAH
The passing of a loved one?

MARA
No.

(HULDAH’s patience is beginning to wear thin as she has no success.)

HULDAH
A rite? A reunion? (Frustrated) The birth of a stable animal?

(MARA laughs at what she thinks was a joke.)

MARA
Nooo.

(HULDAH strains for another suggestion.)

HULDAH
(Excited) A catered affair?

MARA
(Enthused) Yes.

(HULDAH and MARA rejoice for a moment at their success.)

HULDAH
(To TRYPHENA) A catered affair. There we go. (To MARA) That wasn’t too difficult, was it?

(MARA shakes her head.)
HULDAH, Continued

Now, will this be a sixth hour celebration?

MARA

A what?

HULDAH

The day’s first meal.

MARA

(Thinks) I think that might be a little too early in the day.

HULDAH

Then a main meal?

MARA

Probably too late in the day. You know, I’m not really sure.

HULDAH

You’re not sure of the time for your own event?

MARA

See, that’s the thing. It’s not really my event.

HULDAH

Once again.

MARA

I’m here for my boy— a friend of mine.

HULDAH

A friend. Um-hmm. Does this friend have a name?

MARA

Of course he does. Don’t be silly.

(Silence.)

HULDAH

(To TRYPHENA) And again we seem to be getting nowhere.

MARA

Is there a problem?

HULDAH

His name, please. You said it was his party.
MARA

I don’t think I can say.

HULDAH

We’re going to need a name for our records.

(MARA hesitates as TRYPHENA and HULDAH try to encourage an answer.)

MARA

Still, I’d better not.

(TRYPHENA place her hand on the shoulder of a frustrated HULDAH. TRYPHENA bends down and whispers into HULDAH’S ear.)

HULDAH

You’re right. (To MARA) My dear, times are lean. The whole region is in a variety of slumps... economic, spiritual... you name it, it’s slumping. If you’re concerned with us turning down the job because of any...

TRYPHENA

Relationships with any unsavory, questionable or nefarious—

HULDAH

(To TRYPHENA) Enough. I’m sure she understands.

MARA

No, I don’t.

HULDAH

We can’t afford to turn away your business.

MARA

Oh, perfect then.

HULDAH

Outstanding. His name then.

MARA

I thought we were past that?

HULDAH

So did I.

(HULDAH and MARA stare at each other.)
TRYPHENA
Mara. The House of Figs, in an effort to understand the unstated but understood demands of our clientele asks for no payment up front, but, instead, we bill our customers afterwards, expecting payment, in full, upon receipt of bill.

MARA
Wow, that’s really very trusting and generous.

(HULDAH looks up to admire TRYPHENA’S business acumen.)

HULDAH
That’s the House of Figs. Trusting and generous.

TRYPHENA
Now, where, and to whom, shall we messenger the bill?

MARA
Mariamne of Nazareth.

HULDAH
Marianne of Nazareth.

MARA
Not Marianne, Mariamne.

HULDAH
That’s what I said. Marianne.

MARA
Mariamne. Mary-am-nee.

(HULDAH stares at MARA.)

MARA, Continued
There’s a little inn outside of town. Ask for Gabriel and he’ll give you directions.

HULDAH
(Slightly annoyed) Let’s continue, shall we?

Sounds good.

MARA
(To TRYPHENA) Where were we?

(TRYPHENA checks her scroll.)
TRYPHENA
First meal too early. Main meal too late.

HULDAH
Right. How about something in between... a supper time.

MARA
Oh, I like the sound of that. Very ‘out there’ thinking.

HULDAH
Yes, we’re out there. Very mystical.

MARA
Mystical. That sounds marvelous. A mystical supper.

HULDAH
(Humors) Terrific. Write that down, Tryphena. One mystical supper for our newest client.

MARA
Not for me... remember.

HULDAH
Of course, the... friend who shall remain nameless. Does... someone have a particular venue in mind?

MARA
(Nods) It needs to be right here in Jerusalem.

HULDAH
Good. We have excellent relationships with several local inn keepers in the area. The first thing we’ll do—

MARA
No. It can’t be in a public place.

HULDAH
(Excited) A surprise party. What fun. Why didn’t you say so earlier?

MARA
Oh, there’ll be a few surprises all right.

HULDAH
What’s that?

MARA
It’s not a surprise party.
(Disappointed) Oh.

HULDAH

MARA

It’s more like a... farewell dinner, I suspect.

HULDAH

You suspect.

MARA

It needs to be for just him and his immediate friends.

(TRYPHENA again whispers into HULDAH’S ear.)

HULDAH

Apparently we have a little, out of the way place up on Mount Zion.

(TRYPHENA again, quietly, shares her information.)

HULDAH, Continued

An upstairs room. Nothing fancy but I’m sure it will meet your needs. Especially if the affair is to be an intimate one.

MARA

Sounds fine.

HULDAH

We’ll check the availability once you give us the date.

MARA

Two days.

HULDAH

Two days from...

MARA

Today.

HULDAH

In two days. Nothing like last minute planning.

(TRYPHENA leans and whispers.)

HULDAH, Continued

It’ll cost extra on such a short notice.
What will?

*(TRYPHENA leans and whispers.)*

Everything.

Okay. Oh, wait.

Now what?

How will anyone know where to go?

You really are new at this, aren’t you?

It needs to be kept a secret, remember.

*(Sarcastic)* How’s this? Since a sign would be out in public, messengers wouldn’t be keeping it a secret, and it’s obviously too late for any formal announcement, why don’t we just have a signal that you, or your friend, or whomever you trust, can convey to all the attendees?

*(Silence.)*

That’s a wonderful idea. I love it. What should it be? The signal that is.

*(Fed up)* How about a little old man walking around the front of the building. He can carry a jug of water and give them a secret signal to direct them where to go.

That’s perfect. I like it... except for secret signal. That might be overdoing it a tad.

We wouldn’t want to overdo it, would we?

Absolutely not. This is fun, what’s next?
(HULDAH takes a deep breath.)

HULDAH

How many guests will be in attending?

(MARA counts her fingers.)

MARA

Let’s see. Thomas, James, Bartholomew... the two sets of brothers... him... him... twelve.

HULDAH

You’re sure.

(MARA closes her eyes and counts in the air.)

MARA

(Nods) Twelve.

HULDAH

Including your...

MARA


HULDAH

(To TRYPHENA) Thirteen.

TRYPHENA

(Writes) Got it.

(MARA refers to her feet.)

HULDAH

Ah, you’ll need accommodations for the washing of the feet. Not a problem. Tryphena, please make a note to arrange for a slave for the ceremonial washing of the feet.

MARA

No, no, no.

HULDAH

No, no, no?

MARA

No, no, no. No slave.
HULDAH
You can’t expect the guests to wash their own feet?

MARA
No, never.

HULDAH
Good. You had me worried.

MARA
My— (Catches herself) The host wishes to do it himself.

HULDAH
(First to TRYPHENA) Who is this guy? (To MARA) Who is this guy?

(TRYPHENA and HULDAH gaze quizzically at MARA.)

MARA
It’s okay, really. I’ll sign a ... what would you call it?

A waiver?

HULDAH

MARA
That’s it.

HULDAH
No, that won’t be necessary.

(TRYPHENA whispers into HULDAH’S ear.)

HULDAH, Continued

Well, maybe later.

MARA
And he’ll need a special... cup.

HULDAH
A special vessel? A goblet?

MARA
Without handles.

HULDAH
A chalice?
MARA

That’s it.

(MARA’S response once again initiates concerned stares from TRYPHENA and HULDAH.)

HULDAH

Just one?

MARA

Yes, but a special one. Big enough to pass around.

HULDAH

That’s not the most sanitary practice, you realize.

(MARA ponders the comment.)

MARA

I'll sign a waiver.

HULDAH

Fine.

MARA

(Flippant) He wants what he wants when he wants it. What can I say?

(MARA pulls her skirt up an inch or two and winks at TRYPHENA and HULDAH. The two women squirm uncomfortably.)

HULDAH

Let’s decide on the meal.

(MARA repositions herself.)

HULDAH, Continued

Let’s start with the main course. A nice leg of lamb is always... a... popular...

(MARA vigorously shakes her head.)

HULDAH, Continued

And now you’re shaking your head, why?

MARA

No lamb.

HULDAH

Oh, okay. No lamb. We could do a nice twelve ounce rib eye—
(MARA shakes her head.)

Ten ounce?

(MARA responds with a slowed but still emphatic gesture.)

Let me guess. No beef?

(MARA shakes her head.)

Medallions of veal?

(MARA shakes her head.)

Calf’s liver?

(MARA shakes her head.)

Why don’t you help me out here, dear?

MARR

Mmmm. How should I phrase this?

(HULDAH relaxes waiting for MARA to word her request. After a long wait, MARA finally speaks.)

MARA, Continued

Nothing that fire, frost or water has destroyed.

