

Acting Edition

Mother Play

A Play in Five Evictions

by Paula Vogel

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|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

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CHARACTERS

PHYLLIS HERMAN – The Mother. Ages 30s to late 70s/80s.

CARL HERMAN – The Son. Ages 13–37. The genius in the family.

MARTHA HERMAN – The Daughter. Ages 11–50s.

SETTING

A series of apartments. In the beginning of the play, these apartments are the custodial units, sub-basement, in what we now call Section 8 housing.

TIME

From 1964 into 21st-century America.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

By the way: this play is not naturalistic. The walls may or may not meet. But since it is a memory play, even the cockroaches have a touch of magic.

Music. And muzak.

A note about cockroaches: please be playful. At the Helen Hayes Theatre, the production used projections. I ask you to make a story when the roaches dance in transitions. A salute to Hollywood dance legends, or an Ethel Williams homage with roaches in the toilet, etc. For now, I am simply suggesting a courtship story: the roaches court their mates through dance, followed by marriage, followed by hundreds of baby roaches. But you choose!

About the purse: it is magical. The way our mothers' purses are when we are toddlers: the purse can hold infinity. Please sprinkle some magic throughout these basement apartments. Phyllis pulls props out of her purse that – by the laws of physics – should not be able to fit.

NOTE ON SONGS

The original Broadway production of *Mother Play* used the following songs. Permission to include these songs in a production is not included with a license from Concord Theatricals. If any licensee wishes to use any or all of these songs in their production of *Mother Play*, they must acquire the necessary rights from the applicable music publishers.

“So What’s New?”	“Baker Street”
“Mercy Mercy”	“Un Cellier”
“Because”	“Disco Inferno”
“Do Wah Diddy Diddy”	“I Will Survive”
“There’s a Small Hotel”	“I Will Wait for You”
“Moon River”	“In the Mood”
“Stranger on the Shore”	“The Way You Look Tonight”
“Pavane pour une infante défunte”	“My Romance”
“La Cucaracha”	“Harmelodial Introduction”
“My Blue Heaven”	“Perpetuum Mobile”
“The Fashion Show”	“Pie Jesu”
“There’s No You”	“Dance of the Blessed Spirits”
“Theme from <i>A Summer Place</i> ”	“La Vergine degli Angeli”
“Lullaby”	“Jenie with the Light Brown Hair”
“Work Song”	“Steal Away”
“Ride of the Valkyries”	“Nearer, My God, to Thee”
“You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feelin’”	“My Foolish Heart”
“Soul Finger”	“The More I See You”
“Classical Gas”	

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Page 2 – “1960s music”

Page 6 – “a rock and roll song from 1960–64 with inane lyrics”;
“the easy listening station”

Page 7 – “an instrumental standard”

Page 13 – “music”

Page 28 – “a snippet from a musical torch song.”

Page 38 – “A 1970s disco song”; “a beloved 1970s disco tune”

Page 39 – “another disco anthem”

Page 42 – “a medley of soft and easy music”

Page 43 – “Rodgers and Hammerstein, Porter, Gershwin, a sprinkle of hits”

Page 54 – “Fauré’s ‘Pie Jesu’”; “Gluck’s ‘Dance of the Blessed Spirits’”;
“La Vergine degli Angeli”; “I Dream of Jeanie”; “Steal Away”;
“Nearer My God to Thee”; “Easy soft listening music”

Page 57 – “The standard song, Phyllis’ favorite”

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Page 5 – “a large McDonald’s bag”

Page 44 – “Tabasco”

For further information, please see the Music and Third-Party Materials Use Note on page iii.

MOTHER PLAY, A Play in Five Evictions, is dedicated to Mark Vogel.

Present Moment in Time

(MARTHA enters the stage. In the middle of the stage there is a sealed moving box.)

MARTHA. After I left my mother's house, I worked for a time as a packer in a moving van company. In Washington, D.C. people are always moving. Republicans in, Democrats out. Democrats in, Republicans. Out.

