

What is Susan's Secret?

An American Farce

by
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and
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A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



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WHAT IS SUSAN'S SECRET? was first produced by Rocky and Claudie Varcoe at Class Act Dinner Theatre in Whitby, Ontario, Canada on January 15, 2011. The performance was directed by Glenn Ottaway, with sets by Jim Renshaw. The cast was as follows:

MICHAEL..... Jim Renshaw
SUSAN Alexandra Savage-Ferr
JEAN/JULIE/BERTHA Linda Chapman
LARRY/BILL/MURRAY Graham Gauthier
JENNY/PENNY/KELLY Mireille Awad-Arnberg
BOBBY/JEFFREY/PAUL Rob Notman

CHARACTERS

MICHAEL – (age 70-plus) He and his wife, Susan, are the owners of a somewhat run down country inn. There are times when he appears to be totally “with it,” but often wanders off into worlds of fantasy. One day he might be at The Alamo with Davy Crocket, and the next with George Washington at Valley Forge. He is often confused about names, dates, places etc. but is, however, a very endearing character with whom audiences should empathize. He is always kind, gentle, and loving towards Susan and, in the end, almost turns this play into a love story.

(Very elderly, somewhat infirm, and might best be described as “An old man with a twinkle in his eye.”)

SUSAN – (age 70-plus) Spry and active, she appears to run The Cider Mill Inn, and is the driving force behind the “con jobs” she and Michael pull on their unsuspecting guests. She consistently forgets Michael’s name, and engages him in hilarious conversations in which she and Michael are rarely “on the same page.” Her attitude toward Michael, and the love and rapport they clearly share is central to the core of the plot. Whether her secret is, in fact, revealed at the end of the play is something about which the authors remain silent, preferring to let the audience be the judge.

(Hard working, efficient, competent, gentle and caring to Michael.)

JEAN – (age 35-55) While Jean is an interfering “busybody,” her heart is in the right place. When she intervenes in the marital problems of Bobby and Jenny, it is out of genuine concern for them. She totally dominates her mild mannered husband Larry, and we are left with the impression she dominates everything and everyone around her. Things have to be done “Her Way.”

(Forceful, purposeful, single-minded.)

LARRY – (age 40-60) A mild mannered, easy-going sort of guy, who has learned, over the years, to just go along with Jean and not make any waves. However, when Jean gets herself into a situation from which she cannot escape, he does not attempt to extricate her, but rather, in a kindly sort of way, sits back and seems to enjoy a laugh at her expense. Perhaps, in his life with Jean, there have been too few opportunities to do this.

(Long-suffering, hard-working, a devilish sense of humor.)

BOBBY – (age 25-30) A pleasant young man, who gets caught up in the emotional ups and downs of his new bride, Jenny. He acquiesces, perhaps a little too easily, to the fact that he has been conned by Michael and Susan, but that is probably his nature. Clearly very much in love with Jenny, he is willing to apologize when he has no idea what it is he is supposed to have done.

(Clean cut, hard working, easy-going.)

JENNY – (age 20-25) Young and pretty, but perhaps not too bright. She works herself into an emotional upheaval for the most trivial of reasons. Anyone, other than her gentle, easy-going husband, would probably feel like smacking her. To be kind, she is very young and on her honeymoon, and who knows what is going on in her mind.

(Immature, naïve, but in the end showing a good sense of humor.)

BILL – (age 40-60) Bill is a suave, sophisticated man about town. He is a reviewer for a publication, *Country Inns of America*, visiting The Cider Mill Inn incognito. While married, he has arranged a weekend tryst with his girlfriend Julie. He discovers that Michael and Susan are simply con artists and is prepared to expose them, but ethics are not his strong suit, and he compromises his principles to keep his affair secret.

(A polished, well-dressed, educated adulterer.)

JEFFREY – (age 25-30) If there was an award for “The Most Boring Man on the Planet,” Jeffrey would win hands down. When his long suffering wife, Penny, says he’s had charisma bypass surgery, we could easily believe her. He goes on and on about the stupidest subjects imaginable, blissfully unaware that he is driving everyone around him crazy. He is so boring that audiences almost like him.

(Sincere, lives in his own world.)

PENNY – (age 20-30) Penny seems to be driven to drink by her boring husband Jeffrey. She must never appear to be drunk or her sparkling wit and terrific sense of humor will be lost. A little tipsy, most of the time, she brings lightheartedness and laughter into the scenes with Jeffrey, to counterbalance his boring personality.

(Pretty, clearly enjoys life, funny, flighty, giggly.)

JULIE – (age 35-45) Julie has a libido that never lets up. She leaves the audience in no doubt as to why she is at the inn for the weekend. She is, however, sophisticated not cheap or tawdry.

(Beautiful, sensuous, single-minded.)

KELLY – (age 20-30) Kelly is clearly the dominant one in her relationship with Paul. She has concocted the scheme for Paul to pose as his brother Patrick so they can get the tradesmen’s discount. She next comes up with the idea for him to then become her girlfriend “Pauline.” She is a schemer who never gives up, constantly creating explanations for the most improbable circumstances.

(Clever, manipulative, quick-thinking.)