HULDAH

Frost?

(HULDAH questions MARA’s awareness of their environment.)

MARA

(Meek) I’m pretty sure that’s what he said.

HULDAH

He, being...
(MARA nods her head.)

HULDAH, Continued

Right. He who shall remain nameless.

(MARA winks in response.)

HULDAH, Continued

Now, where would that leave us?

Fish.

HULDAH

(To MARA) Fish.

HMM, fish.

Fish.

HULDAH

Boiled fish.

TRYPHENA

Huh. Can we make it a little more... I don’t know...

MARA

Exciting? Tasty?

TRYPHENA

Edible?

HULDAH

Yes.

MARA

There’s a variety of spices and herbs we can use.

MARA

Nothing bitter.
HULDAH

Noted. As a side dish we can prepare a wonderful vegetable medley of garlic flavored beans, corn and stewed onions and leak.

*(MARA pauses before she shakes her head.)*

HULDAH, *Continued*

There’s that shake of the head again.

I don’t think so. No.

MARA

No to... what in particular?

HULDAH

*(Silence.)*

All of it.

MARA

All of it?

HULDAH

*(Hesitates) All of it. No side dish.*

MARA

No side dish at all?

HULDAH

Not even fruit and honey?

TRYPHENA

Not even.

MARA

Because he... what about steamed or dried garbanzo beans?

MARA

*(Excited) I love garbanzo beans.*

HULDAH

There we go. Tryphena makes this wonderful spread with them.

MARA

Really... *(Abrupt) No.*
HULDAH
You can’t just serve fish.

MARA
How about bread?

HULDAH
Bread and fish.

MARA
It’s something at least, right?

(HULDAH takes pause.)

HULDAH
(To TRYPHENA) She’s the client. Unleavened bread and fish.

(MARA’S shaking head is barely noticeable.)

MARA
Ummmm...

HULDAH
(Angry) Ummmm, what?

MARA
What you suggested.

HULDAH
You have a problem with unleavened bread. You have a problem with unleavened bread? No, excuse me. He who shall remain nameless has a problem with simple, flat bread?

MARA
He likes it fluffy.

(HULDAH winks at TRYPHENA.)

HULDAH
(Sarcastic) Fluffy bread he will have. Make a note Tryphena. Boiled fish and fluffy bread and, wait for it, water?

This is Not the End of the Play

Ending of Scene Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

Please Continue to Read the Next Scene
ALL YOU CAN EAT

SCENE: A bare stage. The entire downstage width or apron should be the location of an implied, all you can eat, family buffet.

AT RISE: MANNY stands at either side of the stage. With both hands, he holds a large, oval, empty plate in front of him. From where he stands, MANNY ogles the extent of the buffet.

NOTE: His dialogue, unless otherwise specified, is spoken to himself.

MANNY

(Impressed) Wow! By far the largest buffet I’ve ever seen. The flyer said great food at a great place.

(MANNY looks around.)

MANNY, Continued

Well, who cares about what the place looks like and we’ll just see about the great food. The flyer stated Chinese, Japanese and American cuisine.

(MANNY peruses his surroundings.)

MANNY, Continued


(MANNY pulls a flyer from his pocket.)

MANNY, Continued

(Reads) Chinese, Japanese, and American.

(MANNY stands on his toes and looks all around and over the buffet.)

MANNY, Continued

(Satisfied) Ah, there it is. Station number five. The sushi bar. And wait... could it be? Yes it is. Soft serve ice cream with sundae fixings.

(MANNY’S attention is drawn to the middle of the buffet.)

MANNY, Continued

(Concerned) Oh, oh. We’ve got a mad rush towards one section of station two. That could only mean one thing...

(MANNY angles himself for a better look.)
MANNY, Continued

Just as I thought. Snow crab legs. That mad rush doesn’t mean a thing. (Looks around) If they’re any good the tables will have shell crackers...

(MANNY does an exhaustive search of the tables. He nods and begins to smile broadly towards the end of his search. MANNY looks back at the gathering around the crab legs.)

MANNY, Continued

(Determined) Get out of the way folks. I’ll be getting me some of those—

(MANNY’S move is stopped dead by his response to a strong smell.)

MANNY, Continued

(Intrigued) What’s that? (Sniffs) Garlic, a trace of ground pepper, lemon and... olive oil. That has to be the best lemon chicken I’ve ever smelled.

(MANNY composes himself.)

MANNY, Continued

Whoa, whoa. Get a hold of yourself Manny. You’re acting like you’ve never been to one of these before. And we all know that couldn’t be anything further from the truth. Don’t let your mind get ahead of your stomach. First things first. There are rules to remember and procedures to follow. Let’s not let a little lemon chicken destroy all protocol. Take a deep breath. (Breathes deeply) One: salads belong in restaurants, not at a buffet. Two: never eat too much of one item. Three: follow the proper eating guidelines. An appetizer sampler, snow crab legs, appetizers, appetizer seconds, meal taste-test, meal with rice or lo-mein, meal seconds, rice and lo-mein optional, an appetizer nosh, snow crab legs, if available, dessert, and dessert with ice-cream. Four: take what you want but eat what you take. Five: soda fills, water flushes. (Bows his head) Amen.

(MANNY touches his stomach.)

MANNY, Continued

Time to take care of business.

(MANNY stretches his arms and shakes his legs one at a time. He looks around, makes several moves towards several different stations. MANNY reaches for a number of different foods but eventually returns to his original location. He closes his eyes and pinches the bridge of his nose.)

MANNY, Continued

Oh boy. Feeling a little woozy here. (Wipes his forehead) I’m hungry. Yeah, that’s it. A little warm in here, too. I need to eat something, that’s all. (Laughs) Well, I’m in the right place for that. No shortage of food at this place. Now, let’s rock and roll.

(MANNY remains frozen. He looks down at his legs.)
MANNY, Continued
C’mon legs, do your stuff. You lead and the rest of us follow. *(Remains frozen; to his legs)* Snow crab legs! GO!

*(MANNY is forced to address a waiter. [The waiter is unseen by the audience.])*  

MANNY, Continued  
*(Embarrassed)* No, everything’s fine. Just checking out the landscape before I forge ahead.

*(MANNY bows at the waist in respect to the waiter’s culture.)*

MANNY, Continued  
*(Nervous)* This is ridiculous. *(Kids)* Come on ol’ boy, get with it. *(Closes eyes)* Travel back and remember... remember...

*(Silence.)*

MANNY, Continued  
*(Softly)* The excitement of your first buffet. *(Breathes)* Your sixteenth birthday. *(Breathes)* Three carving stations. *(Breathes)* The oyster bar. *(Breathes)* The cheesecake assortment for dessert. Pineapple, cherry, blueberry and chocolate swirl.

*(MANNY takes one last breath. He straightens out his arms, holding out his plate like an offering.)*

MANNY, Continued  
You need it. You want it. You shall have it.

*(MANNY opens his eyes with a renewed determination.)*

MANNY, Continued  
*(Instructs)* Six to eight shrimp, three oysters, three baked clams-on-the-half shell. Don’t forget the cocktail sauce and lemon slices. Mussels as appetizer only if they’re not in red sauce. Move to the calamari. Rings only and avoid the heavily battered pieces. Next, several pieces of fried chicken, drumsticks only, and four to five sweet and sour chicken nuggets. Dribble sweet and sour sauce onto chicken as to avoid any sauce on the shellfish. If crab legs are obtainable, procure a second and third plate. The third for shells and bones. Do not, repeat, do not pile legs onto other food. If crab legs are currently unavailable, quickly return to your table with your initial plate of food and immediately return to the crab leg station and linger until the next portion of legs is served. Take legs and claws. Bodies should be left in the pan. Why? It just ain’t worth my time and effort.

*(MANNY remains still.)*

MANNY, Continued  
Oh. My. God. This can’t be happening. Not to me. Oh sweet mother of God, not me.
(MANNY once again is forced to address the waiter. He awkwardly bows several times before speaking.)

MANNY, Continued
(Flushed) No, no, everything’s fine. (Enunciates loudly) It... all... looks... very... good.

(MANNY bows again.)

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending of Scene Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes
Please Continue to Read the Next Scene

MAMA MARIE’S

SCENE: Present. The office of Mama Marie’s CEO. Only a phone and a Newton’s Cradle sit on a table under a looming, corporate logo of the Italian food conglomerate. A fluorescent letter “X” is on the floor as far from her desk as possible.

AT RISE: A woman, ANTONIA, dressed in a matching, velour work-out suit, stares at the toy as she alternately bounces one then two steel balls against each other. ANTONIA does this for several minutes.

ANTONIA
(Yells off) Come. Next. Let’s go.

(A younger woman, BONNIE BELLE, enters the room. She is dressed in a stylish, but conservative suit. She cautiously enters the room. ANTONIA ignores BONNIE as she stands across the room from the desk. BONNIE finally works up the nerve to approach the desk. She extends her arm for a handshake. ANTONIA throws her hand up and stops BONNIE short of the desk.)