By age eleven, I had already moved seven times. My father had a habit of not paying rent. My mother, brother and I could pack up our house in a day.

A very useful skill. To know what household goods are in every box so one can also unpack in a day. Family in, family out.

When I packed up my brother Carl's apartment after he died, everything he left behind fit into one medium size U-Haul box.

There is a season for packing. And a season for unpacking.

(MARTHA pulls out a box cutter and slices through the taped box. She pulls out a stuffed rabbit, a book -)

(- CARL begins to appear -)

(- and finally a piece of paper, which she reads from.)

“Dear Martha”

(CARL is now fully present, in the past, and as music rises, MARTHA goes to him. Together they begin moving furniture and boxes into the space.)

(Once all the furniture pieces are in place, MARTHA goes into the hall and pushes in a big knockoff Eames lounge chair. When the chair is in the living room, MARTHA turns it. There in the chair is PHYLLIS. In her lap is a huge purse.)

MARTHA. ERIE STREET, ADELPHI MARYLAND. BASEMENT APARTMENT. 1964. MARTHA 12, CARL 14. PHYLLIS 37.

(The apartment at Erie Street comes to life. A two-bedroom apartment built in the 1940s. Ugly ceiling fixtures. The metal door into the hallway is open. There is a flight down from the front door.)

(A sofa. Two armchairs. A round walnut coffee table. Lamps, a rug. Knockoff Scandinavian furniture. Earth colors. There is a dim light from the living room window coming from ground windows halfway up the wall. The apartment is the custodial unit.)

(MARTHA takes out a radio and turns it on - 1960s music. The siblings smile at each other.)

(As MARTHA and CARL unpack boxes, PHYLLIS, in a daze, watches her CHILDREN work.)

Is it all going to fit?

CARL. Anything that doesn't fit goes on the street.
Someone will take it.

MARTHA. Okay.

(PHYLLIS takes her cigarettes out of her purse. Sits. Then she searches her purse. Finds the ashtray in her purse. Sits. Then starts looking in her purse. Looking. Looking.)

PHYLLIS. God Damn It.

CARL. What.

PHYLLIS. My lighter.

CARL. It's...somewhere.

PHYLLIS. It's a gift from Sonny.

CARL. You didn't leave it behind.

PHYLLIS. Engraved. The only boy I ever loved.

CARL. What about the other four boys?

MARTHA. It will show up.

(CARL roots in his pocket and brings out matches. Goes to his MOTHER's chair and lights her cigarette. PHYLLIS breathes it in as if it is oxygen on a planet without air. She exhales. Breathes. Less shaky now. PHYLLIS calms.)

PHYLLIS. Thanks, love.

(PHYLLIS goes back on the hunt in her purse. She pulls out a small bottle of gin.)

Martha, love...where did we put the -

(MARTHA opens another box. Pulls out a high glass. Hands it to her MOTHER.)

PHYLLIS. I need ice.

(MARTHA opens another box. Pulls out an old-fashioned metal ice cube tray. Cranks it. Hands it to CARL. CARL puts three ice cubes into Phyllis' glass. Clink. PHYLLIS pours a stiff shot of gin. Swirls her glass. Then puts the glass to her mouth. Her CHILDREN watch. PHYLLIS savors the gin. Ahhh. Her brain chemistry changes.)

Mother just might get through this.

(MARTHA opens up a new box. It's her mother's lingerie.)

MARTHA. Should I put your underwear on the bed?

PHYLLIS. Carl will know where everything goes. He's gone through my private things at least every week since he was four years old.

CARL. I am not the slightest bit interested in your underwear.

PHYLLIS. *(A silent laugh, an exhale of smoke.)* Just put it on the bed. I'll put it away.

(MARTHA lifts up the box, exits, and reenters.)

CARL. You caught me just once.

I was searching for money.

PHYLLIS. Right.

(With the move in mostly complete, both KIDS throw themselves on the furniture. CARL whips out a book and buries himself in it. All of his life, CARL can read while talking and hearing every word.)

