



THE LESSER MAGOO

MAC WELLMAN

/ubu editions
2002

The Lesser Magoo
By Mac Wellman

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T H E L E S S E R M A G O O

persons of the play:

Ms CURRAN, an adept and assistant of
Mr CANDLE, an expert on the topic of
Crowe's Dark Space,
Mr TORQUE, the new man, and replacement for
Mr Bullock, who is discovered hanging
in the closet and later as
JOEGH BULLOCK'S GHOST,
CANDLE's wife, RUTH, and their daughter,
TESSARA, at the Summer Place in Moonhat;
and their guests:
Mr GABRIEL PLEASURE, a literary person,
Mr CANDLE PROSPER, a country-cousin of the
CANDLES and former United States Senator;
Mr FOSS, former Genius and mathematician,
SHIMMER, who has catered the whole affair, and Aunt
SYCORICA, a remote relation from the
deep, interior regions of Central Asia.

THE LESSER MAGOO follows A MURDER OF CROWS, THE
HYACINTH MACAW, and SECOND-HAND SMOKE and con-
cludes the author's CROWTET; the play was commissioned by the
Bottom's Dream Theater of Los Angeles, Jim Martin, Artistic
Director.

*Dear, it's only a paper moon, sailing over a cardboard
sea,
But it wouldn't be make-believe, if you believed in me.
And it's only a canvas sky, hanging over a muslin
tree,
But it wouldn't be make-believe if you believed in me.
Without your love, it's a honky-tonk parade.
Without your love, it's a melody played
In a penny arcade.
It's a Barnum and Bailey world, just as phony as it
can be
But it wouldn't be make-believe, if you believed in me.*

— Billy Rose, from THE GREAT
MAGOO (1932)

Note: The occasional appearance of an asterisk in the middle of a speech indicates that the next speech begins to overlap at that point. A double asterisk indicates that a later speech (not the one immediately following) begins to overlap at that point. The overlapping speeches are all clearly marked in the text.

Scene [**bounce**]: An office in a large building where important work of an unmentionable kind is done. CURRAN, CANDLE's assistant is dressing down the new man, a poor fool named TORQUE. Pause.

CURRAN

You did not answer my question, Mister Torque.

TORQUE

I did not answer it because I did not understand what you were asking.

CANDLE

Did you hear that, Curran, he did not understand? Ain't that rich.

CURRAN

You are saying you did not reply to my question because you did not understand my question?

TORQUE

That is what I am saying, yes, Ms Curran.

CURRAN

What was it about my question that escaped you, Torque, if you don't

mind my asking?

CANDLE

Surely the poor man is MAD.
He cackles— hides his
face in his handkerchief.

CURRAN

Sir, I must ask you to hold your
reaction, Mister Candle, till I have
finished the rogatory phase.

CANDLE

I did assume, my dear Curran, you
had concluded the rogatory phase
as the poor ape is clearly on the
ropes. But if I have been premature
in my postrogatory celebration please
accept my apologies.

TORQUE

Gee—

CANDLE

No, not you, you mildewed sock;
you, you walking flea-circus.

TORQUE

Mister Foss would not address me
in such a fashion.

CANDLE

Doctor Raymond Bojangles Crapley Foss is
a genius— you are a flaming crow's head
of mediocrity. Go on, Curran.

CURRAN

Now Mister Torque, you were saying you did not understand my question. What precisely about it did you fail to comprehend?

TORQUE

Pretty much all of it— from the head part all the way to the tip of its tail.

CURRAN

I find this incredible, sir.

TORQUE

I am saying I did not understand the language of it.

CURRAN

“I did not understand the language of it”, What am I supposed to make of that? And this is not a mere Quine statement.

TORQUE

I believe my statement speaks for itself; it is self-evident.

CURRAN

Perhaps Mister Torque, I shall follow your tack and reply that my previous question speaks for itself. And also, perhaps I shall also announce that the statement I am in the process of just now uttering speaks for itself. How would you respond to that?

TORQUE

Look, I don't know what you're getting

at. For the life of me. If you want to ask me a question, ask me a question I can understand, in a language I can understand.

CURRAN

Why should I do that Mister Torque?
After all it is you, there, twisting
in the catbird seat ...

CANDLE

Attagirl, Susannah! Twist the old
corn knife.

TORQUE

I can't believe this guy.
They glare at each other.

CURRAN

All I am trying to do, Mister Torque,
is shed some light on the matter at hand.

TORQUE

On **what** matter, for Pete's sake?

CURRAN

On the matter at hand, the matter
of the previous question.

TORQUE

Could you repeat it please?

CURRAN

What did you say?

TORQUE

I said: could you repeat it

please?

CURRAN and CANDLE
consult. Pause.

Could you please repeat what you just
said?

CANDLE
No. Not* really.

CURRAN
Could you please repeat what you
just said?

TORQUE
Why the hell should I? Jesus, you
people have a lot of nerve, you ask
me.

CANDLE
Do you always behave in such a
peremptory fashion, cheesehead,
during interviews of this kind?
Pause. TORQUE lowers his head.
Do you?

TORQUE
Sorry. It's just. It's just that I, well,
I have never been interviewed before in
precisely this fashion. I'm sorry, and ...

CURRAN
How have you been interviewed then,
Mister Torque? Tell us, really,* we'd
very much like to know. We would
like to know, wouldn't we, Mister
Candle?

TORQUE

Well, usually, people ask me ... oh,
crap ...

CURRAN

What is it, Mister Torque?

TORQUE

All this sarcasm, I'm sorry I just
don't see the point of it. Where I
come from interviews are conducted in such
a way that ... that ...

CANDLE

I cannot believe the fatuous* cheesehead.

CURRAN

Go on, go on, Mister Torque. We are
listening to everything you say.

TORQUE

Well ... in a way that is dignified and
low-key. All this badgering and question-begging ...
well it baffles me. And I just don't know how,
how to respond. I mean, I literally ... I tell
you I don't understand what you are saying and
all I get is this really objectionable ridicule.

CANDLE sobs with
stifled laughter. CURRAN
stares coldly at the poor
man.

CURRAN

Perhaps then you are not interested
in this job.

TORQUE

But I am, I am, don't you see? It is

only I do not understand ...
Groping helplessly
for words, anything.

CURRAN

Perhaps then you are not really
interested in this job.

TORQUE

It is only that I do not understand
what it is I am expected to do.
CURRAN rolls her eyes as
CANDLE whinnies. Pause.

CURRAN

Since you refuse to answer my first question,
I propose asking you a second one, with the
caveat that I shall not ask a third.* Do I
make myself clear?

TORQUE

But, but Ms Curran please I ... I ... certainly
would have answered the question, only you see,
I must confess that English is my only language
and that therefore I meant no harm. Only, you
seemed to be speaking, I would say, a foreign
tongue.

CURRAN

What!

CANDLE

Indeed. What?

TORQUE

Yes I would say a foreign tongue, and not only
that, but a language at some remove from those

with which I am ... most familiar. Altaic, I would say. A variant of Turko-Tungusic perhaps.

CANDLE

Perhaps, eh?

He laughs again

CURRAN

That would seem to imply an unusualist position on your part, Mister Torque. Are you quite sure that is the stance you would like to leave us with the impression of, as you complete your interview?

TORQUE

You have no reason to call me an unusualist. I am not an unusualist, er.

CURRAN

You mean to say you deny categorically any association with members of the unusualist camp, either here, or back home in New Delbert whence your people originated?

CANDLE

Slouching in their foul turbans and pointy-toed shoes.

TORQUE

I would deny that charge categorically; yes, that is true, I would, indeed.

Long smoke-filled pause.

CURRAN

Sir, do you know what Crowe's Dark Space is?

TORQUE

Sure, it's the place where the One He Refused to Meet encounters the Crocodillian Mahoon and therefore lays an egg. Quite a large egg, in fact.

CURRAN

And you are sure of that?

TORQUE

Well— that's what I was taught at Princeton. School of Upper Malabar Philocubist and Macrurous Studies.

CANDLE

Was old Jenkins still around at that time?

TORQUE

No, Mister Candle, I do believe that, owing to a random bicker at the College of St John the Stylite he had already been given the mad-dog skull cap and forced to resign in favor of Foss. His true love was not resonance and radiance in any case.