ANTONIA, Continued

On the “X”.

BONNIE
(Confused) What?

(BONNIE nervously searches the room and even examines herself for an “X”.)

ANTONIA
The “X” the “X”. Over there, for ‘crying out loud’. Over there on the floor.
(ANTONIA points to an opposite corner of the room, where an orange letter “X” is drawn on the floor. BONNIE spots the letter.)

BONNIE
Ah, the “X”. I see it now. Sorry.

(BONNIE scurries and stands on the orange letter.)

BONNIE, Continued
I’d like to thank you for the—

ANTONIA
Did I say you could speak?

BONNIE
Uh, no, I, uh... sorry.

ANTONIA
Uh... no... oh.... wah, wah, wah.

(ANTONIA returns to the steel balls.)

ANTONIA, Continued
(Condescending) You’re all alike. Your kind has been parading in and out of this office, in front of generations of family members for decades and it’s always the same attempt to prove you know more about our business than we do.

(BONNIE begins to defend herself but is halted by a raise of ANTONIA’S hand. ANTONIA steps out from behind the table and moves freely around the room.)

ANTONIA, Continued
Do you know how long Mama Marie’s has been in business? Do you?

(ANTONIA refuses to allow BONNIE a word.)

ANTONIA, Continued
Let me tell you. Since the days of your mother’s mother’s grandmother, that’s how long. Do you know how long Mama Marie’s intends to be in business? Do you?

(ANTONIA again refuses to allow BONNIE a word.)

ANTONIA, Continued
Let me tell you. Until we, you and me, are the grandmothers in the answer the person in charge of this company will give an upstart like you generations from today. (Pause) What’s your name?
(BONNIE opens her mouth to answer but is stopped before she utters a sound.)

ANTONIA, Continued

Don’t answer that question. You know why I don’t want you to answer that question? Because I don’t need to know your name. I don’t want to know your name. I have a secretary and two assistants who know your name for me. If I need them to. You’re probably saying to yourself, how dare this person speak to me this way? You’re probably asking yourself, who does this so-and-so think she is? Well, I’ll tell you who I am. I’m the CEO of the largest, yes, the largest - not one of the largest- the largest, and oldest, not one of the oldest, but the oldest, manufacturers of Italian foods in the world. You’re now probably thinking, she’s too young to be a CEO, aren’t you? (Raises her voice) Aren’t you? Don’t deny it. Yes, I’m young, and so what I say to you. Let me tell you something, younger lady than me, I’ve earned my place behind that desk. I didn’t wheel some chair from another office and plop myself down in it and say, ‘I’m in charge.’ I earned sitting in that chair. That chair that all my relatives before me sat in. I know what’s going through that pea sized brain of yours. You’re thinking, how? How did she do it? How did she get into that chair? You’re thinking, will I ever sit in that chair? That’s what you’re thinking, isn’t it? Don’t answer me. Let me answer. You’ll be lucky if you ever sit in any chair, let alone that one. Oh, I’m sure you think you’re the exception. ‘If anyone can do, I can do it.’ Well, little lady, if you think you can, and you think you will, and you won’t, you’d better be good at one thing. Want to know what that one thing is? Want to know the one word secret to the success of that chair? Do you?

(BONNIE barely opens her mouth to answer but is quickly stopped.)

ANTONIA, Continued

Innovation. That’s right, innovation. Mama Marie’s is all about innovation. Fresh vegetables and meats sold from a horse drawn cart on the cobblestone streets of old New York. Jarred, then canned products and packaged goods that stocked the shelves in a converted bakery in Little Italy. Then frozen foods and dinners, microwaveable meals, fast food franchises, and independently owned stores. Low calorie, fat free, sodium free, sugar free, gluten free, and dairy free. Low cholesterol, no carbs and whole wheat. We emphasize foods that are natural, chemical free and organic. If you’ve got an allergy, we’ve got a food. In original, home style, restaurant, pizzeria and ‘a taste of Sicily’ varieties. Mama Marie’s is recognized as a leader in restaurants, deli’s, supermarkets and food courts. Mama Marie’s, an innovator in both fresh and prepared foods. But go ahead, continue to stand there and believe you have an idea that we haven’t already thought of. We’ve probably discarded more ideas in one week than you’ve come up with in your entire young, pathetic life. Dare to dream, kid, dare to dream. That corporate logo, a logo recognized around the world, a logo that has traveled to the moon and every space station that’s flown the stars and stripes and the sickle and hammer. That’s right, Mama Marie’s, the official food of two, two, space programs. You couldn’t wear my chef’s hat and apron for one day and survive. How dare you? What gives you the right to march in here thinking you’ve got the next brilliant idea that will catapult you into that seat? You smug, arrogant so-and-so. Tell me, Top Chef or Iron Chef or whatever you consider yourself. What’s the next untapped market, Chef Boy-ar-dee? What is it? Speak up, why don’t you?
(BONNIE remains still, half in fear and half in disbelief. ANTONIA makes her way back to the Newton’s Cradle.)

ANTONIA, Continued
Just what I thought. All preen and fluff. You stick out your chest and chirp but you never take flight. If there’s no action on your part, there can be no equal and opposite reaction on my part.

(ANTONIA sends the steel balls clacking against each other. She stares at a stunned BONNIE. A woman, ALLIE, enters the room. She is dressed in a military style outfit, but not a uniform.)

ALLIE
(To ANTONIA) Ah, there you are. (Calls off) She’s in here.

(ALLIE motions to BONNIE to be patient. A male NURSE dressed in hospital scrubs enters. ALLIE subtly points to ANTONIA. The NURSE slowly approaches the desk.)

NURSE
Please come with me Antonia.

ANTONIA
(Wide-eyed; to NURSE) It’s time for another taste test isn’t it?

NURSE
Yes, we have a new product for you to approve.

ANTONIA
I hope everyone likes it.

NURSE
I’m sure they will.

(The NURSE escorts ANTONIA from the room.)

ALLIE
(To NURSE) Wait.

(ALLIE grabs the Newton’s Cradle from the desk and hands it to the NURSE before they leave.)

ALLIE, Continued
(To BONNIE) It calms her. Especially when she’s waiting for her meds.

(BONNIE shifts her confusion from the door, to ALLIE to the “X” on the floor. ALLIE addresses her unspoken questions.)
ALLIE, Continued
A former employee. A very sad set of circumstances that you needn’t worry about. I’m Allie Berardino, CEO of Mama Marie’s. And you must be Bonnie Belle.

(BONNIE hesitates moving off the “X”, but eventually approaches ALLIE. A warm handshake from ALLIE relaxes the young woman.)

BONNIE
She had me wondering what I might be getting myself into.

ALLIE
Big corporations sometimes produce big problems. Now, what do you say we get on with the interview?

BONNIE
That’s sounds terrific.

(ALLIE takes her seat behind the desk. She takes two oriental health balls from her jacket pocket. ALLIE manipulates them in one hand.)

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending of Scene Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes
Please Continue to Read the Next Scene

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

SCENE: A round table and two simple chairs. On the table: a paper place mat, utensils rolled into a paper napkin, condiments and a closed menu.

AT RISE: DEREK sits at the table. He fidgets with a mug of beer. Across from him a woman, TARA, sits, her arms folded across her chest. She leans back in her chair. Silence.

DEREK
Thanks for letting me explain myself.

TARA
I just don’t have a lot of time.

DEREK
I understand. I’ll try to be as brief as I can.
TARA
Please.

DEREK
I have... commitment issues.

TARA
You think admitting to that makes my life easier?

DEREK
No, not at all, but I think it explains why I act the way I do.

TARA
The way you act has gotten me into a lot of trouble.

DEREK
I’m sorry. I’m really, really sorry.

TARA
(Looks at her watch) Can we get on with his?

DEREK
Right. Get on with it.

(DEREK takes a sip of beer.)

TARA
Why am I sitting here?

DEREK
I’m hoping to help you understand who I am and how I can help you... I don’t know; work with me on my situation.

TARA
Work with you? How about I let you work on your situation. Or, better yet, why don’t you and your wife work on you situation. I neither have the time nor do I care.

DEREK
My... what?

TARA
(Thinks) Your wife. The woman you’ve been coming in here with every Friday night for, I don’t know, five years.

(Silence.)
DEREK
(Shaken) No. No. No wife. Not my wife. Not the wife. She’s only the girlfriend. We’re not even engaged.

TARA
Only the girlfriend. Nice.

DEREK
I didn’t exactly mean it the way you’re making it sound.

TARA
Like I said, talk to her, not me.

DEREK
She doesn’t understand me.

TARA
There’s a shocker.

DEREK
No, she doesn’t.

TARA
Listen slick, that’s what they all say.