PAUL – (age 25-30) Paul is clearly under the influence of his girlfriend Kelly. She seems to be able to persuade him to do almost anything. Much against his better judgement she has him weave a tapestry of lies and deceit. He never really gets “with the

program” as he alternates between the characters of Paul, his brother Patrick, and Kelly’s girlfriend Pauline.

(Not very forceful, but eager to please Kelly.)

MURRAY – *(age 40-60)* Murray is a very unusual clergyman. He almost belongs in the “Hippie” generation. He arrives on a Harley wearing black leather, and using expressions like “rock on.” He is, nevertheless, a genuine pastor with concern and kindness for those around him, and shows great understanding and compassion, for “Pauline” whom he believes (thanks to Kelly’s manipulations) is a painfully shy claustrophobic.

(Kind, sincere, adventuresome.)

BERTHA – *(age 40-45)* Michael’s sister is referred to by him as “Boot Camp Bertha.” A retired army officer, she certainly lives up to that name. She is a strong comedic character, who seems to dominate the stage whenever she appears. However, prompted by Murray, she finally shows a gentler, more human side to her nature.

(Loud, domineering, aggressive.)

SETTING

The Cider Mill Inn. Somewhere U.S.A.

ACT I Sc 1: Mid-summer afternoon

ACT I Sc 2: One week later

Act II: One week later

TIME

The Present

AUTHORS' NOTES

The play is written for three-to-seven females and three-to-seven males. The characters of Michael and Susan are constant and appear in all three scenes. There are two other couples in each scene, one generally young (say, 20-30) and the other older, perhaps (50-60). So the cast could be any number between 6 and 14, depending on casting availability and how much doubling the director wanted. If doubling, attention should be given to the characters so there is enough difference in dress and manner to change appearances as much as possible for the audience.

ACT I

Scene One

(It is a late summer afternoon in a run down country inn, somewhere, U.S.A. It is very rustic and shabby looking. The front entrance is downstage right. The reception area is upstage right. This should be a counter with a call bell on it, and cluttered with papers. Behind the reception area is a door leading to the office. The whole width of the upstage area is a raised platform with open railings leading off both left and right. This platform has an open area in the center with one or two steps. There is one door to the right (room 5), one door to the left (room 6), and one door directly in the center, the bathroom. Downstage left is a field stone fireplace with a rocking chair just above it. On the left wall above the fireplace is a door to a large closet. Downstage center is a couch with a coffee table in front of it, with a vase of slightly wilted flowers, and some magazines on it.)

(As the curtain rises we see MICHAEL dozing in the rocking chair by the fireplace. He is seventy-ish, moves slowly and might appear to be somewhat senile. He is wearing blue jean overalls, a checkered shirt and work boots.)

(SUSAN enters from the office and starts to straighten up the papers on the counter. She is also seventy-ish, but spry and active. She is wearing a below the knee, old fashioned skirt, blouse, and flat shoes.)

SUSAN. Michael, it's almost four o'clock and we have two couples checking in today. Don't you pretend to be asleep. I need you to help get this place ready.

MICHAEL. *(eyes still closed)* Watch the left flank. They're coming up from the river.

SUSAN. (*crosses left*) Oh Lordy! It's Saturday and he's at the Alamo with Davy Crockett again. (*gently takes his hands in hers*) When you're finished dealing with the Mexicans dear, I need you to help me here, at The Cider Mill Inn.

MICHAEL. Right Davy, I've got 'em in my sights. Pow! (*opens his eyes and looks at SUSAN*) Gladys, what are you doing at the Alamo?

SUSAN. I'm not Gladys. Gladys was your mother. I'm Susan, your wife.

MICHAEL. No, no. Gladys was married to Robert.

SUSAN. That's right, Robert.

MICHAEL. So, I'm married to Gladys.

SUSAN. No dear, you're married to me, Susan.

MICHAEL. No, no, Susan is married to Michael, and you just called me Robert, so I'm married to Gladys.

SUSAN. That would be impossible. You can't be married to your mother.

MICHAEL. Then why did you call me Robert?

SUSAN. I didn't call you Robert.

MICHAEL. Yes, you did.

SUSAN. You can't remember what I called you, you can't remember anything. You can't even remember what you had for breakfast.

MICHAEL. I can so.

SUSAN. Alright then, what did you have for breakfast?

MICHAEL. (*thinks for a second*) Oatmeal.

SUSAN. You hate oatmeal. You haven't had oatmeal for twenty years.

MICHAEL. I didn't say it was today's breakfast.

SUSAN. (*gives him a kiss on the head*) Now that you're back among the living, did you buy the rest of the supplies for the week? It's Plumber's and Tile Layer's specials week.

MICHAEL. All taken care of.

SUSAN. Well, the new toilet was delivered a little while ago. It's sitting by the front door and we need to move it before our guests arrive.

MICHAEL. (*moves upstage to the closet and takes out a little flat dolly on wheels*) OK, I'll go get it. (*crosses right and exits front entrance as the phone rings*)

SUSAN. (*crosses right and answers the phone*) Hello, the Cider Mill Inn. Yes, you've read the ad correctly. It is the handyman's special weekend rate. This weekend only, we're discounting our rooms at ninety per cent off for Plumbers and Tile Layers, including a free dinner every night. No, I'm sorry, this weekend's rates are only for Plumbers and Tile Layers. Keep watching our ads, you never know when we'll run another handyman's special.