CARL. What's for dinner.

PHYLLIS. Shit on a shingle what's it to you.

(Her CHILDREN are relieved to hear the old PHYLLIS.)

CARL. Well, mother, you haven't lost your way with words in the move.

(PHYLLIS takes one last puff and stubs out the cigarette in her ashtray. Then she dives into her purse and pulls out a large McDonald's bag.)

PHYLLIS. Ta da!

MARTHA. Really?!

(She distributes the burgers to her CHILDREN. Puts the fries carefully on napkins on the coffee table.)

CARL. One day scientists will discover Amelia Earhart's plane in the bottom of your purse. What else are you hiding from us in there?

PHYLLIS. Everything but money.

This meal is the last of my spending cash this week. You should know that when your father abandoned us, he also cleared out our checking and saving accounts.

MARTHA. You mean this is the last hamburger we can buy?

PHYLLIS. Until we get back on our feet.

(CARL ritualistically eats his fries as if it's his last meal; MARTHA slows her chewing.)

For school lunch, you'll make your own sandwiches – there's bread and Velveeta cheese. For dinner, you'll set the table, Martha, make the rice, and we'll heat up our meal when I get home.

MARTHA. Why can't Carl make dinner? Set the table?

PHYLLIS. Your brother will be in the school library. On the Debate Team! 790 on his pre-SATs in English!

MARTHA. 480 in math.

PHYLLIS. Screw math. If your brother keeps it up, he is going to get a free ride to a good school. Somebody in this family will get a college degree.

(The radio plays a rock and roll song from 1960-64 with inane lyrics. MARTHA, enthused, leaps up and turns up the volume.)

- Turn that noise down.

(MARTHA turns down the volume.)

That's not music. *(PHYLLIS quotes an inane lyric.)* Those are lyrics?! The Gershwins wrote lyrics. Cole Porter - those are lyrics. Put my station on.

(MARTHA turns the dial to the easy listening station.)

CARL. Your music has no lyrics at all.

PHYLLIS. *(Tapping her head.)* In here - all the lyrics.

CARL. They play this station in the psych ward of hospitals as they pass out sedation to the patients. They strap the inmates down and put mouth guards between their teeth. And then they'll hike up the volume and hike up the juice. *(Beat.)* Your music makes me want to slash my wrists.

PHYLLIS. What are you reading?

CARL. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.*

PHYLLIS. - Martha, have you unpacked the knives yet? Your brother needs to slash his wrists.

CARL. I can't even jump out the window to end it all. You have to jump up half a story to reach the ground.

(CARL fiddles with his now cold fries.)

PHYLLIS. *(Stung.)* This is the only apartment I could afford to rent! The custodial apartment is twenty bucks cheaper. All you have to do, son, is take the trash cans out once a week. Make yourself useful.

I owe my father the advance for the rent. And we are not going to the movies, to McDonald's, or to buy sodas until your grandfather is paid back every penny. Do you have any idea how hard it is to find work for a woman my age? I'm lucky I found a government typist job. You two have been living a life of ease: your sister had her own bedroom for two years. Tonight Martha moves into my bedroom.

(MARTHA tries not to cry.)

MARTHA. You snore.

PHYLLIS. Deal with it. You will learn to sleep to it like it's muzak.

(The radio starts to play an instrumental standard.)

I love this song. Turn it up.

(MARTHA does so. An instrumental washes over the living room. CARL turns the volume down.)

CARL. Why don't we listen to the classical music station.

PHYLLIS. You get to choose the radio stations when you are paying your share of rent.

CARL. When I can afford the rent I will be at the Algonquin... Room Service. Elevators with elevator men. One of the seats at the Round Table waiting for me. The bartender knows what I drink. The cat comes out for a chin rub when she hears me at check-in.

CARL. Or perhaps I will check into small pensiones in Italy on quiet cobblestoned streets away from the hubbub of American tourists.

Or perhaps –

PHYLLIS. – Did you go to the wrong hospital when you were born?