DEREK
But in my case it’s true. She’s changed over the years. She won’t even try to understand me, let alone help me.

TARA
Maybe it’s up to you then.

DEREK
What do you mean?

TARA
You need to help yourself. You have to do the work. Stop relying on everyone else to do it for you. Stop making excuses. Do something.

DEREK
Like what?

TARA
Knowing you, live up to your responsibilities. That’d be a good start.
DEREK
Live up to my responsibilities, huh?

TARA
You can call it whatever you want. You can do whatever you want. It’s your problem and as of here and now, I’m not dealing with it anymore and, as a matter of fact, I’m not dealing with you anymore.

You can’t do that.

TARA
Excuse me?

DEREK
You can’t do that and you can’t treat me that way.

Oh, I can’t?

DEREK
No, you can’t. That’s what you get paid for. Why I tip you the way I do. Admit it, I tip you very well.

You’re right, I get paid to provide a service... and not to tell you what you want. (DEREK sits in shame.)

TARA
(Sullen) What do you expect me to do?

(TARA stands. She reveals herself as DEREK’S waitress.)

I don’t know why I feel sorry for you. This is the last time, understand?

Thank you.

(DEREK takes the wedding response card from his pocket. He places it on top of the menu for TARA to see. TARA takes a quick look.)

You’re kidding.
DEREK
I’m afraid not.

TARA
Pick one. Prime rib or chicken. Check a box, stuff it, seal it and send it.

(DEREK stares at the card.)

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending of Scene Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes
Please Continue to Read the Next Scene

THE FIRST THANKSGIVING

SCENE: Fall, 1621. The Interior of a rustic, common meeting room. A simple wood table and two simple, wood chairs are the only pieces of furniture.

AT RISE: A Pilgrim, MILES STANDISH, nervously paces the room. His secretary, ELIZABETH, sits in the chair at the table; a ledger and ink bottle sit before her. She waits for STANDISH to speak, dragging the back of the quill along her cheek. Silence.

MILES
Read it back, please.

(ELIZABETH reads from the ledger.)

ELIZABETH
Great leader and spiritual advisor Ousamequin. (Pause) How are you?

MILES
Continue.

ELIZABETH
That’s all.

MILES
That’s it? It feels as if we’ve been here forever. Really, that’s it?

ELIZABETH
It took you a while to come up with the ‘how are you’ part.
MILES
Well, what else am I supposed to say? Thanks for letting us live through the summer.

ELIZABETH
You don’t mean that.

MILES
I think this whole idea is ridiculous. This is just another one of Bradford’s gimmicks to bring attention to himself.

ELIZABETH
The celebration?

MILES
Yes, the celebration. Or feast or day of thanks... whatever it is he’s calling it these days.

ELIZABETH
The Reverend Brewster’s calling it a Thanksgiving.

MILES
That blowhard could make a trek to the outbuilding cause for celebration as long as he can find a way to add a prayer at the beginning and end of the trip... with a sermon thrown in between somewhere.

ELIZABETH
That’s not very fair and you know it.

MILES
Well I bet it was Brewster who planted this crazy idea in Bradford’s head.

ELIZABETH
Does it matter whose idea it was? I for one think it’s a splendid suggestion.

MILES
He’s asking all of us to gather in one place, at one time, and break bread with three thousand Indians. There’s not even three score of us. And we’re asking them to bring the bulk of the ‘bread’ if you know what I mean. Who knows if they even know what bread is?

ELIZABETH
(Surprised) Miles Standish, you act as if they’re savages.

(MILES gyrates an ‘of course they are’ gesture.)
MILES
I didn’t travel two months and six thousand miles, suffer through a long cold winter and then starve most of the summer to attend some dinner party in the middle of nowhere only to end up with a hatchet in the back of my skull while I’m shelling walnuts... which I’m sick of, by the way.

ELIZABETH
Three.

MILES
Three what?

ELIZABETH
It was only three thousand miles.

MILES
Oh... well, it felt like six.

ELIZABETH
What about Squanto? Do you consider him a savage?

MILES
That hot-head? Yes, as a matter of fact, I do.

ELIZABETH
If his people meant us any harm at all would they have sent one of their best, and most respected members of the tribe to help us plant and farm.

MILES
Did you try working side-by-side with the guy? He’s a lunatic.

ELIZABETH
If it wasn’t for him, we may not have the harvest we’re intending to celebrate.

MILES
Poke a hole into the ground, drop a seed in the hole, kick some dirt into the hole and then have one of his female minions dribble some water from a hollowed out squash on it. That’s real cutting edge, agrarian technology if you ask me.

ELIZABETH
I think you’re jealous.

MILES
Of what?
ELIZABETH
Of his... prowess.

MILES
If you’re talking about what was dangling out from under that deerskin... trust me, nothing there to be jealous about.

ELIZABETH
(Insulted) Miles Standish.

MILES
I just don’t like the guy.

ELIZABETH
(Grins) Apparently none of the men could figure it out.

(STANDISH notices the look on ELIZABETH’S face.)

MILES
(Points) What’s that?

ELIZABETH
(Confused) What?

MILES
There... on your face. You’re... smirking.

ELIZABETH
No I’m not.

MILES
Yes... yes, you are.

ELIZABETH
Oh, good gracious.

MILES
You like him.

ELIZABETH
As if.

MILES
You find him appealing, don’t you?
ELIZABETH
He has certain, rugged qualities I find attractive, yes.

MILES
He has long hair and wears beads and feathers in it.

ELIZABETH
It’s not just looks that make a man appealing to a woman.

MILES
Right, his prowess.

ELIZABETH
Miles Standish, I won’t even dignify that comment with a response.

MILES
Dress ‘em up any way you like, they are what they are.

ELIZABETH
Maybe they feel the same way about us.

MILES
What did you say?

ELIZABETH
Maybe they don’t trust us.

MILES
That’s ridiculous. What have we ever done to make them think that?

ELIZABETH
Besides laying false claim to their land?

MILES
Who said it was theirs? I didn’t see a flag flying. I didn’t see a piece of paper with their names on it.

ELIZABETH
They were here first. At the least, we’re uninvited guests.

MILES
What would you have had us do? Send an announcement heralding our coming? Dear Natives... of wherever it is we’re journeying to. Be arriving on your rock sometime in the upcoming winter, if we live through the voyage. Keep a bed warmer with coal heated for our arrival.
ELIZABETH
I just think we should be aware of how good to us the Wampanoags have been.

MILES
If you want to call not killing us en mass in our sleep being good to us...

ELIZABETH
See, there you go again.

MILES
Fine, fine... let’s get back to the letter, shall we?

ELIZABETH
Let’s.

MILES
Where were we again? Read back what we have.

ELIZABETH
Great leader and spiritual advisor Ousamequin. (Pause) How are you?

(Silence.)

MILES
You think it’s too much?

ELIZABETH
Which part?

MILES
The great blah, blah, blah bit.

ELIZABETH
Maybe a little.

MILES
What’s that name he goes by?

ELIZABETH
Massasoit?

MILES
That’s it. What’s that mean again?

ELIZABETH
Great leader.
MILES
There you go. We’ll use that. A sign of... cultural understanding and recognition. Now, read it back.

ELIZABETH
You’re kidding.

MILES
No, go ahead. I want to hear how it sounds.

ELIZABETH
Dear... Massasoit.

MILES
No, all of it.

ELIZABETH
Dear Massasoit. How are you?

(MILES ponders the salutation.)

MILES
Good. Respectful. Concerned. I like it. (Pause) In recognition of the, no, our first successful harvest in our new land...

(ELIZABETH looks up from the ledger.)

MILES, Continued
…in this new land... We are planning a feast to recognize the achievement of our joint collaboration and friendship. That’s good, right?

ELIZABETH
Pretty good.

MILES
I’m not exactly sure how to word this next part.

ELIZABETH
What do you want to say?

MILES
What do I want to say? What do I want to say? (Builds) What I want to say is bring as much food as possible because we don’t have enough and we’re all freakin’ hungry.

ELIZABETH
What if you alluded to their hunting skills? Prove what great providers they are.
MILES
That’s good. Come up with something along those lines and read it back.

ELIZABETH
What?

MILES
(Breaks) Elizabeth, I can’t do this. It’s not right.

ELIZABETH
You don’t have a choice. This was a direct request... no, order, form Governor Bradford.

MILES
Don’t you see, he’s just trying to put a positive spin on this whole disastrous year. He needs to make this cockeyed venture look successful to his drinking buddies and sponsors back home. He’s up to no good. I’m sure of it. This... hoopla is just the beginning. And what next... a year from now, when he’s invited all his cronies from the old World over, he’ll want a bigger celebration and a bigger one yet the next year. Thanksgiving II, then Thanksgiving III... when do you think it will stop? No, I want no part of this.

(A knock at the door startles STANDISH and ELIZABETH.)

MILES, Continued
(Defensive) Who’s there?