CURRAN

Foss would never've stooped to such a thing.

CANDLE

And there is no such thing as a "random" bicker, Mister Torque, you ... you ...

CURRAN

Actually on this* score he is correct, Mister Candle.

CANDLE

You, you fetid, cronking bagpipe.

TORQUE

Yes, quite.

CURRAN

At the German Club quite. Random bickers did occur, if I recollect it correctly.

TORQUE

Yes, that's what I'm saying. There is such a thing as a random bicker. And random bickers did occur at the German Club.

CANDLE

Phooh. Lucky guess ...

CURRAN

And, Mister Torque, do you know the precise location of the Bad Place?

TORQUE

Er,

CURRAN

Only a confirmed unusualist would hesitate at this juncture, Torque. Come clean.

TORQUE

Er, only a bit of phlegm in the throat. You cannot imagine how unnerving an experience this is.

CANDLE

Poor little philobrutist Tsk, tsk.

CURRAN

Must I repeat myself, sir?

TORQUE

The Bad Place lies deep within the Forest
of Whim. In the deep, interior regions.

CURRAN

And?

TORQUE

And he holds sway there who stamps
with a silver hoof.

CURRAN

And? Go on.

TORQUE

And all the children of desire are raised
exponentially to serve at his banquet.

CURRAN

And what is the name of this banquet?

TORQUE

Er, the Madison Avenue Transcendental
Beetle-dance, I think.

CURRAN

You think.

TORQUE

Er, I am sure of it.

CANDLE

He thinks, ha.

CURRAN

And what are the tools of the Lesser Magoo?

TORQUE

Tools?

CURRAN

Yes, tools.

TORQUE grimaces,
brightens.

TORQUE

Oh, you mean the implements and instruments
at her disposal?

CURRAN

Tools, I said. "Tools". The word speaks
for itself.

TORQUE

Whisk broom.

CURRAN

One ...

TORQUE

Valve trumpet.

CURRAN

That's two.

TORQUE

Tom and Jerry Tongs— and tongue depressor.

CANDLE

"Tom and Jerry Tongs". Is that what they call
them in New Delbert? How vulgar.

CURRAN

In Chenango, Mister Torque, we refer to these as Ludovican Constrictors. File that away for future reference. In the unlikely event you are invited to join the firm. Do you understand what I am saying? Good. Now please continue.

TORQUE

Chattahoochie Star-Toothed Harrow.

CURRAN

And ...

TORQUE

Number six parting tool ... tub chair ...
Klein bottle and ... er.

CURRAN

That's eight. Good. Five more.
Pause.

TORQUE

I thought there were only twelve.

CANDLE

We bicker in New Style here, fool.
Check your manual in CD rom.
Dolt. Cheesehead.

TORQUE

Sorry, er.

CURRAN

Go on, please.

TORQUE

Oboe. Hip-boots. Hacksaw.

CURRAN

Eleven.

TORQUE

Ah. Clothes tree. Plunger. Jigger-chaser.

CURRAN

Fine. You're almost there. Four more.
One of them tricky.

TORQUE

St Louis Double-Hinged Rainbow-Roof.

Pause.

Ramses Motorized Lawn Cable.

CURRAN

And?

TORQUE

Er.

CURRAN

Hint: there's a trick to it. It is two things,
not one.

TORQUE

I don't get it, er.

CANDLE

Phooh.

TORQUE

I get it: The Obeah-Man Refluent Bow
and Arrow.

CURRAN

That is correct, Torque. You have completed round one of the first cycle of Presley's Title One Rogation Exercise. Sir, would you like to visit the Men's Room?

TORQUE

No, but I would like a drink of water.

CURRAN

There's a water cooler down the hall to your left. Room 8. Be quick* about it.

CANDLE

Dullard.

Hurriedly TORQUE exits.

Both CURRAN and CANDLE shut eyes, place handkerchiefs over eyes (i.e. Einstein fashion with knotted corners).

Neither one makes the slightest move for three minutes.

Both remove the handkerchiefs.

CANDLE

Susannah, would you like to stop by for dinner next Friday? We're opening our place out by Moonhat for the summer.

CURRAN

I'd be delighted, Mister Candle.

CANDLE

You've never met Ruth, and my daughter,
Tessara. About your age, I reckon.

CURRAN

I'd be delighted, Mister Candle.

CURRAN

Five sharp. Dress is informal.

CURRAN

Five sharp it is.

Pause. Neither moves
for another full minute.

TORQUE re-enters. Something
terrible has happened to him.
He looks like he has seen a
ghost. Perhaps his own.

He has vomited, soiling his
shirt and jacket. His left
shoe and stocking are gone,
and the foot is bloody.
Tremblingly, he crosses
the room, leaving bloody
splotches; and quietly
sits as before.

CURRAN and CANDLE exchange
meaningful glances.

As TORQUE sits trembling
CURRAN quietly begins talking.
CANDLE looks away and smokes
a cigarette.

CURRAN

Torque, do you know the story of the
Marabou Man-Orchid?

No reply.

And what is the taboo name for the
flensing knife?

TORQUE

George.

CURRAN

Very good. Now, you must listen
very carefully to every word I say.
For every word is of the utmost
importance.

The history of our people begins in the
Malabar nightshade. For once upon a time,
deep in the Malabar nightshade. In the
deep, interior regions of it, I mean.
A man named P. Johnston Crapley
fell off his horse and like you,
injured a foot. Staring up to
Heaven, he began to hear voices.
The voices told him to go to a far,
far place. And arrange for a billet
on the next steamer bound for New
Delaware. He spoke with a local
carcoon and all was arranged as he
desired. The voices were
followed by visions. Visions of Resonance
and Radiance ...

CANDLE

Hallelujah. Hallelujah [Matter-of-factly.
He makes an odd salute
with one hand.

CURRAN

Within a short time it appeared clear to P. Johnston Crapley that he had been selected for a unique spiritual mission, namely the compilation and editing of the *Variorum New Delaware Florilegium*.

Thus, his grandson J. Mahoon Crapley was subsequently able to found this firm upon the soundest of principles in 1923. In 1925 his son, Clarence Jeremiah and Clarence's sister, Clarissa Madrasah were suspected of Philadelphian tendencies, and so involuntarily separated. She was sent to London to be secretary to Lady Ernestine Pomfret du Nouyes. He went to Germany where he studied Rotor Statistics and Upper Silesian Slide-Bar Rotation with a certain Doktor Dornier at Dusseldorf. Later he escaped, with a superior doodle-bug of the Herr Doktor's design to the Yellowstone River region— which he had always wanted to see. And in especial, the “hoodoo” or goblin land of that country. Devastated by the forced separation from his dear sister Clarissa, he only thought to make an end of it all there. The world and all it contained had become for him what it is we mean when we refer to the Bad Place. Do you understand what I am saying? It is very important that you are clear about the meaning of each word. Do you?

TORQUE

I understand, er.

CURRAN

Meanwhile sweet Clarissa would open a pillow from time to time, and confess her unholy passion. Do you understand what I am saying? It is very important that you are clear about the meaning of each word. Do you? Are you? Fine. Finally she arranged with some Soho hoodlums to kill a black cat on the last quarter of the moon, and place it on the doorstep of the person she intended to hoodoo— namely Lady Pomfret du Nouyes. In this way she was able to disguise herself in Indian boots, and make her way into the night, with only a husking pin and a corn knife.

Years later she prepared the first complete anatomical description of the Hutchin's goose. She married late in life to a distant uncle of Mister Candle here [He nods.], a certain Lyell Crapley, the true inventor of Mergenthaler linotype and rusticated here, where she spent her sweet, latter years.

CANDLE

Indeed, her corn knife is rumored to be buried deep in the woods of my summer estate out at Moonhat, near the casino.

CURRAN

Is that so? I wasn't aware of that.

She turns sharply
back to her prey.

And what is the taboo name of the flensing
knife?

TORQUE

George, I said. George.

CURRAN

Just checking to see if you're paying
attention. Now,

She takes a drink
of water.

TORQUE

Er,

CANDLE

What is it, you moron. You CHEESEHEAD ...

CURRAN

Please, Mister Candle, let me get
to the meat of the matter.