MICHAEL. (*enters from the front entrance straddling the toilet, which is on a small dolly, and riding it like a horse*) Hi Ho Silver, away.

SUSAN. (*watching*) What are you doing?

MICHAEL. (*stops*) You didn't expect me to carry it did you?

SUSAN. Of course not. It's just that we don't have time for your foolishness. We have guests arriving any minute.

MICHAEL. (*turns around on the toilet*) Do you remember that broken toilet on our honeymoon in Niagara Falls?

SUSAN. I've never been to Niagara Falls.

MICHAEL. You didn't go on our honeymoon?

SUSAN. Of course I went on our honeymoon, it just wasn't in Niagara Falls. You went to Niagara Falls with your sister.

MICHAEL. I went on our honeymoon with my sister?

SUSAN. Oh Martin, you're hopeless you can't remember anything about our honeymoon.

MICHAEL. I remember my name is Michael not Martin.

SUSAN. Whatever are you talking about?

MICHAEL. You just called me Martin.

SUSAN. I did not.

MICHAEL. Then who is Martin?

SUSAN. I don't know.

MICHAEL. Well, you ought to. You went on a honeymoon with him. Now who's foolish?

SUSAN. Michael, you look like King Tut on his throne. Please put the toilet in the closet before our guests arrive. *(exits to the office)*

MICHAEL. *(riding the toilet towards the closet)* A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust and a hearty "Hi-Ho-Silver" The lone ranger rides again!

(He rides the toilet into the closet and closes the door behind him, as JEAN and LARRY enter from the front entranceway. JEAN, age 50-plus, is wearing a modest sweater and matching skirt or pants. She is carrying a purse. LARRY, age 50-plus, is wearing khaki pants and a short sleeve shirt. JEAN is a friendly busybody who is perhaps a little domineering. LARRY is quiet, distant and sometimes abrupt, but will do anything to make JEAN happy.)

JEAN. *(glances around the room)* Oh my! Larry, I hope this place is OK. *(whispers)* It looks a little run down, don't you think?

LARRY. With ninety percent off for Plumbers, and a free dinner every night, the price sure is right. Although why they would give plumbers a discount I can't figure out. Anyway, we're here now so let's make the best of it.

JEAN. *(crosses to the fireplace)* It is romantic out here in the woods. I feel like we're on our second honeymoon.

LARRY. *(moves to the reception counter and rings the bell)* That's my girl.

(JEAN moves upstage to the closet and opens the door. She closes the door, then quickly opens it again then closes it. She hurries right to LARRY.)

JEAN. *(whispers)* Larry, there's a man in that closet sitting on a toilet.

LARRY. You mean it's a bathroom?

JEAN. No, it's a broom closet.

SUSAN. *(enters from the office)* Good afternoon and welcome to The Cider Mill Inn. I am Susan Edwards. Can I help you?

LARRY. Yes, we're the Hamptons.

(JEAN is tugging on LARRY's shirt and nodding toward the closet.)

I'm Larry and this is my wife Jean.

SUSAN. Welcome, *(pauses and watches JEAN)* are you alright Mrs. Hampton?

JEAN. Yes. I'm perfectly alright.

SUSAN. Well then, let's get you checked in. Do you have verification that you're a plumber?

JEAN. Do you want him to bend over?

LARRY. *(gives JEAN a look)* Will my union card be sufficient?
(hands her the card)

SUSAN. Perfect, *(hands it back to him)* if you would just fill in this form we'll get you into your room. *(hands him a pink form)* I'm sure you'll like it, it has a little private porch, and you'll be able to see quite a lot of wildlife.

(While LARRY begins to fill in the form, JEAN wanders casually over to the fireplace, looks to see that no one is watching her, quickly moves to the closet and peeks in, closes the door and crosses right. She tugs on LARRY's shirt again, whispers in his ear while smiling at SUSAN.)

LARRY. Excuse me, but my wife seems to think there is a man sitting on a toilet in your broom closet.

SUSAN. Oh yes, that would be my husband, Matthew. Please excuse me for a moment.

(She crosses left to the closet, and opens the door as MICHAEL appears in the doorway. He has a long-handled toilet plunger held like a rifle on his left shoulder, and a small bucket on his head with the handle as a chin strap. He marches out, paces like a soldier on sentry duty, does an about face and returns to the closet.)

SUSAN. (*cont.*) Oh Lordy! He's on sentry duty at Buckingham Palace again. (*closes the door and crosses right to the reception desk*)

JEAN. Is he alright?

SUSAN. He's fine. He just has a very active imagination. Would you mind bringing your own bags in? It's best not to disturb him when he's on sentry duty. He tends to take his responsibilities very seriously, and can get a little feisty if he's disturbed.

LARRY. No problem. Jean, would you just finish signing us in and I'll be right back. (*exits front door*)

JEAN. (*quickly signs and returns the form to SUSAN*) Here you are.

SUSAN. Would you please sign this section at the bottom as well, please? (*hands the form back to JEAN who signs it and hands it back*) Well, it looks like everything is in order. (*separates the duplicate form and hands it back to JEAN*)

JEAN. Are you sure your husband's alright in that closet? How long will he stay there?

SUSAN. Don't you worry about Michael, he tends to wander off a bit sometimes.

JEAN. Michael, who's Michael?

SUSAN. That's my husband.

JEAN. I thought your husband was Matthew?

SUSAN. Why ever would you think that?

JEAN. I thought I heard you....oh never mind. But I am curious as to why there is a toilet in your broom closet.

SUSAN. It's a new one. We're installing it in the main bathroom tomorrow morning.

(*Enter LARRY from the front door carrying two overnight bags. He moves upstage to the counter.*)

JEAN. Well, isn't that nice. (*turns to LARRY*) Thank you dear, we're all checked in.

LARRY. (*puts the bags down*) Oh, by the way Mrs. Edwards, I was wondering if there are any hiking trails around here? Something, you know, not too strenuous.

(**JEAN** cannot resist the temptation to investigate **MICHAEL** in the closet again. She shuffles left.)

SUSAN. Absolutely. We have a little sketch map somewhere.
Give me a second. (*exit to the office*)

JEAN. (*now at the closet, opens the door and peers in, then takes a step or two towards LARRY*) Larry, he's still marching up and down in the closet.

LARRY. Just leave him be dear.

SUSAN. (*enters from the office with a small map*) Here it is.

(*As LARRY turns right to SUSAN, MICHAEL appears in the closet doorway, places the plunger firmly on JEAN's derriere and pulls her into the closet.*)

There are three trails and they all start...

(*JEAN steps into the room, the plunger still attached to her rear. SUSAN has her head down looking at the map, and so does not see JEAN who opens her mouth to say something but MICHAEL pulls her back into the closet.*)

...right at the end of the driveway.

LARRY. Thank you, may I keep the map?

SUSAN. Let me just make a copy for you. (*exit to the office*)

JEAN. (*enters from the closet now free of the plunger, and stands just outside the closet door*) Larry, do something!

LARRY. What are you talking about?

JEAN. It's Mr. Edwards.

LARRY. I told you, just leave him be.

JEAN. No, no, you don't understand.

LARRY. I understand that Mrs. Edwards told us not to disturb her husband.

SUSAN. (*enters from the office with the map copy*) Here you are.

LARRY. Thank you.

(*He turns right as MICHAEL re-appears with the plunger, attaches it firmly to JEAN's derriere and pulls her back into the closet. LARRY takes the map and turns left but JEAN is once again in the closet.*)

Jean! Leave him alone.

SUSAN. (*hurries over to the closet*) Oh dear, I hope she's alright.
He doesn't like intruders at Buckingham Palace.

(*She goes into the closet and immediately re-appears with a somewhat flustered* **JEAN**. *They leave the closet door open and cross right.*)

I'm so sorry, Mrs. Hampton, he does get carried away a little bit sometimes.

LARRY. I told you not to go in the closet.

JEAN. Like I had a choice.

SUSAN. (*now again behind the counter, hands* **JEAN** *a room key*)
You're in room five, right up the landing there.

LARRY. (*picks up the bags and moves towards room five*) I'm
looking forward to a nice dinner tonight and sleeping
late tomorrow morning.

JEAN. Me too.

SUSAN. You won't be sleeping too late, I hope. You need to
be finished with your work by twelve noon.

LARRY. (*stops dead in his tracks and turns downstage*) Work?

SUSAN. Yes, you've agreed to install our new toilet.

LARRY. I have done no such thing.

SUSAN. Well, technically you haven't, but your wife signed
the contract on your behalf.

LARRY. Contract?

SUSAN. Yes, it's all in paragraphs five, six and seven.

LARRY. (*takes the check in form copy out of* **JEAN** *'s hands and looks at it*) Jean, what did you sign?

JEAN. Just the check in form.

LARRY. This is a work contract.

JEAN. Well, nobody ever reads the small print.

LARRY. Well, I'm just not going to do it.

SUSAN. I see, then you need to read paragraph eight.

LARRY. (*frowns and looks at* **SUSAN**) Why don't you just tell
me what's in paragraph eight.

SUSAN. If you don't do the work agreed to in paragraphs five six and seven, then we charge you on your credit card for a whole week at full rates, *(She is busy with a hand held calculator.)* and that would total one thousand seven hundred and forty-two dollars.*

JEAN. That's outrageous. You can't get away with that.

SUSAN. I'm afraid we can. You signed and authorized us to debit your card. The lawyers charged us a fortune. This contract is very legal and very binding.

LARRY. *(turns to JEAN)* What have you got us into?

JEAN. Well, it's not that bad, I mean, you're a plumber after all. You've installed hundreds of toilets. It won't take that much time. Besides we're staying here practically free, and we get dinner. All in all, I think I've done a pretty good job.

LARRY. Well, can I at least sleep in tomorrow and do it in the afternoon?

SUSAN. I'm afraid not, we've already planned to re-tile the entire bathroom in the afternoon.

MICHAEL. *(enters from the closet and crosses right)* So, are you our plumber?

LARRY. It looks that way.

JEAN. I'm glad to see you're off duty now.