GOV. BRADFORD (O.S.)
Governor Bradford.

MILES
(To ELIZABETH) Keep writing.

ELIZABETH
Write what?

MILES

GOV. BRADFORD (O.S.)
Is there a problem in there Standish?

(MILES composes himself.)

MILES
Come in, Governor.

(GOVERNOR WILLIAM BRADFORD enters the room. He is sullen as he roams the room.)
MILES, *Continued*

We were just finishing up the letter to Ousamequin.

GOV. BRADFORD

Who?

ELIZABETH

Massasoit.

GOV. BRADFORD

Yes, day of thanks invitation... well, stop writing Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

Governor?

GOV. BRADFORD

It’s no longer necessary.

MILES

(Feigns concern) Is there something wrong, Governor?

GOV. BRADFORD

The bastards beat us to it. *(To ELIZABETH)* Excuse my language, my dear.

*(ELIZABETH nods her head.)*

MILES

Who beat us to what, Governor?

GOV. BRADFORD

(Angry) The Berkeley Hundred, that’s who. And Thanksgiving is the what.

MILES

What is the Berkeley Hundred?

GOV. BRADFORD

The Berkeley Plantation. A group of thirty or so English brethren who had settled on the North Bank of the James River. Near some place called Charles Cittie.

MILES

That’s in the Virginia Colony. I thought Jamestown was the only settlement down there.

GOV. BRADFORD

So much for news traveling fast. Here, read it.

*(GOVERNOR BRADFORD hands a letter to STANDISH who in turns hands it to ELIZABETH.)*
ELIZABETH

(Reading aloud) For immediate release. December 4, 1619. Richard Berkeley, founder and land owner of eight thousand acres of prime Virginia Colony land to be known as Berkeley Plantation, is proud to announce the celebration of their arrival in “The New World.” In an opening ceremony speech, group spiritual leader Captain John Woodleaf recognized the day as the First Annual Thanksgiving Day. In his observation, he stated, ‘we ordain that the day of our ship’s arrival at the place assigned for our settlement in the land of Virginia shall be recognized yearly and perpetually kept holy as the day of Thanksgiving to Almighty God.’

(The room is silent.)

GOV. BRADFORD
We can’t top that. They covered it all. Good angle, cause, wording... God.

MILES
What are you going to do about it?

GOV. BRADFORD
There’s nothing we can do. It’s all over.

(A moment.)

MILES
That should about wrap it up, then. Anyone want to get a mug of cider? It’s on me.

ELIZABETH
Maybe we should have our own celebration.

MILES
(To ELIZABETH)
Didn’t you hear the Governor, it’s all over.

GOV. BRADFORD
Didn’t you hear, Elizabeth? They’ve established a holy day called Thanksgiving.

ELIZABETH
Yes, celebrating their arrival.

GOV. BRADFORD
So?

ELIZABETH
We’re celebrating a harvest. With natives.

GOV. BRADFORD
Go on.
(Behind Bradford’s back, STANDISH does his best to dissuade ELIZABETH form continuing.)

ELIZABETH
We make it a week long event.

GOV. BRADFORD
I’m liking what I hear.

ELIZABETH
Add some games, some singing and dancing between meals.

GOV. BRADFORD
A whole week with the Wampanoag? Where do we put them? We barely have shelter for our own.

ELIZABETH
Encourage them to build their own shelters when they arrive. Their own village.

MILES
Are you forgetting it’s a two day walk?

ELIZABETH
All the more reason for them to stay the week... and have the comforts of home. And after the celebration, when they move out of their shelters...

GOV. BRADFORD
We move in. I like the way you think young lady. And the longer they know they’ll be here, the more food they’ll bring.

MILES
We still won’t be remembered as the first.

GOV. BRADFORD
Who knows what the upcoming months may bring.

MILES
(Imagines) Maybe Berkeley’s group’ll be massacred by Indians.

GOV. BRADFORD
(Adds) Word through the grapevine is they all sleep with one eye open down there.

(The TWO MEN foresee the future and react in their own way.)

GOV. BRADFORD, Continued
Let’s do it. Standish, I want that letter on my desk tomorrow morning.
MILES

Tomorrow morning, Governor.

GOV. BRADFORD

Carry on you two.

(GOVERNOR BRADFORD exits. STANDISH turns his attention to ELIZABETH.)

MILES

A week long event, indeed.

ELIZABETH

Massacred by Indians?

MILES

It could happen. Anyway, I had to say something.

(ELIZABETH holds up her quill.)

ELIZABETH

The letter?

MILES

Be my guest. You’re the one with the bright ideas.

(MILES starts for the door.)

ELIZABETH

Where are you going?

MILES

Home.

ELIZABETH

To do what?

This is Not the End of the Play

Ending of Scene Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

Please Continue to Read the Next Scene
GRAPE JELLY
Based on a story by Dakota Lyn Svec

SCENE: Some time in the near future. A table sits center stage. Its contents include large jars of both grape jelly and peanut butter plus knives, packages of white bread and several plates.

AT RISE: A man, JOE, and a woman, JEAN, methodically construct healthy peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. They are dressed in contemporary clothes which are protected by full length aprons. When decent piles of sandwiches have been constructed, they break the fourth wall and address the audience.

NOTE: JOE and JEAN continue to construct sandwiches throughout the play. They only address each other when specified; otherwise they break the fourth wall and speak directly to the audience.

JOE
We’re jelly people.

JEAN
Grape jelly... people.

JOE
Yes, grape jelly. (Beat) At a time, not long ago, we thought we might just be the last jelly people on earth.

JEAN
Grape jelly people on earth.

JOE
We thought we had become the last of a... a... a...

Dying breed.

JEAN
That’s it. The last of a dying breed.

JEAN
The last of a dying breed.

JOE
Until.

JEAN
(To JOE) Until?
We actually were the last of a dying breed.

Dead.

Well... dying.

Okay.

It was interesting how the situation unfolded.

Strange.

That too.

*(JEAN nods.)*

A situation started to unfold.

Nothing out of the ordinary, so it appeared.

We didn’t think much about it, at first.

Not much at all.

It happens sometimes. The depletion of a particular grocery item in a popular supermarket of above average consumer traffic.

It’s bound to happen, at some time, in almost every section, one would think.

It was a Sunday morning...
JEAN
Sundays are when we do our weekly shopping.

JOE
We used to do it on Saturdays.

JEAN
Saturdays are now for laundry.

JOE
(To JEAN) Oh, I like that new detergent.

JEAN
(To JOE) Like a Fresh Meadow. (Beat) And so it does.

JOE
(To JEAN) And so it is. (Beat) Where was I?

(JOE and JEAN think.)

JEAN
(To JOE) Sunday morning shopping.

JOE
(To JEAN) Yes. (To audience) But, that Sunday morning, as we were doing our weekly shopping...

JEAN
I said that.

JOE
Please.

JEAN
Sorry.

(JOE regroups by mouthing what he has just said.)

JOE
(Continues) We noticed something, that for us, was very...

JEAN
Upsetting.

JOE
Distressing.
And upsetting.

Low stock.

Highly irregular for this particular item and in this particular store.

The grape jelly we were used to buying was no longer available. *(Beat) The next week...*

Even lower stock. And in more than one brand of the item in question.

The next week.

Just the store brand. One variety. One size. Just one choice.

The next week.

Nothing.

*(Exhales) The shelf space for grape jelly was now completely empty.*

So we patiently waited... and waited.

For several weeks.

For much, much longer than the usual allotted time for any low stock, emptied shelf space situation. *(To JOE) Did that make sense?*

*(Under breath) That was fine.*

*(To audience; demure) Thank you.*
It wasn’t as if all jellies and jams were no longer being stocked.

There were plenty of... others.

It wasn’t as if the store was out of particular brands.

Or specific varieties.

Or jar sizes.

There was product to be had.

If you wanted anything other than grape jelly.

They were stocked.

Oh, they were stocked.

Yes, they were stocked.

(To JEAN) I said that.

(Shakes her head) I know. (To JOE) It was already out of my mouth when I realized. (Very upset) I’m sorry.

(To JOE) Calm down... it’s okay.

(To JOE) Thank you. (Beat) I love you.

(To JEAN) I love you, too.
(Silence.)

Stocked.

(Regroups) Yes, the shelves were stocked.

But...

There was that clear indication our type of spreadable delight was no longer desirable.

(To JOE) That was very poetic.

I try.

It had been a subtle, almost unrecognizable elimination at first.

First, the larger size jars.

Then the low sugar...

...the sugar free...

Finally they were down to Welch’s and Smuckers Grape Jelly.

Twelve ounce jars.

(JEAN forms the size of the jar with her hand. JOE adjusts her fingers slightly, faces the audience and nods. JEAN holds up a plate of sandwiches.)

(To audience) Is anyone hungry?