Some thirty years later, a group of
youths in black jackets were observed
moving in a ring near Bug River. Some
of them were smoking cigarettes. Now,
presently, as we speak, all of the,
the descendants of P. Johnston Crapley
are now dead. So the point is how do
you explain the following. Say I am
in my laboratory and I stumble upon a
very lovely little North Wind Camwood
Ergometer. I say, it seems to have

been left by someone. You reply, if
 it is such a beauty someone will surely
 come back for it. I respond, that makes
 sense, but in truth it is such a beauty
 I should really like to have it. You
 assure me that you understand my desire.
 I suggest that I shall wait a week, and
 after that time if the Camwood Ergometer
 still remains here unclaimed, well then
 the precious device shall belong to me.
 Where precisely is the error in my
 argument?

TORQUE

J. Mahoon Crapley's fame did not arise
 from his dealings with emissaries of the
 Bad Place, but as a result of his subsequent
 work on Lower Silesian Side-Bar Rotation,
 and to a lesser degree, upon his treatise
 on the Brazilian, or "Silvery", poodle.
 A rare beast (**Pudelhund Argentum**).

CURRAN

Very Well.

The closet door opens
 with an eerie creak.

We see in the shadows
 a body swinging from a
 rope. A suicide. The
 MAN is dressed identically
 to poor Mister TORQUE.
 TORQUE stares, then screams
 once.

TORQUE

For the love of Christ. What's **he** doing

there?

CANDLE

Joegh Bullock— your predecessor. Seems to have suffered a fatal selferasure. Ha. Can you imagine? You, fool, lug the guts out of here.

CURRAN

Mister Candle, this is really disgusting. I feel I shall have to file a report. I had assumed we were operating under the terms of the St Cloud System for Stress Reduction, New Orleans Resonance and Monkeyhat Preadmonishment.

CANDLE ignoring her
You heard me, moron, move it.

TORQUE lumbers up to the swinging corpse. Stares. Cuts him down with a wicked looking knife secreted in his shoe, and slowly proceeds halfway to the door. He stops.

TORQUE

Where?

CANDLE

Bugger yourself.* Phoooh.

CURRAN

Take it down the, Mister Torque, down the hall, to the wall chute, please.

TORQUE lumbers out with the corpse. Closes the glass door behind

him. Pause.

CANDLE

He'll do.

She yawns.

CURRAN

Long day.

Stands.

CANDLE

Remember: next Friday at my summer place.

CURRAN

Off Route 6?

CANDLE

Near the Republican landfill.

CURRAN

Bring a bottle of wine?

CANDLE

Bring a white. I have the red. Loads of red in the basement. And in the deep woods. In the deep interior regions of the woods.

Both begin to pack their bags, and prepare to close the office for the day.

Slow black. End of scene.

Scene [**ricochet**]: Late afternoon, of a pleasant summer's day, near the gazebo, on CANDLE's vast estate, close to both Bug River and the deep woods adjoining. The guests stroll about drinking, smoking— having a good time. These include Ms CURRAN and CANDLE himself; his wife RUTH and daughter TESSARA; the literary person, GABRIEL PLEASURE and CANDLE PROSPER, a country cousin of the CANDLES, also a former U.S. Senator. In addition: SHIMMER, who serves the drinks, and Aunt SYCORICA from Central Asia. And of course, the old philosopher FOSS, who is confined to a wheelchair and says not a word. They all drift in and out of scenes, and observe the others. Principle of the Act: when you're not on, you're off. [Note: at some point all the characters stop whatever they are doing, and join together to sing Billy Rose's "Paper Moon" (See page 3).

TESSARA

I wasn't funny— so I got hosed.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

I beg your pardon?

TESSARA

In the school play, back at school.

CANDLE

What is the point of writing crap

like that, Ruth?

Crumples paper
and tosses it.

RUTH

She was to see the doctor.
She was to see the doctor
if it got worse.

As they drift off
SHIMMER rescues the
paper, secrets it
on his person.

Senator CANDLE PROSPER
hums a little tune to
AUNT SYCORICA who is
staring at TESSARA
with flaming eyes.

CANDLE PROSPER sings:

Ask too many questions
and you fly, fly, fly.
Ask too many questions
of the woods, the creek, the sky!
Of the corn, the wheat, and
of the sacred monkshood—
Ask too many questions
of the bluegrass and the hay ...

He stops.

I forget the rest of it, but it was
our song. The song of our people,
you might say.

Notices AUNT SYCORICA's
intense stare.

Yes, yes. She's a lovely young girl.
Absolutely stunning.

CURRAN hands CANDLE a bottle.
He kisses her lightly
on the cheek.

CANDLE
Now go mingle.

CURRAN
Could you introduce me to your family?

CANDLE
They're a pretty dull bunch. Oh, Ruth,
come here, would you? Tess? You, too.
They wave, but
don't bother.

I never know how to behave at
social situations. Oh, there's
someone you ought to meet.
Mister Gabriel Pleasure.

GABRIEL PLEASURE turns at the
mention of his name and trips,
nearly falling. Smiles and
waves.

He's a literary person of some note.
Can't recall actually reading anything
the poor fool has written. But everywhere
one goes one encounters it— books and
books of the stuff. Dyed-in-the-wool
unusualist, I suspect. I dunno. One of
his epistolary novellas was written in
high school French. **Anomalous Narcolepsy**
it was called I believe. Decent enough
fellow, and a pretty fair tennis player.
Lives over in ... ah ... Corntown, that
big old, run-down Corinthian courthouse

by the morgue. A Minnesotan, ah ...
SHIMMER brings them
wine. Our host hands
CURRAN's bottle over
to him.

CURRAN

Tell me, Mister Candle, is what we're
dealing with classical Quadratic
Stark Effect?

CANDLE

No, I wouldn't call it "classical".
In fact, in point of fact, it doesn't
really qualify as Stark Effect either.
No, I'd prefer to call it a case of
Quadratic Zeeman Effect.

CURRAN

You don't say?
GABRIEL PLEASURE approaches. Pause.
So the Q value is joint?

CANDLE

Hello, Gabriel, this is Susan Curran.

CURRAN

Susannah ...

CANDLE

Sorry, dear, Susannah Curran.
Susan, this is Gabriel Pleasure,
a person of some literary standing.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

Delighted.

CURRAN

How do you do?

CANDLE

Might be thought of as Q switching.
The vulcanization of products, etc.
Rubber and rubber trees.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

I'm having a bad hair decade.

CANDLE

I beg your pardon?

GABRIEL PLEASURE goes off.

—

AUNT SYCORICA

That little rabbit, I'd swear she's giving
off Cerenkov radiation. The soft blue aura.
Amazing.

FOSS

—

AUNT SYCORICA

You bet I'd like to monkey with her
bore-hole.

FOSS

—

AUNT SYCORICA

When the moonlight comes perhaps
I'll tell you the true tale of our people.

Not before. We were unusualists,
all of us, you know.

FOSS

—

AUNT SYCORICA

The historical trace is persuasive.
Admiral Miraldi was the first to
diagnosed the condition: The “Monocoque
Money Illusion”, he named it.

She laughs
softly.

Yes, I’d like to monkey with that.

She sings:

In Shantung, Charlie,
The sharks all live on
a hill.

The sharks all live on
a hill.

Pause.

The sharks all live on
a hill.

In Shantung, Charlie ...

—

CANDLE

Transcaucasia? Not bloody likely,
Ruth. The daypart morning drive
picks each bid off the wall. Won an Emmy.

RUTH

Eligible liabilities, I should say.
Gabriel is the sweetest man.

CANDLE

Walks like he's fouled with
Lepas Anatifera. Barnacles
conceal his ball of glass.

RUTH

Tessara's a-tingle. Ho.

CANDLE

At least she doesn't need any character
merchandising. The sensuous young!
You like Curran?

RUTH

Where's she from? She acts like a rabbit
in a challenge box. Unusualist.

CANDLE

Her? No way. A bean counter.

RUTH

Bean counters can be unusualist too.

CANDLE

Ha. Ha.

Pause.

Go ask Shimmer if the gimmick fruit
can be that funky. Magneto-hydro-
dynamically speaking. Look. Hey,
Don't look at me that way. Funk
money is not funk art.