MICHAEL. What are you talking about? Is your wife feeling alright?

LARRY. She's fine.

MICHAEL. Well, the toilet's in the closet, and any tools you'll need are right there too. See you at dinner.
(crosses to counter)

LARRY. *(picks up the luggage and heads up to room five with JEAN following)* I can't believe this.

JEAN. It really wasn't my fault. You'd need a magnifying glass to read all that stuff. *(They exit to bedroom five.)*

MICHAEL. *(leans across the counter and gives SUSAN a kiss on the cheek)* Well dear, we did it again.

*This dollar amount may be changed at the director's discretion based on the current market in the area, but should be an amount which is ridiculous in nature.

SUSAN. Yep, worked like a charm. They were easy. They didn't give us any hassle at all. *(We hear a car pull up.)* Well, that will be our Tile Layer. Michael, why don't you check on the dinner menus and make sure they are ready for tonight. *(MICHAEL exits to the office.)*

(Enter from the front entrance BOBBY, carrying a suitcase, followed by JENNY. They are on their honeymoon. BOBBY is thirty-ish, wearing black jeans, tennis shoes, and a T-shirt. He is a clean cut young man, very much in love with his young bride. JENNY is in her mid-twenties, wearing a casual skirt, blouse or top, mid-heeled sandals and a matching purse. She is extremely pretty but appears to be somewhat upset. She is quietly sobbing into a handkerchief. They move up to the counter.)

SUSAN. Welcome to the Cider Mill Inn, I'm Susan Edwards. You must be Mr. and Mrs. Brader.

BOBBY. Yes, we are. I'm Bobby and this is my new bride, Jenny. *(turns to JENNY)* I'll get us checked in, dear. Why don't you go sit down.

(JENNY crosses left, and sits in the rocking chair. She continues to sob.)

SUSAN. Is Mrs. Brader all right?

BOBBY. She'll be OK. She's just a little upset.

SUSAN. *(takes out paperwork)* You'll be staying in room six which is our honeymoon suite, as you requested. However, before I can guarantee you the ninety per cent off weekend special, I do need to verify that you are an experienced Tile Layer.

BOBBY. Oh, yes, I've been doing it for years. Here's a card from my company. *(hands SUSAN the card who looks at it and hands it back)*

SUSAN. Wonderful, now if you'll just sign here.

(hands a pink form and pen to BOBBY who signs it)

Oh, you need to sign here as well.

(BOBBY signs again and returns the form and pen.)

Excellent. You're in room six, right up the stairs there.

(detaches the duplicate copy and hands keys and the duplicate to BOBBY)

SUSAN. *(cont.)* Now, tomorrow you –

(There's a loud nose blowing raspberry into her handkerchief from JENNY and BOBBY hurries over to her side.)

Is Mrs. Brader alright?

BOBBY. She'll be fine. She just needs to rest a little.

SUSAN. Would you like my husband to help you with your bag?

BOBBY. No, that's alright, I've got it.

SUSAN. Dinner's usually about six thirty and my husband will have the menu out here shortly. If you need anything, please ring the bell.

(She gives the bell a ring, and MICHAEL enters immediately to answer it. SUSAN just gives him "a look." Without breaking stride he wheels about and exits.)

We're right here in the office. *(exits to the office)*

BOBBY. *(crosses right to pick up the suitcase)* I'm really not sure why you're so upset, dear, but if you just come to our room, we can talk about it.

JENNY. I'd rather just sit out here for a few minutes if you don't mind.

BOBBY. O.K, if you really want to. I'll go unpack and wait for you. *(exits to room six)*

(JENNY watches BOBBY enter the bedroom then bursts into tears. Enter JEAN from room five. She notices JENNY in the rocker and moves downstage towards her.)

JEAN. I'm sorry. I couldn't help but see that you're upset. Are you alright?

JENNY. Not really.

JEAN. Is there anything I can do? I'm Jean, by the way. *(shakes hands with JENNY)*

JENNY. *(shakes hands)* I'm Jenny.

JEAN. *(sits on the couch, left arm)* I'm a great listener.

JENNY. Would you mind if I asked you something?

JEAN. Not at all.

JENNY. Are you married?

JEAN. Yes.

JENNY. Has your husband ever asked you to do something you didn't want to do?

JEAN. I suppose so yes. Why don't you tell me what it is that's got you all upset like this.

JENNY. Well, we're on our honeymoon, and last night at three in the morning my husband made an unreasonable demand.

JEAN. At three in the morning? Oh, the brute! You poor girl.

JENNY. I thought I knew Bobby better than that, but now...I don't know. I think my marriage is over before it's begun. I don't know what to do? I'm not even sure I want to be alone with him.

JEAN. Don't you worry about a thing. Why don't you come and lie down in our room, and I'll get my husband Larry to have a talk with Bobby.

JENNY. Oh, I can't do that.

JEAN. (*stands and pulls JENNY along with her to the door of room five*) Of course you can, Larry won't mind at all. I'm sure he will talk some sense into your husband and he'll apologize. (*She opens the door to room five.*) Larry, I need you out here for a moment please.

LARRY. (*comes to the door*) What is it? I was just about to lie down.

JEAN. You can do that later. Larry, this is Jenny, she's going to rest in our room. (*turns to JENNY*) You go lie down dear and don't worry about anything. Larry will take care of this. (*pushes JENNY inside and closes the door*)

LARRY. Larry will take care of what? Why is a strange woman lying in our bed where I'm supposed to be right now? I don't like that look in your eye, Jean.

JEAN. All you have to do is go next door to room six and explain to her husband why it is wrong to make an unreasonable demand on that poor young girl at three in the morning on their honeymoon.

LARRY. What?

JEAN. Well, Jenny and Bobby are on their honeymoon, and last night, at three o'clock in the morning, he made an unreasonable demand on her. She is so distraught and thinks her marriage is over. I'm sure you can make him see that what he did was wrong. Make him apologize, and they can get on with their honeymoon.

LARRY. Why me? Why not you?

JEAN. Because.

LARRY. Because?

JEAN. Well, because...because he needs a man-to-man talk.

LARRY. You expect me to knock on a perfect stranger's door and tell him he needs to apologize to his wife, for something that's none of our business anyway?

JEAN. Yes, and don't forget the part about three in the morning. *(gives him a kiss and exits to bedroom five)*

LARRY. *(stands in the hallway facing downstage muttering softly to himself, imitating JEAN)* "I'm sure you can make him see what he did was wrong. Make him apologize. Then they can get on with their honeymoon..."

(MICHAEL enters from the office walking backwards slowly. He moves left till he is clear of the counter, then he mimics stepping off a ladder.)

MICHAEL. One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.

LARRY. Come in Houston, we have a problem.

MICHAEL. *(now back to normal)* Really, can I help?

LARRY. Help with what?

MICHAEL. Your problem.

LARRY. I don't have a problem.

MICHAEL. You said you did.

LARRY. Well, I don't.

MICHAEL. Oh, OK.

(SUSAN enters from the office.)

SUSAN. Michael, where did you put the menu? Oh, hello, Mr. Hampton. Everything all right?

LARRY. As alright as possible given the circumstances, I suppose.

(Enter BOBBY from room six.)

SUSAN. Wonderful! Oh hello, Mr. Brader. Have you met Mr. Hampton?

BOBBY. *(comes downstage and shakes hands with LARRY)* Hello.

SUSAN. *(to MICHAEL)* Did you finish writing out the menu Mitchell?

MICHAEL. No, but Michael did.

SUSAN. *(exits to office with MICHAEL following)* Well, who else would? Sometimes you just don't make any sense.

MICHAEL. You're telling me I'm the one who doesn't make sense?

BOBBY. You haven't seen my wife, have you? I left her sitting in that rocking chair.

LARRY. Well, as a matter of fact, I have. She's in our room.

BOBBY. What is she doing in your room?

LARRY. Actually, I have no idea. You see my wife...wait a minute, can we sit down?

(They sit on the couch, LARRY left, BOBBY right.)

You see my wife has this strange idea, – first I should tell you that my wife has strange ideas all the time. She asked me to talk to you, I want you to know this is not my idea, I don't think it's any of our business. But when Jean gets an idea into her head it's best to go along with it. So, there it is.

BOBBY. No disrespect, Mr. Hampton, but I haven't a clue what you're talking about.

LARRY. Oh boy! Sometimes it's just best to come straight out with it. Here it is. Your wife told my wife that you made an unreasonable demand on her at three in the morning.

BOBBY. And that's what has her so upset?

LARRY. Apparently so.

BOBBY. I didn't think it was unreasonable, she'd already got out of bed to go to the bathroom.

LARRY. She'd already got – wait a minute. Exactly what demand did you make?

BOBBY. I wouldn't call it a demand. I just asked her if she would mind opening the window. I was hot.

LARRY. And that's it?

BOBBY. Yes, do you think that's unreasonable, Mr. Hampton?

(LARRY shakes his head no and begins to laugh.)

What's so funny?

LARRY. Well, Jean thinks that....oh never mind. *(moves upstage to room five)* Let's get our wives out here and get this sorted out.

(knocks on the door and JEAN appears)

Jean, could you and Jenny come out here please.

JEAN. *(enters followed by JENNY)* Good job, Larry. I knew you could do it.

(moves downstage followed by JENNY and LARRY)

So young man, are you ready to apologize?

JENNY. Yes, Bobby, I'd like an apology.

BOBBY. But I didn't do anything wrong, did I, Mr. Hampton?

LARRY. I'm staying out of this one.

JENNY. Didn't do anything wrong? How can you think that it's OK to make a demand like that...

JEAN. At three in the morning? Young man, I can't believe–

LARRY. *(grabs JEAN by the arm and pulls her aside)* Jean, this is between the two of them.

JEAN. But –

LARRY. You need to let them sort this out. It's not what you think.

JENNY. I'm not your slave, I'm your wife.

JEAN. That's the spirit.

JENNY. My mother always told me that big things start in little ways. One little demand here, becomes a life-time of demanding, and she told me never to let it get started, and Mrs. Hampton agrees. Three o'clock in the morning is not a reasonable time to ask me to do anything. I wouldn't ask you to do anything at three in the morning.

BOBBY. If it were the other way around, I wouldn't have minded.

JEAN. Of course you wouldn't, you're a male.