[*NOTE: If someone in the audience raises a hand, JEAN should deliver a sandwich, or two. If, or if not, she should bite into a sandwich of her own and continue.]
The Flintstones.

Excuse me.

(To JOE) The Flintstones. The cartoon.

(To JEAN) I know who the Flintstones are. Why...?

(To JOE) Welch’s Jelly.

(JOE gestures that he is still lost.)

When you emptied the jar it became a drinking glass.

(Acknowledges) I remember. I do remember.

My family had a set of twelve. Passed down over the years, of course.

We only had a couple. One for me and one for my sister. (Beat) Then the glass broke.

Yours?

No, my sister’s.

Aww.

She took mine.

Ohh.

(To JEAN) I hated my sister.
JEAN
(To JOE) Because she took your Flintstones glass?

JOE
(To JEAN) No, because she hated me. I couldn’t care less about the glass.

JEAN
Uh-huh.

JOE
(To JEAN) By the way, how’s your sister Sandy?

JEAN
(To JOE) Very well, thank you.

(Both JOE and JEAN relax with a sandwich. They then remember the audience and continue without missing a beat.)

JOE
Welch’s and Smuckers.

JEAN
Twelve ounce jars.

JOE
One grape jelly.

JEAN
One grape jam.

JOE
Meanwhile, all the other brands, varieties and flavors were there... available.

JEAN
Slowly taking over for... replacing...

JOE AND JEAN, Together
Grape jelly.

JOE
There were red raspberry preserves—

JEAN
And jam.
Peach preserves.  

Strawberry and blackberry preserves.  

Apricot preserves and jelly.  

Even pineapple preserves.  

Orange marmalade.  

Black cherry jelly.  

Blueberry jelly.  

All Fruit.  

Currant.  

And legion... langdon... legend...  

(To JEAN) What are you trying to say?  

(To JOE) You know, the preserves... from Sweden.  

Ah, lingonberry.  

(Excited) That’s it.  

But... preserves, not the jam.
JEAN

Same thing.

JOE

No, not really.

JEAN
Really? (To JOE) There’s a difference between jam, jelly and preserves?

JOE
(To JEAN) Not really so much between jelly and preserves, but between jelly and preserves and jam.

JEAN
(To JOE) Hmmm. Really. Do tell.

JOE
Preserves and jelly refer to fruits, or vegetables, that have been prepared and canned for long term storage.

(JEAN is silent. She waits for JOE to continue.)

JOE, Continued
The use of pectin. As a gelling agent.

JEAN

Jelly agent?

JOE
Gel-ling agent. You could use honey or sugar.

JEAN

And jam is different?

JOE
Slightly. Theoretically, jam is a variation of preserves. The difference is a jam often has pieces of the actual fruit’s flesh. Some sources merely differentiate jam as cooked and gelled, that’s gelled, fruit puree.

JEAN

Wow.

JOE
Jam usually refers to a product made with whole fruit, cut into pieces and crushed.
JEAN
I didn’t know that.

JOE
Most times just one fruit rather than a combination.

JEAN
One fruit?

JOE
Yes.

JEAN
(To JOE) Do you know what fruit butter is?

JOE
Yes, I do. A larger fruit, your apple, plum, peach, is cooked until softened and then run through a sieve for a smooth consistency. Add sugar, and cook rapidly with a constant simmer.

JEAN
How about conserves?

JOE
Fruit stewed in sugar.

JEAN
And confit?

JOE
(Shakes his head) Preservation of meat. Nothing to do with fruit.

JEAN
(To JOE) You amaze me.

JOE
I just know my jams and jellies. For us and... for them.

(JOE gestures to the audience.)

JEAN
(To JOE) I love you.

JOE
(To JEAN) I know. (Beat) Back to the shelf space?
JEAN

Let’s.

JOE

The shrinking shelf space and diminished stock was, in our opinion, clearly, not a coincidence.

JEAN

So, we spoke to the store manager hoping for an answer.

JOE

We approached the store manager.

JEAN

Yes, we approached the store manager. Joe spoke to him.

JOE

‘We are good, regular customers,’ I said.

JEAN

I was standing behind Joe, nodding my head.

JOE

‘Mr. Tucker,’ I asked...

JEAN

We knew it was Mr. Tucker because of his picture over the Customer Services counter. Where we get our lottery tickets.

JOE

Remind me to get tickets for the next drawing.

JEAN

I will.

JOE

‘Mr. Tucker,’ I asked. ‘Why are you no longer stocking any brand or variety of grape jelly?’

Or...

JOE

‘Or grape jam, for that matter?’

JEAN

And he replied...
(In a deep voice) ‘We do stock grape jelly and jam. Twelve ounce jars. Welch’s Grape Jelly and Smuckers Grape Jam. Aisle 13 with the peanut butter, Marshmallow Fluff and Nutella spread. The original creamy, chocolaty hazelnut spread.’

And then...

He walked away.

Just disappeared into the lines that had gathered at the checkouts.

We were looking for a bit more of an explanation.

Now...

It was up to us.

To find an answer.

The answer.

We left the store and on our way back to our car we plotted our next move.

Road trip.

Down the road to the A&P.

Then cross town to the Whole Foods and from there, Pathmark. Twenty minutes more to the Stop and Shop and finally—

Lunch.

(JEAN’S comment has put an immediate halt to the momentum of the scene.)
(To JEAN) Not really relevant to our saga.

(JEAN thinks hard.)

(To JOE) No, it isn’t, is it? Sorry. (To audience) Sorry.

Finally... King’s.

But, we weren’t done.

Into the city.

New York... City. And beyond.

We visited them all. Met Foods, D’Agostino’s, The Food Emporium, Walbaum’s, Gristedes, Key Food and King Kullen.

And all the overpriced bodegas and deli’s in between.

The situation got worse by the day... by the hour, no, by the minute.

With each visit there were less and less jars of grape jelly to be found.

They were disappearing overnight.

Our search had taken weeks. We slept on the street...

When we slept...

In the subways... in parks.

When we returned home we persevered.
JEAN
Every minute of every day on the phone and searching the internet.

JOE
There were only more lies...

JEAN
And less grape jelly availability.

JOE
Until...

JEAN
Until...

JOE
It was gone.

JEAN
From everywhere.

JOE
Our worst fears had come true.

JEAN
Back at our Shop Rite...

JOE
The amount of shelf space once reserved for grape jelly and jam was now occupied, by of all things....

JEAN
Mint jelly. That’s right. Mint jelly.

JOE
In jars of every shape and size. Original, regular, reduced fat, low fat, fat free—

JEAN
Seedless.

*(JOE is once again thrown by JEAN’S random comment.)*

JOE
They didn’t... there couldn’t be, seeds.
JEAN
Oh. No? (To JOE) Why not?

JOE
(To JEAN) Mint isn’t a fruit... it’s a leaf.

JEAN
(To JOE) They can make jelly from a leaf?

JOE
(To JEAN) And stems.

JEAN
(To JOE) The stems, too? (Beat) You’re kidding.

JOE
(To JEAN) You can make it yourself.

JEAN
(To JOE) No?

JOE
One to one and half cups of fresh mint leaves and stems, four to six drops of green food coloring, two and a quarter cups of water, three and a half cups of sugar, two tablespoons of lemon juice, from the bottle, and a three ounce pouch of liquid pectin makes about four half-pint jars.

(JEAN ponders the idea.)

JEAN
They even had it in squeezable containers.

JOE
Produced by every major company you could think of. Worse yet was the seemingly total acceptance of the disappearance of an American food staple.

JEAN
It just didn’t seem to matter to anyone. No grape jelly, no big deal. Shoppers just selected something else.

JOE
Like robots.

(JOE pantomimes a zombie-like individual selecting any-old-jar of fruit spread.)
Then one night, sitting in a dumbfounded state about the whole situation, we attempted to put the pieces to our mysterious puzzle together.

(Silence.)

We were playing Scrabble. I had the “J”.

I hate it when I get the ‘J”.

I perused the letters on my rack and there they were. J-L-L-Y. Well, with the word grape running vertically on the board and the “E” available...

It was a sign.

It was a triple word score.

It was an omen.

We had to continue our...

Quest.

Yes, quest. We were destined to find the reason behind the now extinct product we knew simply as... grape jelly.

(JEAN fights to hold back her emotions.)

(To JEAN) Are you all right?

(To JOE) It just so overwhelming sometimes.

(To JEAN) I know, I know.
(To JOE) Sorry, dear. Please continue.

JOE

(To JEAN) What a trooper.

JEAN

(To JOE) Thank you.

JOE

Our theory, brief and to the point, is what we thought was the sudden and unexpected disappearance of grape jelly was, in fact, a process that had been going on for some time prior, and right under our noses.

JEAN

Everyone’s noses.

JOE

Apparently we were the only one’s bothered by the situation. And aware of the circumstances at the end of the... extermination.

(JEAN quickly covers her mouth in fear.)