CARL. My being here is all a clerical mistake. I am the lost Romanov. Anastasia.

PHYLLIS. When you come into your millions, all I ask is a small townhouse. A box at the National Theater. Oh and if you might pick up one small Fabergé Egg for your Mama for her étagère as a Christmas gift...

MARTHA. I wanna room with Carl.

PHYLLIS. “I wanna”? It’s “I want to room.” “I wanna.” You will enunciate please.

I assume you know where to catch the bus on Monday?

MARTHA. My class is studying what we studied in fourth grade.

PHYLLIS. Great. You’ll ace the exams. And next year, Martha, you will be in Junior High and old enough to take the typing classes.

MARTHA. Why doesn’t anyone care if Carl can type?

PHYLLIS. Because you are going to be able to take care of yourself if and when your husband walks out on you with little mouths to feed. When your husband empties out your joint bank account and you find out he’s keeping his mistress in a high rise in Georgetown. Besides, Carl will be typing. His first novel. His work that he will dedicate to his mother.

(PHYLLIS goes digging in her purse and comes out with two latch keys.)

Here – put these around your neck when you leave the house. You are to come straight home when the school bus lets you off. I can't afford to lose this job so you are on your own if your mouth gets you in trouble. I am talking to you, Mr. Herman.

(MARTHA and CARL solemnly take their latch key.)

Well, my little loves. Today is the day our lives get better. We will look back and discover what great good fortune it was when that son of a bitch – your father – walked out on us. No matter what, I have you two. I'm lucky to be so close to my children.

(MARTHA and CARL are quiet. PHYLLIS kisses her SON's cheek ardently and pats/air kisses MARTHA.)

MARTHA. Good night.

CARL. Sleep tight!

(PHYLLIS leaves. The two SIBLINGS look at each other.)

MARTHA. I'm sleeping on the sofa.

CARL. She will get pissed.

(MARTHA goes to a box in the corner. She opens it and takes out stuffed animals. We see the stuffed Rabbit.)

I don't want our old stuffed animals.

MARTHA. Neither do I. I don't know why she insisted on packing them. We'll put them on the curb. Kids will take them.

CARL. It's over, isn't it?

MARTHA. What?

CARL. Childhood.

*(In answer, **MARTHA** takes up the box, and **CARL** opens the front door. **MARTHA** decides to save the stuffed Rabbit.)*

Transition – Outside the Trash Room

*(In the break, **CARL** struggles with the trash cans up the stairs. He drops the can he is carrying, and manically brushes his clothes off from the roaches. Stomps. Shudders. Food that has been rotting for a week in the Maryland heat. Takes a deep breath, and as quickly as he can, carries the brimming can up the stairs.)*

Afterschool Erie Street, 1964

*(**CARL** is on the knockoff Eames chair reading. He hears someone struggling at the door. Then a pounding. He jumps up.)*

*(**MARTHA** enters. Breathless. Her tight t-shirt has been ripped. Her hair is a mess.)*

CARL. Why didn't you –

*(He sees **MARTHA**.)*

MARTHA. I Am So Fucking Mad!

CARL. Martha?!

MARTHA. Mom's not home –? *(She is starting to cry.)*

CARL. Jesus What Happened? Are you –

MARTHA. – I have to change my shirt –

(She starts to rush off.)

CARL. What happened?

(MARTHA shakes her head no.)

Tell me.

MARTHA. There's this – fifteen-year-old boy on the bus. He's been held back twice in sixth grade. And he – usually just, ya know, makes kissing noises at me or yells out piggy things –

(She stops. She fingers her neck where the latchkey chain has rubbed her skin into a burn.)

CARL. What kind of things does this ruffian say?

MARTHA. He says he can smell fish when he passes me and all the boys laugh. Even some of the girls.

CARL. I hate boys.