JENNY. There, you see, you just don't understand. I thought you were more sensitive than this.

BOBBY. I really didn't think it was a big deal.

JEAN. Big deal!...Big deal!....Larry, do something!

LARRY. I don't think it's a big deal either.

JEAN. Larry Hampton, I can't believe what I'm hearing. Jenny, let's go.

(JEAN & JENNY start to move upstage.)

BOBBY. No wait a minute. If it's so important to you, I apologize. I swear I will never ask you to open a window at three in the morning ever again.

(There is a long pause.)

JEAN. Open a window?

LARRY. *(grins at JEAN)* Open a window.

JENNY. Oh, Bobby. *(runs into BOBBY's arms and kisses him)*

JEAN. Well, how was I to know....I mean the poor girl was so upset...I was only trying to help...besides...you didn't do anything to help the situation either.

JENNY. I was being so silly. I love you. *(kisses BOBBY)*

BOBBY. Me too, you! Listen, we're on our honeymoon and have the whole weekend together, so let's start over.

LARRY. They appear to be happy now, so let's let it go at that.

JENNY. (*giggling*) And you were so smart to find us this place for practically nothing. (*kisses him again*)

LARRY. Wait a minute, did you say practically nothing? You wouldn't happen to be here on the tradesman's special would you?

JENNY. How did you know?

LARRY. Did you sign in already?

JENNY. Yes, we did.

JEAN. Did you read the fine print?

BOBBY. No

LARRY. What's your line of work?

BOBBY. I'm a Tile Layer.

LARRY. Then they didn't tell you?

JENNY. Tell us what?

JEAN. That you probably signed a work contract to tile the bathroom tomorrow afternoon. Larry, I think you'd better explain to Bobby how he's been conned.

LARRY. Do you have your check-in form?

BOBBY. It's in our room.

LARRY. Why don't we go look at it.

(BOBBY exits to room six followed by LARRY.)

JENNY. This is my honeymoon.

JEAN. (*sits on the couch left*) I know dear, but it's not so bad. As you said, it's costing you practically nothing, and you do get a free dinner.

(Enter SUSAN from the office with a menu. She stops behind the counter.)

JENNY. (*moves to the counter*) Is it true you had us sign a work contract to do some tiling?

SUSAN. It's just a very small bathroom. Please tell your husband he will be expected to start work at noon tomorrow. The tiles are in the closet as well as any tools and materials he may need.

JENNY. That's not fair. It's my honeymoon.

SUSAN. Well, you can always pay full price for the room.

JEAN. You don't want to do that. Cheer up. We can go for a walk or something while he's working.

JENNY. Do you have the dinner menu?

SUSAN. Yes, it's right here. (*hands JENNY the menu*)

JENNY. Well, dinner had better make-up for your trickery.

SUSAN. I'm sure you'll find the menu very interesting. Just ring the bell when you're ready to place your order for tonight.

(She gives the bell a ring and MICHAEL enters immediately to answer it. SUSAN just gives him "a look." Without breaking stride he wheels about and exits, followed by SUSAN.)

(JENNY comes downstage and sits on the couch right end, as BOBBY and LARRY enter from room 6 and move downstage.)

BOBBY. How could I be so stupid? I wondered why there was a duplicate copy.

LARRY. Cheer up, at least you get to sleep in, I have to be at work at nine. (*sits in the rocker*)

BOBBY. (*gives JENNY a kiss on the cheek and sits on the right arm on the couch*) I'm afraid I'm going to have to do a little work tomorrow afternoon dear. I'm sorry.

JENNY. It's OK. Jean said she'll keep me company.

JEAN. Well at least we get a free dinner. Jenny, what's on the menu?

JENNY. (*reads for a moment and makes a face*) Earthworm soup?

JEAN. (*grabs the menu*) Squirrel Tail Tidbits?

LARRY. (*grabs the menu*) Possum Pie?

BOBBY. (*Strides over and grabs the menu, reading as he returns to the couch right arm.*) Breast of Turkey Buzzard, and if you're still hungry, Buffalo Chip Cookies.

(There is a long silence as LARRY goes to the counter and rings the bell.)

SUSAN. (*immediately enters*) What can I do for you?

LARRY. Mrs. Edwards, we've been discussing your dinner menu, and we all agree that perhaps it might be nice to eat out tonight. Is there a restaurant nearby that you could recommend?

SUSAN. As a matter of fact, there is a charming little place right down the road about a half a mile away. I'd be happy to make reservations for you.

LARRY. Thank you, six o'clock would be fine. Come on Jean, let's go take a quick nap. Who knows, I might just make an unreasonable demand on you!

JEAN. (*giggling*) Oh, Larry! (*Both exit to room five.*)

BOBBY. (*looks at JENNY*) What do you say, Jenny?

JENNY. (*giggling, pulls BOBBY up and leads him upstage*) Just don't ask me to open the window. (*exit to room six*)

SUSAN. (*dials the phone*) Hello, Brookside restaurant? This is Susan at The Cider Mill Inn. I need a reservation for four at six this evening. Yes, the usual table. Yes our usual twenty percent commission would be fine. Thank you.

MICHAEL. (*enters from the office*) Are they going out for dinner?