RUTH

You old lefty.

She kisses him on the nose.

Funkum.

CANDLE

Funkum. Funkum. Funkum.
Fold.

BOTH

Funkum. Funkum. Funkum.
Fold.

RUTH

Bold. Old old. Future* schlock.

CANDLE

Optical wand.

RUTH

Future schlock.

CANDLE

Optical wand.

RUTH

Mahoon. Mahoon. Mahoon. Mahoon
Mahoon. Mahoon. Mahoon.

CANDLE

Morbidezza, my dear.

RUTH

Morbidezza?

CANDLE

Indeedy do. Folded nicely will do.

—

THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK shuffles

up to the solitary CURRAN, but
only TESSARA can perceive him.

THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK

Miss Curran, it's me. I took the open-jaw
ticket here. The half-life of my half-death
doesn't seem to read. I never accused those
Petra's Bulk-Handling Machine people. I
never did. Someone else cooked the books.

Sniffs her wine.

This wine's got halitosis. If someone
doesn't acknowledge me I'll fade out and
dark about till my dunlops dangle, till
they dark me out in the daddy tank with
Dagmar over there. Please.

But she doesn't
notice anything.

CURRAN

Dado.

Pause.

THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK

Please help me.

CURRAN

Dado. Deedo.

Pause.

Dado. Deedo. Dashpot.

The suave GABRIEL PLEASURE joins her.

Hi.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

Jiminy jiminy jump.

He bows.

Now jump cut the neon
with your nerfing bar.

Now now now.

CURRAN

Now now now.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

That's called Rotary Swaging. It's
a half-moon do-or-die kind of thing.

CURRAN

Usual or unusual?

GABRIEL PLEASURE

You expect me to answer that?

CURRAN

?

GABRIEL PLEASURE

It is, also, of course, a door check
kind of thing. Drastic. Like the
murmur of the comb-tooth spider.

They engage in some friendly
ribbing:

CURRAN

You look at me like I'm a Murjite.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

One could do worse, Miss Curran.
Forty-five thousand tons of drop
weight does not an umble make.

CURRAN

How clever. First generation scare-head
stuff. And I had you pegged as an
unabhorrent. Albeit an unusual one.

Gives her a look, and

then bursts into song:

GABRIEL PLEASURE

Scam. Scam. Scaly scam.
Climb the side-pipes
and back again.

Scam. Scam. Scaly scam.
Climb the side-pipes
and back again.

Oh, steady state. Steady state. Steady state.
Steady state. Steady state. Steady state.
My stick-dad is named
Pellagra.

Oh, my stick-dad* is named
pellagra.

CURRAN

My stick-dad* is named
Pellagra.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

My stick-dad* is named
pellagra.

CURRAN

My stick-dad is named
pellagra.

BOTH

Pellagra. PELLAGRA.
Pause. All stare
at them.

CURRAN

Stick him on!
Stick him on!

[Repeat X 7.]



TESSARA

Sforever.
Sforever.
Sforever.
Sforever.
Sforever.
Sforever.
Sforever.

[Repeat X 7.]

Pause.

Ward X is my washingmachine, oh.
Wango, wango is my washboard.
What a wandering whistle-stop, oh. [Repeat X 7.]
Pause. Sadder
but wiser.

Sforever.
Sforever.
Sforever.
Sforever.
Sforever.
Sforever.
Sforever.



CANDLE looks adoringly at his
daughter:

Tessara, where you're at's
a white rabbit.

CANDLE PROSPER

A wheelsucker, you ask me. Heh?

CANDLE

I beg your pardon? What did you say?

CANDLE PROSPER

Heh. I said "heh". White alert.

AUNT SYCORICA and RUTH
quietly chat.

RUTH

Are you having a good time, dear?
That's Foss you were chatting with.
A deranged former genius. Mathematics.
He elaborated the theory of Resonant and
Radiant Doohickeys. Arrays of infinities
arranged in torus-ellipsoids, topologically
speaking. Thought to be quite useless,
the whole bumfoozle. Lost his poor wits.
The Phantom of Philosophaster Hall, they
named him. Couldn't be put away; it
would be unseemly for a genius to be
confined to the bughouse. Now his ideas
undergird the whole foundation of things
like Airy Disc implants, Avalanche Lilies,
all those cheeses made from petroleum
byproducts. Ultra-large Crude Containers,

or : ULCC's. Rhode Island Electromagnetic Rat-tail Hinges. Things like that, practical down-to-earth things that give a person ballast in the community. You'd never know to look at him; he was the agent of all that.

AUNT SYCORICA

A fascinating old gentleman.

RUTH

Did he say anything?

AUNT SYCORICA

I was under the impression his mind was gaga.

RUTH

No, no, no. He listens to everything, watches everything. He misses nothing. Only he plays his cards rather close to the chest. He's a distant relation of ours. Just like you, only not quite that distant. The exact connection has been diagrammed for me, but I'm still not too clear. Something morganatic. Or perhaps a tontine. Or something tontine-like.

AUNT SYCORICA

Sounds morbid.

RUTH

Do you have such things in your country?

AUNT SYCORICA

In Baku we tie the old, useless ones. One like him, with faculties gone. We tie them to a waterlogged stump and throw him in the tombi, deep glacial ponds.

A shocked pause.
Was this old gentleman, in his fine, former
years, by any chance a philumenist?

RUTH
My word, what in the name of Jupiter
is that?

AUNT SYCORICA
A collector of matchboxes.

RUTH
Come to think of it ...

AUNT SYCORICA
I want to listen to the old Senator talk
about politics. I only ask because he has
a grip of steel when he has clasped a
box of matches I show him from Baku.

RUTH
?

AUNT SYCORICA
Oh, by the way, that Curran slut is after
your husband.
She goes.

CANDLE PROSPER
That old witch used to say the whole
shindig is a flannel tunnel.
THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK has
been following him, and stands
patiently to one side.

TESSARA

Did she now? How original.* And what do you suppose, did she mean by that?

THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK

Please, Tess.

CANDLE PROSPER

Yes, yes, and more. I was on the Senate Committee then. Had access to things, things like, well, you know. Plans for the Mohawk All-Purpose Vehicle, or MAPV. I was Chairman on the Subcommittee for West Virginia Radio-Sensitive Interversion, and Syllabicicity. As you can imagine a lot of the paperwork was highly classified. Did you know there is no way in round number terms to arrive at an adequate derivative for the Fan Choral Display? It means, my dearie, we literally have no way of knowing what we are doing on a macro level. Across the board, I would say. Buckley's wrong; so is Ross Perot. It's all one big Boston haircut, no matter how much you indulge in chest-thumping, whatever. The hate-mongers don't have to be accurate. We do. That's why polls are both nonsense, and not. Ever watch television and get the eerie feeling all that coon-track boss-out is being enacted within, that is right, within the regular confines of your personal noggin? Your own head? Well there is a reason for that. Because it is, you see, it is.

THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK

Please, Tessara, please.

TESSARA aside:

Joegh, Joegh. What are you doing? You don't belong here. What are you doing? What are you doing?

The SENATOR is surprised.

CANDLE PROSPER

Who're you talking to, Tess*, if you don't mind my asking?

THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK

Please, Tessara, please.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

After I **hid** forty I began to not worry about a whole class of things

CURRAN

Did I hear you correctly? Did you say: "When I hid forty"?

GABRIEL PLEASURE

I thought I said, "When I hit forty".

AUNT SYCORICA

That's not what you said. Maybe you too are becoming vacant-headed. Ha.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

I beg your pardon?

AUNT SYCORICA

Certain persons are most interesting at that point in their life when things

begin to go wrong. Radically, drastically
wrong;

Pauselet.

But that doesn't seem to be the case
with you, Mister Please-her.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

Pleasure, please.

AUNT SYCORICA

Pleasure, an odd duck of an name.
She abruptly goes.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

Odd duck indeed.

CURRAN

Mister Candle says you write books in a
foreign language.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

No, although some of them apparently
read that way. I practice both ideology
and the truth. A little spade work in whatever's
current, but not too taxing. Nowadays
poetry is all about line breaks, and that's
not too taxing. A little trivial though,
even for a has-been like me. I rather prefer
investigative ideology— don't matter what
you turn up, the facts always fit. You might
say I alter like the moon between phases of
stuttering polysemy and plausible journalism.

CURRAN

I don't know what you mean.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

That's all right.

CURRAN

Have you spoken with old Senator Prospero? I can't believe a man like that would just retire. His "abdication" he calls it, as if he were royalty.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

I suppose after four terms in the Senate one feels entitled. That Shimmer oaf is looking at Tessara as if she were a ... a ...

CURRAN

Yes?

GABRIEL PLEASURE

A succulent morsel. A dainty dollop.

CURRAN

Mister Candle is an excellent host, and the estate is fabulous.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

You must get Ruth to show you around the upper rooms. The third floor ballroom. Not to mention the hair-filled ogive. And the Rat Tower. Later on we must explore the deep, interior regions of the woods. A good deal of it remora'd to be first growth, though I don't buy that.

CURRAN

Mister Pleasure, what did you just

say?

GABRIEL PLEASURE

I said, I don't buy that. What,
am I talking too loud?

CURRAN

No, no. What you said before that.
I thought you said "remora-ed" to
be first growth.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

What's a "remora-ed"?

CURRAN

Well, exactly.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

—?

CURRAN

Actually, a remora is a type
of parasitical fish, isn't it?

GABRIEL PLEASURE

My good word! [For he sees something.

CURRAN

What? What's wrong? Am I talking
too loud?* Sometimes I talk too loud ...

GABRIEL PLEASURE

No, no. Look. It's him. Look, he's
gotten up out of his wheelchair.

Pause.

Would you get a load of that look on his
face?

CURRAN

There is something terrible in the sight
of a great person in decline.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

I wouldn't know. Let's get another
drink, and go for a walk. I'd love
to hear more about your work, Oh,
there's Shimmer. I'll just go and
fetch us two more glasses of wine.

As he goes off, THE GHOST
OF JOEGH BULLOCK shuffles up.

THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK

Can't we have a conversation,
Susannah?

But she can't hear him.

I guess it's because I'm dead.
That's it, isn't it?

CANDLE

Shimmer, be a good boy, and make sure
everyone gets a little tight. I'm very
delighted with the company, and hope to
make quite a splash with our little
show at midnight, in the third floor
ballroom, bigosh.

SHIMMER

Beg your pardon, sir? There's no question
of that. They've been drinking like
bloody fishes, sir.

CURRAN joining them:
What show was that, Mister Candle?

CANDLE
The video display I've prepared— with the aid
of the folks over in Marketing and Non-
Invasive Lowball Sites. A short industrial
entitled "New Delaware's Upper Peninsula and
the Development of Post-Lurid Nonselself Hedges."
Tessara appears in a brief cameo, as the
Princess of Leeks and Scallions. Directed by
Nigel Duff-Whippet. He's the one responsible
for that turkey at the Rep last year.
Ramses Inflated, a perfectly dreadful show.
Fart jokes in fat suits, ugh.

CANDLE PROSPER also joining:
Morally, I thought it unimpeachable.
Only, why can't the theatre leave us lawyers
alone, and be done with it?

CANDLE
A successful lawsuit is one worn by a
policeman.

GABRIEL PLEASURE arrives on the skid:
Robert Frost. I rather prefer:
Why does a hearse horse snicker
Hauling a lawyer away?

CANDLE
I thought you were with Sycorica and
poor old Foss.

GABRIEL PLEASURE
He appears to have gotten up and
rusticated himself somewhere else,

perhaps even to the deep, interior
regions of the adjoining forest.

CANDLE

I'll send Tess after.

CANDLE PROSPER

Said the most remarkable things as I
was talking to your Aunt, or cousin
Sycorica. Strange, witchified name.
"It's all hollow," he said, "Hollow"
in his strange, quavering voice.

CANDLE

—

CURRAN

Hold this.

Gives glass to SHIMMER. She goes.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

Hollow with respect to what?

CANDLE PROSPER

Who knows? Who cares?

CANDLE

Dear Ruth, ah, darling, would you
come here? Ruth?

Sees he must go to her to
get her attentions. Goes.

SHIMMER

Look what I found under the boxwood.

Holds up a dirty, old
tool. It is the corn knife
alluded to by CURRAN in the

first scene.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

Looks like a prehistoric paleolith. Have a look.

But CANDLE PROSPER snatches it away.

CANDLE PROSPER

Have a look indeed.

The Senator looks at it carefully.

Just as I thought. A corn knife.

SHIMMER and GABRIEL PLEASURE

What?

CANDLE PROSPER

You, boy, your name is Shimmer?

SHIMMER

Yes, sir.

CANDLE PROSPER

Well, what kind of a name is “Shimmer” anyway?

SHIMMER

From the Manganese Island. North of the bay.

CANDLE PROSPER

Well, look. You take this back to the boxwood and dispose of it. Filthy thing. And not a word of this to anyone. Especially not my cousin, Mister Candle. Do you hear?

GABRIEL PLEASURE

I've heard nothing—! Off I go, to dance

with the princess.

He goes trippingly.

CANDLE PROSPER

And stop looking at my niece that way.

SHIMMER

It's only that ... she's so very, very
beautiful.

Embarrassed, SHIMMER moves off
with the corn knife in a
soiled hanky.

Pause. The Senator alone. RUTH
approaches, but stops a few steps
behind him, as if to watch him
unobserved; a few steps behind her
is SYCORICA who has likewise
positioned herself to observe both
him and her. It is getting dark now.
We hear night noises, and are only
now aware of the seven Japanese
lanterns that are all that illuminate
the fading party. Bats, crickets.

Somehow CANDLE PROSPER feels eyes
upon him, and begins quietly and
slowly to talk.

CANDLE PROSPER

Yes, yes, yes. Soon it will be dark. But without
a secure power base one can do nothing. I always
wanted a true conversation with the American people.
But things have changed. What with the rough new

crowd in Washington. I grew up with certain ideas about ... well ... civility, and how far one is ... or ought to be prepared to go. And now I'm tired of it all. I'm just plain tired. Tired of having to explain over and over again the difference ... the difference between right and wrong, truth and lies. Bobby Kennedy was right: he told me, if you don't spend full time stonewalling the Pentagon they'll just roll over you. That's a free paraphrase. I dunno. And yes, I know, I know. This all sounds so old and ... hopelessly liberal. So old hat.

Scratches his head.

But the Defense Department's the least of it now. Corporate this. Corporate that. Why can't the voters perceive that all this corporate hebephrenia is just a cover for the big grab? So much money amassed, and amassed in a way that shall ... that shall bury the common man, whoever that may be, under a fecal tide-flow of dead, little dead-end dreams. Little, dead dreams. Nightmares, in fact. With cyber bats in the internet belfry, ugh. Hebephrenia's a big word, I know; means the foolish kind of crazy. Delusional. Politically cuckoo. All of us, flushed down into the crapper of ... political enfeeblement and, and Holy Roller misrepresentation, sheer moral equivocation. Mendacity. Drastic mendacity. Drastic enfeeblement.

My record on the important topics speaks for itself. I knew when Jimmy Carter's bunch skewered McGovern that all was lost. Only Mason-Dixon border-state borderline liberalism after that. Saddled with do-gooder rhetoric, but fundamentally unmoored. No real agenda any more. We defanged ourselves, you see. But I'm told the young are tired of politics anyway, so what's the use? As if you could make "politics" go away by turning off the tube. A little lying is just so damn tempting, so

you give in, and the cities fall apart, there're riots, because something like three trillion dollars has gone and been dumped into that filthy **abattoir**, in Viet-Nam. At least I was firm on that. No one ever accused me of waffling on that. Ditto for Watergate. So now our schools are shot, and everyone moves to Sunbelt states where no one gives a damn about education or medicare or the environment. Hell, I was for the Brady bill (or something just like it) before Brady ever got drilled; I told Bob Packwood to pack it all in months before the Ethics Committee requested his diaries. Still no one apparently can READ and the Republicans can reproduce faster than a speeding rabbit. SALT I and SALT II were my god-children, only, only no one cares about proliferation anymore. SALT I and SALT II: who remembers that? But they should. I wouldn't want to live downwind of Hanford, Washington. Poor Packwood, the poor ... dope.