JEAN

The last thing we wanted to do was bring attention to ourselves...

JOE

By complaining, questioning, or even mentioning the subject.

(JEAN zips her mouth shut with her finger.)

JOE, Continued

We kept our mouths shut and our eyes and ears open.

(JEAN cups her ears.)

JOE, Continued

We spent every spare minute reading newspapers and magazines. We watched every news program and took shifts searching sites on the computer.

(JEAN types on an “air keyboard.”)

JEAN

Just for some hint, some remote bit of information.
JOE
After some time, it was clear. We were the last two people on earth who still liked, no, desired...

JEAN
And wanted...

JOE
Grape jelly.

JEAN
It was a horrific realization.

JOE
Sad. Disconcerting and depressing.

JEAN
Dreadful. Absolutely dreadful.

JOE
There was nothing more to do.

JEAN
We packed up whatever research materials we had accumulated over the months and tried to settle back into a normal routine.

JOE
Several days later, we were watching television.

JEAN
Antiques Road Show.

JOE
A woman from Hartford, Connecticut had a collection of Civil War era military buttons.

JEAN
Regular jacket buttons.

JOE
What else would they be?

JEAN
Well, they could have been campaign buttons.

JOE
(To JEAN) You’re right. I stand corrected.
JEAN

No need.

JOE

(To JEAN) I love you.

JEAN

(To JOE) And I love you.

JOE

(To audience) One of the jacket buttons was manufactured for the Arkansas Militia.

JEAN

It was worth five thousand dollars.

JOE

The reason I’m telling you this story is that how the buttons were mounted in their display brought up a very fond memory…

JEAN

The array of buttons reminded us how we would serve snacks to guests in our home.

JOE

Platters of Ritz crackers topped with...

(JEAN takes JOE’S arm.)

JOE AND JEAN, Together

Grape jelly.

JOE

It was time to finish the last of the Welch’s we had been saving for a special occasion. It was about a half an hour later when something most unusual occurred.

JEAN

(To JOE) I always scraped the last of the grape jelly from the bottom of the jar… you just never saw me.

JOE

That’s not what I was referring to.

JEAN

No?

JOE

No. Of course not.
JEAN

Oh. (Beat) Maybe it would be best if I just...

(JEAN makes a shushing gesture. Just as JOE begins to speak...)

JEAN, Continued

I need to stop interfering, don’t I?

JOE

At times you...digress.

JEAN

Sorry.

JOE

I love you.

JEAN

I know. Me too.

(JOE ponders her response.)

JEAN, Continued

So, tell them what was so unusual.

JOE

We receive a phone call from an anonymous individual who wants to know if we were the individuals looking for grape jelly.

(JOE waits for JEAN to interject.)

JOE, Continued

It had been months since our last inquiries. I acknowledged we were and that we had.

(JOE nudges JEAN.)

JEAN

(Smiles) Made inquiries.

JOE

I’m sorry.

JEAN

I love you.
JOE
I love you. (Beat) I received a phone number from the mysterious voice.

JEAN
(Serious) It was a number assigned within in our state.

JOE
After all we had been through... we knew—

JEAN
Without discussion...

JOE
We had to call the number.

JEAN
We huddled together... each with an ear to the receiver.

JOE
I dialed the number... slowly.

JEAN
Of course, slowly, we still own a rotary phone.

JOE
(To JEAN) It still works.

JEAN
(To JOE) Hello, sweetheart. The twentieth century.

JOE
Twenty-first.

JEAN
Exactly!

JOE
You’ve...

(JOE refers to the interruption. JEAN gasps.)

JEAN
(Embarrassed; to JOE) So, so, sorry.

JOE
On the other end of the call was an automated message.
Don’t give away too much.

It doesn’t matter now, does it?

Well, out of respect.

(To JEAN) Good point. (To audience) The message provided an address and... (To JEAN) I can tell the time, can’t I?

I’m sure that will be fine.

Friday night. Eight o’clock. We had three days to determine what we should do.

Finally, we agreed to attend.

Why not. We had gone as far as we could on our quest for answers and...

Grape jelly.

We had to follow through, no matter where the adventure would take us.

Anyway, there’s nothing new on TV on Friday nights.

It’s movie night with Chinese take-out.

To be honest, it was pizza. We had Chinese the week before.

It was pizza. (Beat) But we had already discussed what we were going to order come Friday night.
JEAN
Because it appeared you really wanted pizza.

JOE
And you were willing to skip Chinese? For pizza?

JEAN
I was willing to skip Chinese... for you.

JOE
(To JEAN) I love you so much.

JEAN
(To JOE) I love you just as much.

(Silence.)

JOE
(To JEAN) You want sub sandwiches this week.

JEAN
(Excited; to JOE) Sure.

JOE
So with directions and map in hand...

JEAN
(Whispers) I’m getting him a GPS for Christmas.

JOE
A what?

JEAN
Nothing.

JOE
We began our trek, not knowing where we would end up, or what we would find there.

JEAN
It was a moonless, pitch black night. A slight breeze rustled the remaining leaves in the trees. It was chilly, but not cold. The kind of chill that goes through to your bones if—

JOE
Jean.

(Silence.)
JEAN

(Quickly) We had a rendezvous with destiny.

JOE
What it did turn out to be was a meeting. In the back room of a Perkins Pancake House.

JEAN
A secret meeting.

JOE
Under the guise of a book club meeting.

JEAN

(Remembers) That’s right. The hostess asked us if we were there for the book club meeting... and she winked at us.

JOE
We winked back.

(JEAN displays an over zealous wink.)

JEAN
Only there were no books.

JOE
Just a room full of people, just like us.

JEAN
Lovers of the jelly.

(JOE looks up and sighs, deeply.)

JOE
We all proceeded to introduce ourselves and over the course of the night shared our stories. We had all received the same phone call, listened to the same recorded directive and made our way to the same restaurant.

JEAN
It was good to meet people just like us. In the same predicament.

JOE
Just as the conversations concluded and it seemed as if the evening was over—

JEAN
He walked into the room.
He was a tall, comely, gentleman.

(To JOE) Comely?

(To JEAN) Good-looking. Handsome.

(To audience) He was hot.

(To JEAN) Excuse me?

(To JOE) I’m agreeing with you. He was an attractive man.

Yes. (To audience) He was better looking than the average man.

(JEAN agrees emphatically.)

Oh, go ahead and say it.

He was really hot. (Beat) Thank you. (Beat) I love you.

I’m not threatened.

Good.

His attire was impeccable. He spoke very little.

And, he refused to give us his name.

Except to say... ‘It was up to us.’

‘It was up to us.’
JOE

That was all. *(Beat)* We all remained silent. Slowly, one by one, we looked to each other. What was ‘up to us?’

JEAN

He remained still.

JOE

The room got quieter still—

JEAN

If that was possible...

JOE

As he walked amongst us.

JEAN

When he settled in the center of the room...

JOE

And we all had formed a circle around him...

JEAN

He snapped his fingers.

JOE

The loudest finger snap one could ever imagine.

JEAN

The back door flew open and dozens of other men, women and children entered the room.

JOE

Each person carried a case of grape jelly.

JEAN

As quickly as they entered the room, they handed off their case of jelly to one of us and left...

JOE

Through the same back door.

JEAN

As quiet as church mice.

JOE

They never uttered a word...
JEAN

Not a sound...

JOE

They handed us a box, smiled, and were off. (Beat) We all stood there... amazed.

JEAN

Some stared at each other...

JOE

Most at what they were holding in their arms.

JEAN

He had been watching the proceedings with great concentration—

JOE

And delight.

JEAN

Then, without warning or introduction or...

(JEAN looks to JOE.)

JOE

Fanfare.

JEAN

Good. (To audience) He spoke.

JOE

‘Go forth and spread the jelly.’

JEAN

I actually giggled, thinking it was a joke. Spread the jelly.

(JEAN pantomimes the directive.)

JEAN, Continued

You know... spread...jelly

JOE

In Jean’s defense, several people in the room were laughing.

JEAN

But...
JOE

It was no joke.

(JEAN shakes her head vigorously.)

JOE, Continued

In an instant, we all realized the severity of the situation. The responsibility we were being asked to assume and the undertaking on which we were about to embark.

JEAN

(Whispers to audience) F.Y.I., those of us who found humor in the initial situation apologized to whom we could as we were leaving.

JOE

(To JEAN) You needed to do that, didn’t you?

JEAN

(To JOE) Yes. Yes, I did.

JOE

(To JEAN) Feel better?

JEAN

(To JOE) Yes. Yes, I do.

JOE

He then pulled up a chair, told us to relax, and spoke to us for forty-five minutes.

JEAN

His voice was soothing... calm.

JOE

His name was Mr. Blue. He reviewed the time line of grape jelly’s demise. He explained when it began—

JEAN

(Cuts in) An ACME Supermarket in Jersey City, New Jersey.