MARTHA. So I usually sit up front near the driver, but today there were no seats. I got hemmed into the middle of the aisle. And one boy behind me held me by my latch key chain, and the big guy started rubbing himself on me, and then he lifted my blouse and I started screaming but the girls got quiet and the boys were just – wild – And I yelled at the driver Help Me – but he just adjusted the mirror to watch, and then the boy ripped my top and –

I WANT TO BE A SIX-FOOT-TALL MAN! JUST LET ME BE A SIX-FOOT-TALL MAN for five Goddamn Minutes!

(MARTHA starts to cry. CARL awkwardly pats her shoulder.)

CARL. Martha. Sweetie. *(He gives her a tissue.)* I will go with you to the bus stop tomorrow.

MARTHA. No. You won't. You are of more use to me alive.
Don't tell Mother.

CARL. No. I think not. Wait a moment.

(CARL disappears and returns with one of his shirts. He puts it over her t-shirt.)

Wear my shirt. Take my pants.

Dress as if you were going to an all-girl academy. Very Butch.

MARTHA. Butch?

CARL. You look good in my shirt. Keep it. Now –

(He takes MARTHA's hands.)

Stand up. I want you to walk across the living room for me.

(MARTHA does so.)

Now walk back.

(He watches.)

You are using your hips. I want you to walk urgently but with command like Napoleon when he has to take a piss. Look:

(CARL does a very aggressive walk.)

Now you try:

(MARTHA does.)

You are slumping. It makes you look weak. Stand absolutely straight.

MARTHA. But then my breasts are –

CARL. You are to think that your breasts are a pair of gatling guns that will mow down any male stupid enough to try you – again!

(**MARTHA** *executes an almost martial walk quickly.*)

Perfection!

Phyllis On the Runway, 1964

(*Fabulous lights; music; we could be watching the new Chanel collection in Milan.*)

(**PHYLLIS** *stands triumphantly in a Chanel suit, and saunters down and back with Panache; then the lights turn into the ugly living room overhead lights, and the music turns to muzak.*)

PHYLLIS. Look what I found! At Next to New! They have late hours on Friday night. Guess what designer this is!

MARTHA. Salvation Army?

PHYLLIS. No! Guess!

(**CARL** *looks up from his book.*)

CARL. Givenchy.

PHYLLIS. Close! Martha?

MARTHA. I don't know.

CARL. Dior.

PHYLLIS. No.

(**PHYLLIS** *does another turn.*)

CARL. Balenciaga.

(*No.*)

Pierre Cardin.

PHYLLIS. Why do you know so many designers?

(*MARTHA cuts off her MOTHER's diatribe.*)

MARTHA. – So which designer?

PHYLLIS. – Chanel! The woman had just rolled up in her Mercedes, and I practically ripped the suit out of her hand.

– guess how much I paid!

MARTHA. I don't know.

CARL. I thought every penny was going into the piggy bank to repay –

PHYLLIS. – That Georgetown matron shelled out at least 100 dollars last year in Saks. Guess how much.

MARTHA. Forty bucks.

PHYLLIS. Nope.

MARTHA. Thirty.

PHYLLIS. Hah! Ten bucks!

CARL. Why would a Georgetown matron bother to sell her clothes for ten dollars?

PHYLLIS. Thrift stores aren't about secretaries and waitresses being thrifty – it's about the rich pinching their pennies. That's why they're rich. They're thrifty.

CARL. No mother. This Potomac matron took her haute couture to a Capitol Hill reception so she could ornament her bureaucratic husband. And she tried to look elegant in the D.C. humidity until her haute couture is sweat-drenched. She smiles as the stockings trickle sweat into her high heels and she can feel the blisters forming. And her Saks Fifth Avenue Chanel now revolts her: she can still smell her sweat under the copious Arpège perfume and now the perfume revolts her too. And so she rushes home to peel the expensive wilting clothing off. She hands the limp Chanel to her maid for dry cleaning, and when she removes the

plastic wrap she lifts the garment up to her face – and she can still, she imagines, smell her sweat. Smell the faint perfume. If she takes a deeper breath, she could swear that she smells the fetid canal water drifting from Georgetown that always makes her gag in August. And she only wore it once! And so she decides that some woman who works in the typing pool for the postal service can wear her high season sweat.