Hell, I was never in politics to be loved. Not to be loved, precisely; no. But, hell, it gets to you. I mean how for instance no one in the minority caucuses ever bothers to say a simple "thank you". And I've always supported minority rights; see, I'm wearing one of these little, anti-AIDS ribbons. No one forced me. No, no one forced me.

Hell, a man of principle doesn't do the right thing because he expects to be loved, and I'd have gone after that kook Alphonse D'Amato at every juncture, but, I don't know, I don't know.

I know some things about George Bush that would make you truly wonder what it takes. Yes, there is, I am coming to believe, a fundamental disconnect between the means of power and the exercise of power. Real, political power and I am ... certain ...

... that, well, things will turn around, and anyway
 I never gave those really fabulous speeches, speeches
 like the kind Cuomo And he has ... in a sense
 abdicated also; I mean, he was defeated and I've resigned.
 Cuomo bumps. And Senator Bill Bradley. But, hey, he was
 a celeb before his ingestion into the culture of politics.
 Still: Bradley bumps. Paul Simon bumps. And now
 Senator Candle Prosper bumps, bumps, bumps.

Do you suppose they'll miss me when I'm gone? Don't
 get me wrong, one of my kids is working with Ralph
 Nader; I mean, I stood for something ... in my time ...

Nader, that ass.

You know what **so** mattered, and what has
so totally eluded everyone on what
 used to be called "the left", is not fighting
 the good fight, but fighting the good fight on
 a ground of our own choosing. Because I

I don't

I don't want only to fight the good fight
 I want to win. But But

It is them, the other side, who now
 determine the agenda: crime (yawn),
 taxes, welfare reform and so on. All
 down the line. All non issues because
 they all amount to grotesque versions
 of real, desperately real issues.

Issues that have been redescribed by those
 who wish to do nothing whatsoever
 about their true causes: poverty,
 a criminal redistribution of wealth

vertically, up the social hierarchy,
 more poverty and bad schools. That's it.
 That's it. That's all there is to it.

So I've had enough.

And so I'm abdicating. People want
 term limits, let'em have term limits.
 I'm with Bill Bradley and Paul Simon.
 Maybe if people get a real taste of what
 the right wing has in store for them.

A gesture of futility.

Want to hear something funny?

Whips out a bit of newsprint.

These are Bill Clinton's remarks in
 Minnesota just before the election, the
 largest crowd of his whole campaign,
 20,000 strong. His opening remarks
 as transcribed by the Federal News Service:
 "Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you
 very much. Thank you. Thank you.
 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
 Thank you. Thank you! Thank you
 very much. Thank you. Hello, Minnesota!
 Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank
 You. Thank you so much. Wow. Thank
 you.

"Thank you...."

Kinda says it all, doesn't it?

He bows a courtly bow.

Thank you.

AUNT SYCORICA yelling
 To live in mankind is far more than
 to live in a name.

Both turn suddenly to
face her.

RUTH

Sycorica, I almost leaped out of my skin.
SYCORICA smiles.

AUNT SYCORICA

Senator Prosper. In the Christian year 1605 Estergom was taken by the Grand Vizier, Lala Mehmet Pasha, and in November of that year he crowned his vassal the Hungarian Bocskay as King of Hungary. After his return to the capital it was decided that he should remain the next year in the capital and lead the war on two fronts. The young Sultan, however, changed his mind, in keeping with the wishes of the Kapudan Pasha Derwish who was intriguing against Lala Mehmet. Accordingly, the latter was ordered to take command of the army against Persia. He had already put up his tents in Ushkudar, when overcome by sorrow because of the frustration of his plans, he was seized with an apoplexy and died three days later (23rd of May 1606). He was buried near the turbe of Sokullu Pasha. His weak heart and lack of steadfastness betrayed him.

Pause.

CANDLE PROSPER

Afraid I don't follow what you're driving
at?

AUNT SYCORICA

I never repeat myself.

CANDLE PROSPER

It is all about the **sheer** insolence of big money.

AUNT SYCORICA

Look at yourself.

Pause.

CANDLE PROSPER

I said it is all about the **insolence** of big money.

AUNT SYCORICA

Look very hard at yourself.

CANDLE PROSPER

Okay. It is all about the sheer insolence of big **money**.

AUNT SYCORICA

I said, I never repeat myself.

CANDLE PROSPER

This is what passes for conversation then?

AUNT SYCORICA

Kind sir, look around you and quail.

Feel fear. Tremble.

CANDLE PROSPER

—?

AUNT SYCORICA

In my country, in my own lifetime, people

pretended to be MAD ... insane, mind you,
just in order to escape responsibility.

He bows low.

CANDLE PROSPER

Alihu Ahkbar, you ...

Turning away rapidly.

Kewpie.

She spits.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

Hullo, Sycorax, hey, nonny-nonny no.

I'm having a bad hair decade, hey,

philo, philo, philo, phlum.

Phililero, lero, lum.

She stalks back in the
direction of the house.

RUTH looks wildly
around herself: What
has happened to everyone?

RUTH

Where is Shimmer? Where is he?

Her husband emerges
from the shadows,
looking somewhat shaken.

CANDLE

Everyone is acting so strangely, and I
can't find Foss.

RUTH

Miss Curran followed Tessara too.

GABRIEL PLEASURE looms up
grinning madly.
My word.

CANDLE
What are you looking at, you grinning
ninny?

GABRIEL PLEASURE
Your name.

CANDLE
?

GABRIEL PLEASURE
I mean your nose.
He sings:
I want to be a static tube,
static tube, static tube.
Off a bit CANDLE PROSPER
hears and ambles over.
Oh, want to be a static tube,
static tube,* static tube.

CANDLE PROSPER
Oh, I want to be a static tube,
static tube, static tube.

GABRIEL PLEASURE
Static tube, static head,
static field, static dead,
static equilibrium, Oh,

BOTH MEN
I want to be a static head,
static tube, static field.
I want to be a static tube

of static no delivery.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

Of static no delivery.

CANDLE PROSPER

Of static no delivery.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

Of static no delivery.

CANDLE PROSPER

At the static moment
of static* equilibrium.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

Of static equilibrium.
All enjoy the moment.

CANDLE PROSPER

That seagreen parrot fish cousin of yours
has pursued her paranoid epicycloids
back to the Rat Tower of the old manse;
see, she's on the widow's walk gleaming.

CANDLE

Ruth, make sure she doesn't
break something breakable.

RUTH

I'm tired of being solely wifely.
I want a drink. Shimmer.
He appears from the
darkness, gleaming.

SHIMMER

Mrs Candle, I have had the most

extraordinary experience, yes, it
was as I was flailing about in
the boxwood. A thought came to me,
and this is that thought ...

RUTH

Shimmer, is there more champagne?

GABRIEL PLEASURE

I praise the wild alfalfa.
I praise the wigwag man.
I praise all those who wild
amid those wigwag cats.

[Repeat X 3.

SHIMMER

People are so happy. So happy.
It's nice to be so drunk on
nothing in particular.

RUTH

Where, please, is the drink? I've quite
suddenly developed the thirst of
Mahomet, but not for the Lord's truth
but for a simple drink.* It's true.

SHIMMER

But that's what I think, you see.
After my illumination I can see
that all problems are the same.
All true problems are problems
posing as problems.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

Bony, bony, bony* fish.

CANDLE PROSPER

Bony, bony, bony* fish.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

Bony, bony, bony* fish.
Bony labyrinth, oh ...

BOTH MEN

Oh, bony boohoo bojum.

[Repeat X 7.]

SHIMMER

No, no, no, no, no. This is true.
Truth is a little thing, like death
and fucking. Truth is both
terrible and local, terrible and
local. Truth is the language
of a gaggle of untuned violins.

CANDLE

I'll pass on the book of wisdom
for now, Shimmer.

SHIMMER

There was a Being in the boxwood
and it said things in my ear.
Low level language of the strange—
you'll notice I said "strange"
not "unusual".

He goes.

CANDLE

Perhaps a prayer would be in
order. Have all our guests
randomly dispersed?

But THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK slowly
shambles up. As usual, no one sees him.

RUTH

Scattered according to Glitter's Rule.