SUSAN. Oh yes.

MICHAEL. Good, what are we having?

SUSAN. Well, French onion soup, sirloin tips, fresh asparagus with hollandaise sauce, and your favorite, baked Alaska.

(*curtain*)*

*Depending on the "Curtain Down" time required by the director, there may just be time for Michael and Susan to change into a different shirt and blouse.

Scene Two
One week later

(The setting is exactly the same as Act I.)

(As the curtain rises we see MICHAEL dozing in the rocking chair by the fireplace. SUSAN enters from the office with a large bundle of towels. They are dressed the same as Scene One.)

SUSAN. *(crosses left to MICHAEL)* Michael, our guests will be arriving any moment. Have you got everything ready?

MICHAEL. *(eyes still closed)* We've got to find more wood.

SUSAN. We have plenty of wood. It was delivered yesterday for our new deck.

MICHAEL. *(eyes still closed)* We almost had a cave-in in section seven.

SUSAN. *(sets the towels down on the couch, and gently takes his hands in hers)* Lordy! I forgot. It's Friday, he's tunneling out of Stalag seventeen again. Michael dear, *(MICHAEL opens his eyes)* our guests will be arriving soon, and I haven't quite finished getting room five ready. I need you to hold down the fort.

MICHAEL. *(stands up and salutes)* Ja wohl, Herr General.* Martha, you can't be here, there are no women allowed in Stalag seventeen.

SUSAN. I'm not Martha, I'm Susan, and you're not in Stalag seventeen.

MICHAEL. Are you sure you're not Martha?

SUSAN. Oh Morgan, of course I'm sure. Martha was your first wife.

MICHAEL. Morgan was married to Martha?

SUSAN. No dear, you were married to Martha.

MICHAEL. Then who was Morgan married to?

SUSAN. How should I know?

MICHAEL. Well, do you know who you're married to?

* The word "general" is pronounced in German with a hard "G."

SUSAN. Yes dear, you.

MICHAEL. Well you can't be married to me, I'm married to Martha.

SUSAN. (*gives him a kiss on the head*) That was a long time ago. You're married to me and have been for a long time.

MICHAEL. I'm so glad, dear. I'd choose you every day of the week and twice on Sunday.

SUSAN. That's sweet dear, but now that you're back at the Cider Mill Inn, I just want to remind you that we have three parties checking in today. Mr. and Mrs. Woodson, they're here on the tradesman special. He's the carpenter here to build our new deck. There is a Mr. Herman and a Ms. Monroe, who are just regular guests. If they check-in before I'm finished in room five, please make sure you give Mr. Herman and Ms. Monroe the yellow forms, and Mr. and Mrs. Woodson get the tradesman special pink form. We wouldn't want them to get the wrong forms now would we, dear?

MICHAEL. Right.

SUSAN. (*picks up the towels and moves upstage to room five*) And Michael, stay out of Stalag seventeen while I'm gone.

MICHAEL. (*salutes*) Ja wohl, Herr General.

SUSAN. Michael! (*exits to room five*)

MICHAEL. Right, dear. (*Immediately he drops to his hands and knees and begins to crawl across the floor towards the closet.*)

(*BILL enters from the front entrance. As we will see later, it is important that BILL has a mustache. He is wearing an oversized pair of black rimmed glasses, long sleeve white shirt, dress pants, and loafers. He carries a small overnight bag. He watches MICHAEL, who is half way across the room.*)

BILL. Excuse me!

MICHAEL. (*Raises his head, yelling out as he bumps it on the ceiling of the imaginary tunnel. When he reaches the closet he stands up.*) Yep, the tunnel has just enough headroom.

(Turns and sees BILL, and is immediately normal. He then crosses right to behind the counter as BILL moves upstage from the entrance to the counter.)

MICHAEL. *(cont.)* Oh hello, welcome to The Cider Mill Inn. I'm Michael Edwards. May I help you sir?

BILL. I don't know, – er – are you alright?

MICHAEL. I'm perfectly fine, thank you. What can I do for you?

BILL. I'm Bill Herman. I have a reservation.

MICHAEL. Right, if you would just fill in this form. *(grabs a pink form from behind the counter and hands it to BILL)*

BILL. You sure have a pretty spot here in the hills. What a great place for a weekend escape.

MICHAEL. *(eyes bulging)* ESCAPE!

(Immediately drops to his knees and crawls left to the closet. BILL watches as SUSAN enters from room five with a smaller pile of towels. MICHAEL exits to the closet and closes the door.)

SUSAN. *(comes downstage behind the counter, and puts the towels down)* Oh Lordy! He's still in Stalag seventeen. Hi, I'm Susan Edwards.

BILL. Hello, I'm Bill Herman.

SUSAN. Please excuse my husband.

BILL. That's alright. Though I have to admit, he did take me by surprise.

SUSAN. He's quite harmless. He just has an overactive imagination, and I see he gave you the wrong form. *(snatches the pink one away and replaces it with a yellow form)*

BILL. Wrong form?

SUSAN. Oh it's nothing. That was one of the old ones. We don't use those anymore.

BILL. I see. *(begins to fill out the form)* I must say you have a beautiful place here.

SUSAN. Thank you. We think so too.