PHYLLIS. When did you get so angry? You, Mr. Herman, are becoming a radical. It is not becoming. You had better get rich on your writing so that you can buy your Mama Chanel hot off the racks in Saks Fifth Avenue.

You know, Martha, you should come with me next Sunday and find something a little more presentable with your babysitting money. Look at you! You are dressing like some – like a – like a –

MARTHA. – like my brother?

PHYLLIS. Like your father. You are the spitting image. Stand up young lady. You walk like a man. Now watch your mother.

This is how a woman walks:

(PHYLLIS demonstrates.)

Now you.

(MARTHA still walks like Napoleon but with a strange hip sway that she saw her MOTHER do.)

Oh dear God. Again: watch:

(And now PHYLLIS strolls in an even more exaggerated fashion – a cross between a prostitute and a drag queen.)

(MARTHA tries and just can't. PHYLLIS laughs.)

MARTHA. I walk the way I walk because I want to get somewhere fast!

PHYLLIS. I needed a good laugh. I am on my way to retire.

CARL. Martha kept a plate warm for you in the oven.

PHYLLIS. Thanks, love. I ate at the bar. Good night, children.

(CARL sits stock still; both of them listen for the closing of the bedroom door.)

(Then -)

Another Fashion Show

(CARL jumps up. Lights change back into the Milan runway, and CARL sashays and poses up and down the runway. He does a much better job than PHYLLIS did. MARTHA joins him on the runway: Napoleonic style with her gatling gun breasts ablaze.)

MARTHA. TWO YEARS LATER

(The kitchen table. Late at night. MARTHA is writing a book report. CARL enters tentatively.)

She's out. You can tap dance next to the bed and she won't hear you.

CARL. - book report?

MARTHA. Yes.

CARL. For Miss Peggy Baldwin?

MARTHA. Yes.

CARL. She's sex starved.

MARTHA. I don't want to think about Mrs. Baldwin in bed.

CARL. All troubles begin with sexual repression. Remember these words.

MARTHA. Don't you have homework?

CARL. Ridiculously easy. Finished it so I could read French history. Louis XIV. The Sun King.

Did you know that the gentlemen of Versailles considered it rude to knock upon a chamber door? Only a peasant would do so.

MARTHA. Mmhhm.

CARL. Gentlemen of the court developed long pinky fingernails and would scratch the door for admittance. Three times like so.

MARTHA. Is this going to help you on the SAT?

CARL. It is as useful as anything you are learning at Buck Lodge Junior High. I am going to give you a reading list. And you will read this list in your spare time. It will prepare you for the PSAT.

MARTHA. Yeah. Maybe.

CARL. You will not be a peasant knocking on the chamber door. You are my sister. And you will go to college.

MARTHA. You'll go to college. You'll grow your pinky fingernail long. I'll be in the kitchen plucking the chicken.

CARL. The children of rich Washingtonians are going to Sidwell Friends and Washington Cathedral. You are going to match them point for point on the PSATs. What are you reading for fun?

MARTHA. Something Mother gave me.

CARL. Hand it over.

Jesus Christ. Mother gave you this?

The other lesson is to never read anything Mother gives you.

MARTHA. What's wrong with the book?

CARL. *The Well of Loneliness* is a depressing autobiographical novel written by an invert.

MARTHA. She didn't like people?

CARL. No. That's introvert. An invert was the term used for lesbians. Please tell me you know what that term means.

MARTHA. (*Blushing, looking down.*) I do. I think.

CARL. Edwardians believed that lesbians were men trapped inside women's bodies.

I can't believe Mother gave that book to a fourteen-year-old daughter.

MARTHA. Maybe she's warning me.

CARL. She's trying to scare you. Into being "normal." Whatever the hell that is.

MARTHA. Mother does call me Don Herman Junior.

CARL. She needs to leave you alone. But I will tell you this: if I could choose any existence on this earth, I would choose to be a lesbian.

MARTHA. Why?

CARL. Because. Men are brought up to be competitive. Women are brought up to be nurturers. So when you have two men together, they have to undo their training. But with two women –

MARTHA. They take care of each other?

CARL. Exactly.

MARTHA. Think I'll finish *The Well of Loneliness*, though.

CARL. The ending made me suicidal. As did Miss Hellman's *The Children's Hour*.

(CARL cocks his fingers as a gun and shoots himself.)

Now: about Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group.
I would suggest reading *A Room of One's Own*.

*(They are both startled by the figure of
PHYLLIS: half asleep, groggy, thick-tongued.)*

MARTHA. Mother?

PHYLLIS. Thirsty.

*(PHYLLIS goes to the refrigerator. Gets a glass.
A spotlight suddenly shines on the counter:
PHYLLIS sees a couple of roaches and tries
to smash them with her hand. They are too
quick. She beats with both hands and gets at
least one. Spotlight out. Then she takes the
gin from the freezer and shuffles off to bed
with the bottle.)*

Erie Street, Later

*(PHYLLIS in full glory in her house coat is on
the phone.)*

I.

Oh, hello Mr. Montgomery! And how are you today?
I realize you are a busy busy man, so I will get to the
point: This is Phyllis Herman, and we live at 2109 Erie
Street, in the custodial apartment.

My son has been taking out the trash every Wednesday
morning, but...we seem to have an infestation.

Vinegar? Mr. Montgomery, our agreement was that we
would take the trash out, not that we would clean the
garbage room...

PHYLLIS. I am also beginning to smell it through our door.
 May I suggest you come over and smell it for yourself?
 I see. You will send someone to smell it for you? Thank
 you, Mr. Montgomery!

(A change in posture and lighting:)

II.

Mr. Montgomery, please. This is Phyllis Herman. Will
 you please tell him I called?

(A change in posture and lighting:)

III.

Hello. Theresa, yes? Mr. Montgomery never called me
 back. Oh, a family emergency? Well, then, might you
 help me, Theresa?

The infestation has Not Abated. There are maggots,
 and roaches, and I believe I saw a rat.

Maggots and roaches and rats Oh My! We need an
 exterminator.

As soon as possible.

(Another change:)

IV.

Theresa, my children's asthma and allergies are being
 exacerbated by rodents and vermin. Ex-Ac-er-Bate.
 Rhymes with MASTURBATE – Get a dictionary. And
 I don't want to hear about another family emergency
 – by now his entire family must be dead unless Mr.
 Montgomery procreates – Fucks! Like a rabbit... I'm
 vulgar? You know what vulgar is? Come turn on the
 lights in my kitchen at night and I'll show you what
 vulgar is, what filth is, what fucking squalor –

*(Theresa hangs up on the other end of the
 call.)*

Next

PHYLLIS. Children!

(They enter. PHYLLIS gives CARL and MARTHA paper towels.)

Okay children. I want you each to crush at least ten to twenty roaches. Bring me the roach carcasses.

CARL. Mother. That's disgusting.

PHYLLIS. A dime a roach.

MARTHA. Okay!

(She starts the hunt. We hear the sounds of whacking. Small mini spotlights zig zag on the walls and shelves and furniture.)

CARL. I refuse.

PHYLLIS. Fine. The kitchen is mine.

(Whack. Whack. Whack. Spotlights out. MARTHA comes back gingerly holding a stash of smashed roaches. PHYLLIS brings in her trophies too. PHYLLIS counts. Opens her wallet and takes out two dollars.)

Excellent job, Martha. Martha, you have balls twice the size of your brother's. And now it is time to pay the rent.

(PHYLLIS takes out her checkbook, and a pen. She puts the check carefully into the envelope. Addresses it. Finds a stamp in her purse and licks it and presses it on the envelope.)

Martha...put your bounty in this envelope. In back of the check.

(PHYLLIS puts the contents of her paper towel in the envelope.)

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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