Shimmer, however, will bring about
a general reconciliatio.

THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK

Please. Please help me. I'm so desperate.

CANDLE

Him? Not that lad. He's suffering
from a botched effort at an idea.

THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK

Please. Please help me.

CANDLE PROSPER

Our poor Sciatica has turned into an
Halloween masque. Look at her up there.
The flashlight emphasizes the fearful
symmetry in her facial structure.

All look. Pause.

CANDLE

Damn! I want to get on with the viewing.

RUTH

All I want is a silly little drink.

CANDLE

You know how you get.

RUTH

Rest assured I have no intention
of getting that way now, anyway ...

CANDLE PROSPER and GABRIEL PLEASURE
 appear, on synchronized pogo sticks.
 SHIMMER follows. They are singing
 in unison:

Rubber, rubber,
 rubber tree.

Rubber, rubber. [Repeat X 3.

They sing:

Wiggery.

Piggery.

Triggery.

Liftable.

Shiftable.

Siftable.

Niftily.

Shiftily.

Thriftily. [Repeat X 7.

They sing:

Bowery,

dowery,

flowery,

glowery,

lowery,

showery,

towery. [Repeat X 3.

Attar,

batter,

chatter,

clatter,

fatter,

flatter,

natter,

patter,

platter

shatter,
spatter,
splatter,
yatter.

[Repeat X 7.

CANDLE

Think I need a drink. Suddenly
all our guests begin to look suspiciously
unusualist. Or mayhap I am mad,
and have simply done a Brodie because
of a fetish with the generalized other,
I dunno.

RUTH

Why are they reciting all those meaningless
behavitives?

CANDLE

What on earth do you think I'm referring to?
Seriously, do you think I am mad?.

RUTH

No, darling, merely jaundiced.

CANDLE

After witnessing this I believe I shall
swoon. Oh, Shimmer, can we perhaps
assemble our scattered guests? Yes,
alert them to the viewing of the film.
Third floor ballroom. In twenty minutes.
But SHIMMER looks dazed.
Retreats past THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK
into the forest.
My word. What is this?

He goes after. THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK
approaches RUTH, who stands there,
now all alone.

THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK
Please, Mrs Candle, please help me. I do
so much need someone to help me.

RUTH
Let me propose a prayer to ... no,
no Lord God of Hosts, no, perhaps ...
The Adversary, Great Toothy, er,
no ... no ... Black magic is most
certainly out of the question, ah.
Pause. While she is
thinking, we are
treated to a lovely
cameo of GABRIEL PLEASURE
and CANDLE PROSPER,
serenading (whoever).

BOTH MEN
Oh we wander like the wind, or as a stream
Singing the mazurka
Madrilene.

Oh, we wander like the wind, or as a stream
Singing the sonata
Consomme.

[Repeat X 7.]

RUTH
Oh, please, may the semi-divine Magoo
of ditherers, throwbacks and the, ah,
socially untenable appear before me
with trowel, and run the rule over all;

Likewise I pray to the ghost of P. Johnston
Crapley, our founder and beacon. Please,
Sir, lift this farce to a new dimension
and hallow the brass ring of our hopes;
make a snowplow of our human shoes, and
forgive us our unusualist lapses and all
this ... old hat ... hullabaloo

Suddenly up close, we
see and hear the red
masque of AUNT SYCORICA:

Long ago our people came here, to
Central Asia and Turkestan, from
an even more remote place. From the
“hoodoo”, or goblin region of the Western
North American Coast. There our people
quarrelled, raged and swore, played cards,
and committed outrages against visitors
at the train station, and at the race track.
Our people cleaned airplane restrooms at
night, and one among us went off to live
amongst the crows. This is true. One
of them wiser than the rest, and one
of us.

Hullabaloo. Blackout.

End of scene.

Scene [**carom**]: At a glade, deep in the interior region of the forest. TESSARA has followed and found the old mathematician, FOSS. Now CURRAN arrives at the edge of the glade; for she, likewise, has followed and found, both TESSARA and FOSS. She stands quietly apart, not wishing to disturb them. Night noises; a bright moon, waning. A shallow pond at the center of the glade. We hear a frog plop.

TESSARA

Oh, hi. I thought I'd follow him.

CURRAN

And I was curious where the two of you were going.

TESSARA

Escape.

Both laugh lightly.

Then pause.

It's hard to have a conversation ... I mean ... with people acting so, so ... random.

Gestures.

CURRAN

I know. Believe me, I know.

Pause.

TESSARA

I mean, they're all very sweet and like,
Tessara's so sweet, Tessara's so pretty,
Tessara's so ...

Another futile gesture.

CURRAN

I know. Believe me, I know.

TESSARA

—

CURRAN

—

TESSARA

What's, what's it really like, I mean, downtown,
at the firm. like, working with Dad?

CURRAN

Oh, it's not so ... ah.... Er, do you know
what the Upper Michigan Indifference Curve
is?

TESSARA

No.

CURRAN

Well, how do I explain? Well, it's like the,
the old open the kimono, you know? The
story of Tecumseh's red stick and the rat-
tailed hawk. And of course the, the tools
of the, ah, Lesser Magoo?

TESSARA

It sounds fun.

CURRAN

Overpressures, you know. And some buried
transuranics, hopefully in subcritical states.
All hypothetical, of course. It's like we
humans can withstand something like levels
of 30 psi. Drop the other shoe syndrome.
But anything over 5 psi can cause burst
eardrums and hemorrhaging.

TESSARA

Wow. I didn't know that. That's really neat.

CURRAN

Pacers and speeders do best. But then
I suppose that's obvious.
Slightly awkward pause.

TESSARA

He said the most amazing things
to me, you know.

CURRAN

Who did?

TESSARA

Mister Foss. Can't you see him, there?
Yes, indeed. FOSS
is standing off in
the brush. We can
only make out his
legs. The rest is
hidden.

CURRAN

Why doesn't he come out?

TESSARA

I don't know. You can ask him
if you like.

Looks. Pause.

CURRAN

I think I'll pass.

TESSARA

Do you like my parents? They like you.

CURRAN

I think I do. Yes, I do. It's just that
right now I'm not so sure of a lot of
things. And ... and I guess it shows.

TESSARA

You seem quite serene to me. What's
your first name?

Pause. CURRAN lights
a cigarette.

CURRAN

Why, er. Why, it's Lydia.

CURRAN

I thought I heard people calling you
Susannah?

CURRAN

That too, Susannah Lydia. Yes. That's it.

TESSARA

Why did you follow us out here? Is there
something you wanted to talk about?

CURRAN

No. No. I don't really know.

TESSARA

Guess I'm asking all the wrong* questions.

CURRAN

No. No. No. It's me. It's me. I'm in a funny state. I don't do well at parties. And ...

TESSARA

I suppose the others will hunt us down before long. They always do.

CURRAN

People who make a ruckus can't stand it if people don't want any part.

TESSARA

You can say that again.

Pause.

Do you think it's possible to see someone who is dead? I do; I mean,* I've done it.

CURRAN

With your heart maybe. I mean—

CURRAN

I meant emotionally. Loss is a thing that can be capped.

TESSARA

No. No. No. I wasn't trying to make a creepy and sentimental metaphor.

CURRAN

I didn't mean to ...

TESSARA

It's quite real: there is a person who is very dead. And that person comes around and tries to talk to me. As if we had, like, anything in common. I mean, like, how can you relate to a dead person?

CURRAN

Go figure.

TESSARA

I don't want to die.

CURRAN

I don't think you have anything to worry about for quite some time.

TESSARA

Death is always looking down at us, Death sees far but is deaf, Death is a black camel that kneels once at every man's door.

Pause. CURRAN is a bit puzzled by this dark turn of the conversation.

When you lose a sock in the washing machine? It's matter becoming spirit.

CURRAN

You've got a funny sense of humor Tessara.

TESSARA

Taratantara. Taratantara. Taratantara.

Both pause. Both

look at the moon.

GABRIEL PLEASURE dressed
as a donkey **a la** Bottom,
appears down left. Silently
he gestures and CANDLE PROSPER
joins him in the nettles. They
stand observing the young
women. Pause.

Why do you think people don't like
each other and like, act so cruel and
like, totally random?

CURRAN

Because we don't know any better I
guess. I don't know. Why do you ask?

TESSARA

I don't like to be unsure of myself.

CURRAN

Who does? Jeez.
Pause.

TESSARA

Once you know I came out here, well
not here exactly, it was over the rise
of the hill there where Route Six divides
the forest just south of the diner, the
Moonhat Diner, they've got the best
jukebox in there, my absolute fave,
and, like one day I caught my folks
dancing around in the woods here, only
they had brought some furniture all
the way from the house, and they were
like, wearing each other's clothes

and yelling things in a fierce, fierce language, a language I couldn't, you know, follow because it sounded both barbaric, and contrived? Fake.

And like, there were these bottles of what looked like blood, do you suppose it was blood? It sure looked like blood, and they didn't see me even though I was just standing there going, duh, hey parents, it's me, your daughter Tessara Candle and there's a call for Dad from people downtown at the office saying there's been an accident and there's something wrong with the metacarpal prepunch, that it's gone slack-baked, and the dog has ripped the mailman's pant-leg again not to mention broken the screen door, poor Woofly, and I'm supposed to go to my bowling lesson and also am supposed to receive this week's allowance and well it weirds me out Mom just standing there with what looks like clots of black blood all over her and one boob sticking out from Dad's L.L. Bean shirt and they've dug something up or buried something with shovels because the ground all around has been disturbed and I'm afraid to think about that because who knows what it might be? and I'm standing there thinking, hey, am I, like invisible? Am I, I mean really, am I?

So I run back to the house, and pretend not to notice anything strange. But I know if I do this for too long I'll

end up an unusualist like Cindy Perkins at school and what a rinky-dink she is. A true buttfleaser. No one* will talk to her and.... Nobody will treat her with any respect. And I won't either because she's an unusualist and everyone knows the fact. I hate her. I hate Cindy Perkins so much I could splash her with kerosene and set her on fire. BURN UP AND DIE, YOU BITCH. You snivelling, little unusualist. What you do in your dirty little mind is so nasty I don't even want to think about it, so leave me alone and stop infecting me with these unusual thoughts. I want to be like I am, a normal kid with a normal-type home life, a normal family and a normal dog. No cats, only a dog. So I don't have thoughts like, like of killing this big animal— the Giant New Delaware Silver-Tipped Martin, for example— and killing this big, hairy animal with my teeth, and dragging its body up into the crabapple tree and eating part of it, the part of it that isn't sticky and rotten. I mean isn't that gross?*** I think that it is really gross. Sticky and rotten. Too gross for words. Borderline unusual, in fact, Me, borderline unusual.

CURRAN

“Buttfleaser”? What's that?

TESSARA

Yeah, as in “Sure, buttfleaser, just find us a car, woman”.

—

CURRAN

No, no, no, it isn't. No, really.

TESSARA

I want to stay open and free.
Like Missouri, the Show Me State.
I don't want to die.

Slowly the bushes part
and we see THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK,
radiant because he found
his beloved.

CURRAN

I think you have a very special gift,
and it is a ...

She sees the displeasure
on TESSARA's face and stops
short.

THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK

Please, Tessara, please. Don't hate me
just because I'm dead.

TESSARA

I really don't know why you insist on
following me everywhere I go. I really
find it quite revolting.

Poor CURRAN is stunned.

THE GHOST OF JOEGH BULLOCK

Please, Tessara. Please help me.

TESSARA

Oh, for the love of Christ.

CURRAN

I know, I know. I just wanted ...
I dunno ... I just* wanted to tell you
how much I admire the special quality.

TESSARA

No, no, no. It isn't you. No, no. It's
Joegh ... but there's no sense in explaining
the situation. You'd never believe.

CURRAN

I just wanted to say that I think you are
very special.

TESSARA

Everyone treats me as if I had emerged
from a one-way window, like some paranormal
grasshopper. Like I was standing at the
bottom of a Julia set. And I don't even
know what a Julia set is.

FOSS begins to move
about where he stands
half-hidden.

CURRAN

Everyone has moments of some kind of special
radiance, and I think* you are entitled.

JOEGH BULLOCK'S GHOST

Please, Tessara, please. Please help
me. I'll go away if that's what you
want, but please ... please ...

TESSARA

Oh, shut up you pathetic creep and for

the love of Christ just stop following me
around. You're truly sickening.

CURRAN

Okay, Tessara, if that's what you want.

JOEGH BULLOCK'S GHOST

Okay, Tessara, if that's what you want.
Poor CURRAN is trudging out.

TESSARA

This is maddening. Clairvoyance is a total
bummer.

Pause. JOEGH BULLOCK'S GHOST
is likewise trudging out.

You go. Miss Curran stay, please.

JOEGH BULLOCK'S GHOST turns
hopefully. CURRAN stops, but
doesn't dare to turn.

You go, go. Please.

JOEGH BULLOCK'S GHOST
turns back and goes.

Susannah, it's an unworkable dichotomy.

CURRAN turns back
and smiles:

Sorry, I'm odious and pathetic. But
there's something you've got. And I...

Well, I suppose that something is something
I want too.

CANDLE PROSPER and GABRIEL PLEASURE
whisper and retreat. They have decided
to go and collect the others. JOEGH
BULLOCK'S GHOST has disappeared by
time, but FOSS now has fully emerged.

There is a great radiance in his face, but the WOMEN have not noticed. His left foot is a silver hoof.

TESSARA

I know.

Pause. She looks down.

I'm.... I'm really you.

CURRAN

Yeah. That's it. Only younger and much much prettier.

TESSARA

No, no. Susannah, no. Don't say things like that.* It's a terrible thing to do to yourself.

CURRAN

Yes, it is true. Yes, it is. I guess I've just got a ... a morbid interest in you.

She becomes very cold and hard.

She lights a cigarette.

She puts it out, abject.

TESSARA

But you've got ... experience. Experience has to be worth ... well. Experience has to count for something, doesn't it? Ant and the grasshopper, you know? Listen to me.

FOSS

Hollow. It's all hollow. Ever hear

of the Bertrand Duopoly Model? You both are in perfect duopoly mode. Here, in our moonglow ragtime. The model of the unusualist heresy suggests much the same. Because the usual just gets stranger and stranger without the tocsin of the unusual. I am talking tocsin, not toxin. I am talking the tocsin wake-up alarum. Not the rat poison variety. All this I learned back there up in the Rat Minaret, when in a former life I dwelled in these here parts, and worked as a humble shoe-salesman. Yessiree. The past is no prologue; it's looped to a Cant-Wheel Mississippi Nonsel. Consider that as you differ with your shoes, your selves and selfings. There are no such things as crows neither.

Clears his throat.

The WOMEN are rapt.

Tessara, you are good girl. Piffle-headed, but still too good for this rat's-ass sewer of a Moonhat. Moonhat, ha! Moonhat? Bad place, period. Go figure. Now, something higher wants you out of here so that that thing you do may accomplish its own unusual ellipsoid. So that's it, I guess.

A golden circle of light
appears around TESSARA.

You are simply too good for these shit-eating swine. That's it. So long.

TESSARA

Hey! What is this?

CURRAN

Tessara, honey,

FOSS

Say hello to whoever it is.

Slowly TESSARA ascends— yelling—
and disappears in the night-sky.

Pause.

Hollow. All of it hollow.

GABRIEL PLEASURE rushes up,
carrying his ass's head. He
has seen something in the sky.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

For the love of Christ what was that?

FOSS

What?

GABRIEL PLEASURE

That. That. [Pointing to the sky.

FOSS

Jackass.

CURRAN

It's okay. It's okay.

Pause.

She's gone back to the big house. Everything's
fine, Mister Pleasure.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

Back to the big house?

CURRAN

Yes, back to the big house.

GABRIEL PLEASURE

Oh ...

He doesn't know whether
to believe her or not. But
what can he do? He goes
out. Pause.

FOSS and CURRAN exchange
glances. He shuffles off
back into the woods.

She kneels by the little
pool, looking at the moon.

CURRAN

Taratantara. Taratantara. Taratantara.
A silvery pause. She finds
an object in her pocket. It
is a whisk broom.
Taratantara. Taratantara. Taratantara.

Black out.

End of play.

End of CROWTET.

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