JOE

—and why.

JEAN

When asked by her mother what brand grape jelly she wanted...
JOE

... a little girl in pigtails and a frilly pink dress responded through the gap produced by two missing front teeth...

JEAN

‘I’d prefer just a spoonful of peanut butter, thank you.’

JOE

It took nothing more than a simple lack of interest in a peanut butter and jelly sandwich by a youngster to get the ball rolling.

JEAN

He explained everything.

JOE

Peanut butter’s rise to prominence in the pastry and candy world. Grandmothers’ failure to pass along their recipes for lindsor tortes.

JEAN

The whole low calorie, processed food craze.

JOE

He had statistics, names, memos, official documents.

JEAN

It was frightening.

JOE

His final words hit home. If it could happen to grape jelly, it could happen to anything.

JEAN

Imagine the world without... Macaroni and Cheese.

JOE

Ring Dings.

JEAN

Ketchup.

(To JEAN) Catsup.

(JEAN ignores JOE’S correction.)

JEAN

Mustard, French fries, spaghetti sauce... bread for God’s sake!
(To JEAN) You okay?

I couldn’t live without bread.

Who could? (To audience) Now it was up to those of us in that room. We had received our charge. We were told groups such as ours were forming across the nation – around the world, that night.

It wasn’t important how they got our name and phone number...

What was important was being part of the movement.

Helping the cause.

Until our job was done, we would receive a phone call at the same time every Tuesday night. The message would tell us where and when to pick up our case of grape jelly. From there it was up to, on our own time and in our own way to...

Go forth and spread the jelly.

(Silence... then JEAN giggles... but just a bit.)

Stop it.

Sorry.

We started with samples at street fairs and flea markets. Shelters, parks, anywhere we could find a public gathering.

Location, location, location.

We were getting the word out, building a following again, just not getting the grass roots movement we had hoped for.
Groups around the world were experiencing the same problems.

That’s when, (To JEAN) what did you call it?

(To JOE) A miracle.

(JOE nods and points to JEAN.)

Let her tell you. It’s her story.

I was feeling a little down one day, so I went to church.

That’s what she does. I don’t, she does.

The line for the confessional was longer than usual.

(Kids) Like she has anything to confess.

(Serious; to JOE) I do.

Right.

You’d be surprised.

I would?

Yes.

(To JEAN) Anything I should be worried about?

(To JOE) What do you mean by that?
JOE
(To JEAN) Is there something I should be worried about?

JEAN
(To JOE) I don’t understand.

JOE
(To JEAN) You’re in confession... you’re confessing sins. Breaking commandments... the whole nine yards. You just said ‘I’d be surprised.’ I’m asking you, do-I-have-anything-to-be-worried-about?

JEAN
Of course not. I love you.

JOE
(To JEAN) Thank you. I love you.

JEAN
Should I continue?

JOE
(Turns to audience) Yes, of course.

(JEAN wipes her forehead as if she’s avoided a close call.)

JEAN
There I was in this beautiful, vast, cathedral and I said to myself, ‘Myself, I said, if only Joe and I could go forth and spread the jelly, here, on Sunday, with a church full...

JOE
Of sinners.

JEAN
(Snaps) Joe.

JOE
This place really packs them in. Three times on Sunday and once a day during the week.

JEAN
If I could get my priest on board, maybe we’d have a shot at reaching the entire congregation.

JOE
This is when it gets good.
JEAN
In my church, you’re face to face with the priest in the confessional booth. I thought if I had enough grape jelly smell on my breath and maybe a little caked on my mouth, it would get Father’s attention.

JOE
This is gold.

JEAN
I had a jar with me—

JOE
We all carry one. You never know when an opportunity might arise.

(JOE gestures to JEAN.)

JEAN
While I’m waiting in a nearby pew, I start loading up on jelly. Then I feel someone tapping me on my shoulder.

JOE
Divine intervention.

JEAN
It was one of the younger priests in his pastoral stage.

JOE
An intern.

JEAN
He reminded me that eating in the nave, the body of the church, was not permitted.

JOE
But before you could say your penance, the young man is expanding his pastoral abilities with a butter knife and a package of stale wafers.

JEAN
Don’t be sacrilegious.

This is Not the End of the Play

Ending of Scene Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

Please Continue to Read the Next Scene
DECISIONS, DECISIONS, DECISIONS

SCENE: A round table and two simple chairs. The table is set for a wedding reception. A floral arrangement sits in the center, surrounded by an array of filled and unfilled glasses of champagne.

AT RISE: DEREK and SUSIE enter. SUSIE juggles a glass of wine, napkin and a plate piled with hors d’oeuvres.

SUSIE

(To DEREK) Did you try the spinach quiche? It’s to die for.

(SUSIE gobbles down the appetizer.)

SUSIE, Continued

Did you hear me?

DEREK

Spinach quiche, to die for. Yes, I heard you.

What is wrong with you?

SUSIE

Nothing.

DEREK

C’mon, Derek. Free food.

(SUSIE holds up her glass.)

SUSIE, Continued

And drink.

(DEREK pats his suit jacket.)

DEREK

I have a check for two hundred dollars that says the food and the drink are, in fact, not free.

(SUSIE downs the remainder of her wine.)

SUSIE

(Sings) Every party has a pooper, that’s why we invited you – party pooper!

DEREK

Have another drink, why don’t you?
Thanks, I think I will.

*(SUSIE sits at the table. She selects a glass of champagne and quickly empties the glass.)*

Mmm... Alcohol good.

You’re drunk.

Not yet, but I’m getting there.

*(DEREK sits. He stares at SUSIE’S plate of hors d’oeuvres.)*

*(Tempts)* Want one?

*(DEREK becomes anxious.)*

No.

You can get yourself a plate.

I’m not that hungry.

I know you want one.

*(Annoyed)* No, I don’t.

*(SUSIE methodically selects and places an hors d’oeuvres in her mouth. She chews deliberately and enjoys every morsel.)*

Why are you doing that?

Just enjoying how good it is.
(Leans in) Fine, I’ll take one.

(Susie) I changed my mind.

You offered.

I think I’ll just keep these for myself.

Whatever. I was just trying to shut you up.

(Susie watches Derek watch her food.)

You’ve still got time to get some. Oh, watch for those bacon wrapped scallops.

We’ll be going in for dinner soon.

I guess that’s a ‘no’ on the scallops.

I guess.

(Susie enjoys several more delights.)

Still not hungry?

I’ll wait for dinner.

(Susie downs another glass of champagne.)

You couldn’t pick, could you?

(Derek makes a disapproving, negating sound. He knows she’s right.)

You couldn’t.

Susie, Continued
(Silence. SUSIE slides her plate with the remaining hors d’oeuvres in front of DEREK. He stares at the food. SUSIE watches as he tries to take one, but can’t decide. SUSIE reaches for her third glass of champagne while DEREK settles back into his chair.)

SUSIE, Continued

Pathetic.

(SUSIE downs the drink. She selects an hors d’oeuvres and places it on a napkin. SUSIE hands the napkin to DEREK.)

SUSIE, Continued

Here, I wouldn’t want you to starve.

(DEREK takes the napkin. He pops the entire hors d’oeuvres into his mouth. SUSIE stands. She finishes her fourth glass of champagne. SUSIE takes a set of keys from her clutch. She drops the keys onto the table.)

DEREK

(Through a mouthful of food) What’s this?

SUSIE

My brothers should have me moved out of the apartment by now. You can keep the cat. We hated each other anyway.

(SUSIE checks her watch.)

SUSIE, Continued

Gotta go, my ride should be outside waiting for me.

(SUSIE turns away from a stunned DEREK.)

SUSIE, Continued

Give the bride and groom my congratulations and apologies.

DEREK

Apologies?

SUSIE

It was my turn to write the check for a wedding. I put a stop payment on it yesterday. They’re your friends, so... I don’t really care.

(SUSIE guzzles one last glass of champagne. She places the lone, full glass in front of DEREK. She balances the last of her hors d’oeuvres atop the glass.)

DEREK

(Stunned) I have no say in this decision?
The problem is you’re afraid to have a say in any decision, including your own. Especially your own. Good-bye Derek.

(SUSIE exits. A waitress, TARA, enters from the opposite direction. She stands directly behind DEREK.)

TARA
(To DEREK’S back) Excuse me, would you be the Niehaus party?

(DEREK turns in response to TARA’S voice.)

DEREK
Yes.

(TARA recognizes DEREK.)

TARA
(Exasperated) Oh, hell.

DEREK
Hey, you’re the waitress from—

TARA
Yeah, yeah.

(Sincere) How are you?

DEREK
I’m trying to keep my new job since you got me fired from my last one.

TARA
Sorry ‘bout that.

DEREK
I’m sure.

(TARA stares at DEREK.)

DEREK
Is there a problem?

This is Not the End of the Play

End of Play Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes