

Characters

Agnes Dalliard (F)	Ruthless young lady engaged to Edwin
Edwin Burgess (M)	Clumsy young man engaged to Agnes
Clark Caraway (M)	A carefree bachelor and friend of Edwin and Agnes
Halifax (M)	Clark's dutiful, middle-aged butler
Barbara Dalliard (F)	Agnes' philanthropic mother
Gwen Burgess (F)	Edwin's older sister and Barbara's protégé. Engaged to Arthur.
Walter Dalliard (M)	Agnes' absent-minded father
Arthur Pikney (M)	Young man engaged to Gwen. Clark's old school friend.
Millicent Durns (F)	Elderly woman and wealthy benefactress
Prudence Dalliard (F)	The insane matriarch of the Dalliard family.
Miss Bunkle (F)	The Dalliard's family cook. Halifax's love interest.
Phil Haverty (M)	A depressed middle-aged man with an unfortunate allergy.

Act I

Scene 1 - Drawing Room

(Tabs Open. September 1911, modest Philadelphia apartment. Clark inspects his nails while his butler, Halifax, adjusts his master's tie.)

Clark: **(Singing)** Doo, doo, doo, doooo. Trum dulla trum. My soul was but a—

(Halifax overtightens Clark's tie. Clark chokes.)

Clark: **(Slapping Halifax's hands away)** Good golly, Halifax! If you don't like my singing, a simple comment will do.

Halifax: My apologies, sir. My hand slipped. Please continue.

Clark: **(Feeling his throat)** No, Halifax, I'm a sensitive man and the mood has passed.

Halifax: Yes, sir.

Clark: Now, if you don't mind, de-lint me.

(Clark raises his arms and Halifax begins to remove pieces of lint from Clark's blazer. After some moments Clark shrieks, Halifax having pulled one of his hairs.)

Clark: **(Angrily)** Halifax!

Halifax: My deepest apologies, sir!

Clark: **(Indignant)** If you're so eager to wring necks and pluck feathers, I suggest you practice on a chicken and not your employer.

Halifax: Yes, sir. I'm sorry, sir.

Clark: What's gotten into you, Halifax? You aren't normally one to man-handle.

Halifax: I've been distracted today, sir. It's...my bad knee.

Clark: Ha! Bad knee, forsooth! I saw what came in the mail this morning. You and that cook in West Chester have been writing love letters to one another again.

Halifax: **(Appalled)** Sir, Miss Bunkle and I are purely—

Clark: Oh Halifax, I don't care what you get up to in your free time. If you want to woo cooks, God bless you. Woo away, I say! But when it begins to affect your butting — well...I worry.

Halifax: Forgive me, sir. I will not let it happen again.

Clark: I mean really, what do a cook and a butler even talk about anyway? Is she the one who taught you these frightful techniques of preparing chicken?

Halifax: The subject has come up, sir.

Clark: Well, as I said. I am not interested in experiencing them for myself. Keep these techniques between you and Miss Bunkle.

Halifax: Yes, sir.

Clark: **(Picking lint off of his sleeve)** It's a strange way to flirt if you ask me.

Halifax: **(Affronted)** Sir! Miss Bunkle and I do not flirt.

Clark: Yes, yes. I'm sure you keep it as clean as you keep the silver. But enough chit chat. Agnes will be here at any moment, and I have yet to prepare emotionally.

Halifax: I was under the impression that you and Miss Dalliard were friends, sir.

Clark: Oh, we are! Good friends. I dare say she's one of my nearest and dearest, but you just never know what you're going to get with Agnes. She's one of those girls who **(pausing to reflect)** likes her red meat, if you know what I mean.

Halifax: The young lady is distinctly uninhibited, sir.

Clark: Uninhibited is putting it mildly. She is downright vengeful. You remember the Christmas party don't you?

Halifax: It is difficult to forget, sir.

Clark: She got wind that I found her gingerbread "a tad under-seasoned" and she spent the rest of the evening trampling on my foot and sprinkling salt on me at every opportunity. I was salting the roads wherever I walked for the rest of the winter.

Halifax: Yes, sir. To this day I still discover salt whenever I iron your trousers.

Clark: And now she requests my audience to discuss... **(Clark picks up an open letter from an end table.)** "A matter of the utmost importance." This does not bode well, Halifax.

Halifax: Indeed not, sir.

(SFX. Doorbell.)

Clark: Oh, golly! She's here. Quick, Halifax! Hide the salt.

(Halifax shimmies to the table and takes the salt shaker off stage right. Clark opens the front door and Agnes enters.)

Clark: **(Smiling enthusiastically)** Agnes, old girl! How are you? You're looking as smart as ever.

Agnes: Thank you for seeing me, Clark. I wouldn't have asked if it weren't important.

Clark: **(Waves a hand)** Anything for an old friend.

(Edwin appears in the doorway, smiling just as Clark slams the door on him. The door swings back open revealing Edwin on the ground, his legs kicking in the air.)

Clark: That's funny. Normally this thing latches.

Agnes: Clark! Wait!

(Clark slams the door again. This time it catches on Edwin's leg. Halifax enters stage right.)

Clark Our door appears to be broken, Halifax. Everytime I try to close it, it simply refuses.

Halifax: There appears to be a gentleman stuck in the door jamb, sir.

Clark: Hmm? Oh! Would you look at that? What are you doing here, Edwin?

Edwin: **(Grunting in pain)** I came with Agnes, of course.

Clark: Are you two still engaged? I would've thought you would've come to your senses by now, Agnes.

Edwin: **(Shooting to his feet)** What's that supposed to mean?

Agnes: Oh, quiet, Edwin! Just go and sit in the corner while I talk to Clark.

Edwin: What?! Why?

Clark: And face the wall while you're at it, Edwin. You're not easy to look at after a heavy breakfast.

Edwin: You're a loathsome little toad, you know that, Clark.

Agnes: For goodness sake, Edwin, just do as we ask!

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Edwin: But—

Agnes: Must I remind you that you're the reason we're in this mess?

(Edwin exhales through flared nostrils. He mutters under his breath as he unwillingly begins to drag a chair to the corner.)

Clark: I'm sorry, Edwin, I've just had those reupholstered. You don't mind sitting on the floor, do you?

Edwin: On the floor?!

Agnes: **(Taking a seat and removing her gloves)** Of course he doesn't mind.

(Edwin looks back at Agnes in disbelief. Agnes gives Edwin a look. Edwin lets go of the chair, sits down on the floor, and faces the wall, his back to the audience.)

Clark: Now, Agnes. What is it you need, besides a new fiancé?

Agnes: You're familiar with my parents, aren't you Clark?

Clark: I am acquainted with the judge and his philanthropic wife, yes.

Agnes: Well, they don't approve of my engagement to Edwin thanks to his idiotic performance at the recent family tea party—

Edwin: Please, Agnes. He doesn't need to know.

Agnes: **(Ignoring Edwin)** It was his first time meeting my whole family and the little moron thought it'd be a good idea to greet everyone with a hug.

Clark: Good golly, Edwin! What's wrong with a handshake?

Edwin: I thought a hug would be more winsome.

Agnes: Well, my grandmother, who lost her mind decades ago, didn't find it winsome. She thought he was death incarnate come to take her away. She went absolutely hysterical! And do you know how Edwin responded? He squeezed tighter and swung her in the air like a child playing with a kitten.

Clark: Oh, Edwin.

Edwin: I thought she was enjoying it, considering how much she was laughing.

Agnes: **(Rubbing her forehead)** She was screaming, Edwin.

Edwin: **(Defensively)** Laughing and screaming are very similar sounds.

Agnes: They are nowhere near similar.

Edwin: I admit I may have misread some of the finer details, but how was I supposed to know your grandma's as mad as a hatter? You could've warned me.

Agnes: Oh, really? And what should I have said exactly? **(In a mocking tone)** "Edwin, dear, my grandma's a little senile these days, so it's probably not a good idea to huck her around like a hay bail."

Edwin: (Ashamed) It would've helped.

(Agnes sighs.)

Clark: Take heart, Agnes. At least it can't get much worse.

Agnes: Oh, but it does. When it was Father's turn, Edwin opened his arms and shouted "Hey, Walter, bring it here!"

Clark: (Grimaces) And did he bring it?

Agnes: We never got to find out. Edwin tripped on the approach. He would've busted up his nose too had he not latched onto the nearest support. The problem was, that support was Father's pants.

Clark: (Disbelief) No!

(Agnes nods somberly.)

Clark: Down went the walls of Jericho?

Agnes: Down they went.

(Edwin hangs his head in shame.)

Clark: What did you do then, Edwin?

Edwin: The only thing I could think to do. I complimented his knees, pulled his pants back up, and made conversation about the weather.

Agnes: As you can imagine, tea was unbearable.

Clark: Yes, that's a whole new circle of hell that you've discovered. (Stands up from his chair and walks around the room) Well, I wish I could help, I really do, but this is a problem far beyond my powers. If you want my advice, bring the issue up with Congress. Maybe they can do something.

Agnes: (Standing) No, Clark. We need you.

Clark: Need me? But there's nothing I can do.

Agnes: I'll tell you what you're going to do.

Clark: Good heavens! What?

Agnes: You're going to kidnap my grandmother.

Tab Close.

Scene 2 - Drawing Room

(Tabs Open. Clark, Agnes, and Edwin are in Clark's apartment. Edwin is standing in the corner, while Clark and Agnes face one another. Clark sighs and wipes a tear from his eye. Halifax rushes in from stage right.)

Halifax: **(Panicked)** Are you all right, sir? I heard screaming.

Clark: **(Taking a seat and kicking up his feet)** No need to worry, Halifax. I was only laughing.

Edwin: **(Victoriously)** Aha! I told you they sounded similar!

Halifax: Sir?

Clark: Never mind him, Halifax. Agnes here just suggested the funniest thing.

Agnes: I was serious, Clark.

Clark: Halifax, would you mind making us some tea? I believe Miss Dalliard needs her senses restored to her.

Halifax: I'll brew the Yorkshire, sir.

(Clark eyes Agnes as Agnes crosses her arms.)

Clark: Better make it Earl Grey, Halifax. Something a little more pacifying.

(Halifax exits stage right.)

Clark: Listen, Agnes, I don't mean to question your sanity, but what good would kidnapping your grandmother do?

Agnes: Really, Clark, it isn't that hard to understand. My father won't allow me, his only daughter, to marry a clumsy, unsuccessful poet like Edwin. No offense, Edwin.

Edwin: **(Sighs)** None taken.

Agnes: We have to change my father's perception of Edwin. And, to do that, we must target the one person whom my father is devoted to more than he is to me — his own mother.

Clark: You sound bitter.

Agnes: A little, but that's not the point. If my grandmother were to go missing, my father would be completely devastated. I wouldn't be surprised if he offered a huge reward for her return, and you know how he is about money.

Clark: A stickler?

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Agnes: The stickiest. **(Raising a finger)** But imagine if Edwin were to be the one who brought Grandmother home safely.

Clark: He'd be the cat's meow!

Agnes: Yes, but not just that. Upon receiving my father's eternal gratitude and the promised reward, Edwin would tear the check in two and say...**(Looks expectantly at Edwin)**

Edwin: **(Clueless)** Hmm?

Agnes: How many times have we been over this, Edwin?

Edwin: Oh, right! **(Fumbles around in his pockets for a few moments before retrieving a folded piece of paper and reading its contents in a monotonous tone)** "No, Judge Dalliard. As a gentleman and a scholar, I cannot accept this generous reward. Your family's happiness and safety is all that a man of my pedigree requires."

Agnes: And?

Edwin: And then I hug him.

Agnes: **(Sharply)** No! You shake his hand and ask for his blessing to marry me.

Edwin: Oh — right! The blessing.

Agnes: There, you see? The relief of having his mother back combined with the relief of not having to pay the reward would fill Father with such benevolence, he might even marry us on the spot.

Clark: Hmm. Psychologically the plan makes sense, but there are problems you haven't considered.

Agnes: Like what?

Clark: Well, for one thing, I'm not going to be the chump who does the dirty work of kidnapping your infernal grandmother.

Agnes: Oh, yes you are.

Clark: You are a dear friend, Agnes, but I wouldn't kidnap an old lady for anyone. It's simply against...**(Snaps his fingers as if trying to remember the phrase)**

Edwin: Your religious convictions?

Clark: Yes, thank you, Edwin. You see, Agnes, my convictions — you may call them religious — simply forbid me from kidnapping the elderly. Others may have no issue abducting the odd senior now and again. But for me — well, it just isn't kosher if you catch my meaning.

Agnes: **(Coolly)** I was afraid you would say that. I'm sorry it had to come to this, Clark, but if you won't help us, I'll tell your mother about the time you sold her pearl necklace for petty cash.

Clark: **(Spins around)** How do you know about that?

Agnes: I would say a little bird told me, but he's closer to a worm these days.

Clark: **(Turning on Edwin)** Edwin, you blot on humanity. How could you?

Edwin: I'm sorry, Clark! I had no choice. She was threatening my stamp collection.

Clark: Oh, curse your stamp collection! You know what, Agnes! Go ahead and tell my mother. You haven't any proof.

Agnes: **(Procures an envelope from her person)** You remember this, don't you, Clark? It's the letter you wrote to Edwin in which you unnecessarily recounted all the juicy details about how you tricked your mother.

Clark: Edwin, you fatuous lump of cells, I told you to destroy that! **(To Agnes)** Agnes, you will give me that letter this instant.

Agnes: I will give it to you when you've finished the job. Otherwise, I will send it to your mother.

Clark: But what do I know about kidnapping grandmas? Why can't you do it?

Agnes: Because, Clark, you're the one with the kidnapping experience.

Clark: What are you talking about? I have never kidnapped so much as a fly!

Edwin: **(Meekly raising a finger)** Oh, yes you have.

Clark: What? When?!

Edwin: Remember that time in college when Yale was visiting and you kidnapped their mascot before the big game.

Clark: I may have temporarily absconded with Dan the bulldog, but that is far from kidnapping a grandmother! I would never have considered it had Yale's mascot been a random grannie!

Edwin: If it helps, Agnes' grandmother is very similar to a bulldog.

(Agnes and Clark look at Edwin.)

Edwin: **(Crossing his arms)** Well, she is, and I stand by it.

Agnes: **(Sighs)** Whatever helps you do the job, Clark.

Clark: But Agnes—

Agnes: **(Intensely)** No, Clark! There's no use discussing it any further. Either you kidnap my grandmother or I send this incriminating letter to your mother. It's your choice.

Clark: This is blackmail, Agnes! Blackmail!

Agnes: That's right! You finally understand. So what will it be?

(Halifax enters stage right with a tea tray in hand. He is jolly and humming a tune. He places the tray down in the center of the room as Clark and Agnes stare intensely at one another.)

Halifax: **(Addressing Edwin)** Tea, sir?

Edwin: Oh, yes please.

(Halifax pours a cup of tea.)

Halifax: Cream?

Edwin: Just a touch.

Halifax: Sugar?

Edwin: **(Whimsically)** Oh, don't tempt me, Halifax.

Clark: **(Frustrated sigh)** Fine. You win, Agnes. I'll kidnap your deranged grandmother.

Agnes: Excellent. Now, as you've probably heard, my mother is hosting another one of her silly charity events with Edwin's sister at the family estate in West Chester. With all the people who will be there, it'll be the perfect opportunity for you to do the job.

Clark: You hear that, Halifax? You can pack our bags. It looks like we're going to Redmeadows.

(Halifax jumps at the mention of the name, spilling the tea on Edwin. Edwin exclaims in pain.)

Halifax: I'm so sorry, sir. **(Patting Edwin with a rag)**

Agnes: Are you all right?

Edwin: **(Peeking into his shirt and wincing)** My belly button's medium rare, but I think I'll survive.

Agnes: I was speaking to Halifax.

Edwin: What?!

Agnes: He isn't normally one to spill tea. Is anything the matter?

Clark: Oh, don't mind him. He's been chomping at the bit to go to Redmeadows. In case you haven't heard, Agnes, your family's cook, just so happens to be Halifax's lady friend.

(Tabs Close.)

Scene 3 - Lawn

(Tabs Open. Mrs. Barbara Dalliard and Gwen Burgess are setting up decorations on the lawn. Gwen dresses a lawn table with ribbon.)

- Barbara:** No, no, no, Gwen. These decorations need to look sophisticated. We don't want our benefactors confusing us for the Salvation Army. **(Taking the ribbon from Gwen and rearranging it)** There, you see. Like the flowing mane of a galloping mustang.
- Gwen:** Oh, you're right, Mrs. Dalliard. How do you do it?
- Barbara:** You'll learn, my dear. Once you have as many charities under your belt as I have, decorating tables will become second nature to you.
- Gwen:** I don't know about that, Mrs. Dalliard. No one quite hosts a charity event like you do. I mean, the work you did on Cupcakes for the Incarcerated was simply inspiring.
- Barbara:** **(Pleased)** Oh, Gwen, you flatter me.
- Gwen:** I mean it. And remember Danishes for the Dangerous? Ugh! Remarkable! Who knew the dangerous needed danishes?
- Barbara:** Yes, we've cared for many souls over the years, but we must stay focused. We don't want a repeat of last winter.
- Gwen:** None of that was your fault, Mrs. Dalliard.
- Barbara:** **(Angrily)** Of course it was my fault. It was my idea, wasn't it? I don't know what I was thinking when I came up with...**(Shudders)** Pastries for the Papists.

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- Gwen:** You were just thinking of the needy!
- Barbara:** Good heavens, girl! The Catholics didn't need pastries...especially when most of them had given up sugar for Lent.
- Gwen:** But this year will be different. I'm sure of it.
- Barbara:** Yes, this year will be different. Now that we've returned to the basics, I wouldn't be surprised if this was our best year yet! Here, help me with this.
- (Barbara picks up one side of a banner. Gwen picks up the other. The sign reads "Donuts for the Depressed." Both Barbara and Gwen stand on chairs and hang up their ends, so that the sign hangs over the table.)**

Gwen: Oh, just think of all the depressed people we're going to help!

Barbara: I've been thinking of them for years, Gwen. Years! And it's finally their turn. Oh, but I haven't even told you the best part yet. Do you know who's coming? Millicent Durns!

Gwen: No?! The millionaire?

(Barbara nods.)

Barbara: With her support, we could end depression in the entire country!

Gwen: I just got chills!

Barbara: Hold onto that feeling, Gwen! It'll keep you going when you're married and your husband forgets your birthday. Trust me. **(Noticing someone off stage right)** Speaking of which.

(Walter Dalliard enters stage right.)

Walter: Barbara, dear, have you seen the newspaper?

Barbara: It's under your arm, Walter.

Walter: Well, I'll be blessed. So, it is.

Gwen: Good morning, Judge Dalliard.

Walter: Hmm? Oh. Fine. I'm doing fine. How are you — uh —

Gwen: Gwen.

Walter: Ah, I was close. I was going to say Mildred.

Barbara: Walter, what are you wearing?

Walter: My old corduroys. Why?

Barbara: No, why are you wearing a belt and suspenders?

Walter: For security, of course.

Barbara: Security?

Walter: I will not have my pants pulled down again by that little excrescence our daughter has engaged herself to.

Barbara: Walter, please, not here. Edwin happens to be Gwen's brother.

Walter: I don't care if she has a bicycle for a brother. The truth is the truth.

Barbara: Stop it, Walter. Now, go and change. The guests will be here soon and you need to look presentable if you're going to mingle.

Walter: But I don't want to mingle.

Barbara: You're not going to embarrass me, Walter.

Walter: **(Defeated)** Oh, all right.

(Barbara unfolds a table cloth, revealing several gaping tears and claw marks ripped through it.)

Barbara: Oh, Walter! Your mother has gotten into the linen again. I thought I told you to keep her in her room.

Walter: I did, I told her guests *or* the plumbers would be here all day today, and she bolted the door. She must've done it last night.

Barbara: **(Sighs)** I'm sorry Gwen, I've got to go to town and pick up a replacement.

Walter: **(Excited)** Ooh! Let me go!

Barbara: No! Knowing you, you'll never come back. I'll get it myself. Just get changed!

Walter: **(Crestfallen)** Oh, fine.

(Walter walks moodily off stage left.)

Gwen: Mrs. Dalliard, you can't go. The guests will be here soon. Surely, we can do without the table cloth.

Barbara: Oh, Gwen, you silly thing **(Patronisingly adjusting Gwen's hair)** you still have so much to learn. **(Checking her watch)** If I leave now, I should be able to get back before too many of the guests arrive.

Gwen: But, what if something goes wrong?

Barbara: **(Chuckles)** This is charity, Gwen, what could possibly go wrong? Besides, running things on your own is just the kind of experience you need, especially since I'll be retiring soon.

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Gwen: Oh, Mrs. Dalliard. You don't mean —

Barbara: That's right, Gwen. You just might have what it takes to take over when I'm gone. See today as your opportunity to prove yourself.

Gwen: (With giddy delight) Thank you, Mrs. Dalliard! I won't disappoint you!

(Arthur enters stage right with a casual saunter. His hands are in his pockets and he is kicking a pebble across the stage.)

Barbara: (Eyeing Arthur disapprovingly) On the topic of charities, we'll have to host one soon to address this nation's overpopulation of underachieving men.

Gwen: (Turning and seeing Arthur trying to balance a stick on his nose) Oh! (laughing nervously) Haha! We'll take care of them next year. Waffles for the Unwanted.

Barbara: (Seriously) You write that down, Gwen. That is good stuff. Now, I must be off!

(Barbara gives Arthur an unpleasant look before exiting stage left.)

Gwen: (To herself) You can do this, Gwen. You were born to do this.

(Gwen begins removing covers from the trays on the table, revealing a few dozen donuts. Arthur sidles up to her and reaches for a donut. Gwen slaps his hand away.)

Gwen: Stop it, Arthur! Those are for the depressed.

Arthur: But I am depressed. Have you seen my hair? I haven't gotten it to sit right all day.

Gwen: I mean real depression. Unless you're in between jobs or struggling with self-esteem, these aren't for you.

Arthur: Well, my self-esteem is in shambles! Have you seen the way your boss looks at me? You'd think I was a blister on the face of her favorite child.

Gwen: She does not, Arthur. She just — doesn't like me hanging out with strange men.

Arthur: Strange men? Doesn't she know we're engaged?

(Gwen remains silent and looks apprehensive.)

Arthur: (Dramatically) What's this? My own fiancée! Ashamed to tell the world that she's engaged to me? Oh! I can hardly bear it!

Gwen: All right. Fine.

(Gwen hands Arthur a donut. Arthur takes and eats it eagerly.)

Gwen: Listen, Arthur, I know you don't like Mrs. Dalliard.

Arthur: (Chewing) Like her? I like her just fine. As far as uptight gargoyles go, you can't beat her.

Gwen: Please, Arthur, I need you to be on your best behavior today. If all goes well, Mrs. Dalliard will give me her job when she retires!

Arthur: Ah! The charity committee is finally putting her out to pasture?

Gwen: It's more like she's considering hanging up her cleats. But anyway, I need you to do a favor for me. A big name benefactress will be here for the event and we need to do everything we can to —

Arthur: Stuff her with donuts?

Gwen: No. Appease her. Make her feel special. You know what I mean. We must...butter her up!

Arthur: **(Accusing)** I see. You want to manipulate her into donating the big bucks.

Gwen: Please, Arthur. It's for a good cause.

Arthur: Are you sure it isn't for your charity career? **(Shaking his donut at Gwen)**

Gwen: **(Reluctantly)** If what benefits the depressed also happens to benefit me, I see no reason to feel guilty. Please don't make me do this on my own.

Arthur: Well, I suppose I could turn on the charm.

Gwen: That's the spirit.

Arthur: So, where is this bird and her billions?

Gwen: She should be here soon along with the other guests.

Arthur: Who's coming to this little shindig by the way?

Gwen: Donors, volunteers, and, if we're lucky, droves of the depressed.

Arthur: Are they even in season this time of year?

Gwen: The depressed? Oh, yes. They're everywhere in September.

Arthur: Really? I had no idea.

Gwen: That's exactly why we're doing this, Arthur. Depression affects people around us every day, and we never know it. Now, I'm going to see if anyone has arrived yet. You stay here and keep an eye on the donuts. This is all we have until Miss Bunkle can make some more.

(Gwen exits stage left. Arthur looks around to see if anyone is watching. He takes a second donut and takes a bite when Clark suddenly enters stage right.)

Clark: Hello, you old tart!

(Arthur jumps, upsetting the tray of donuts.)

Arthur: **(Startled scream)** Agh! Look at what you made me do!

Clark: Good golly, Arthur! Why are you so jumpy?

Arthur: Because I'm not supposed to be eating these. They're for the depressed. And now, thanks to you, they're ruined.

Clark: Nonsense, Arthur. They're fine. **(Picking up the donuts and placing them back on the platter.)**

Arthur: Oh? And what about the bits of grass and dirt?

Clark: Well, if we add more, it'll just look intentional.

Arthur: No! Don't!

(Clark collects an armful of vegetation from the ground and sprinkles it all over the donuts. Arthur watches stunned.)

Clark: If there's one thing I've learned in life, Arthur, it's to lean into our mistakes and own them.

Arthur: **(Angrily)** By making them worse?!

Clark: If necessary, yes. Besides, they're not worse. They look much better.

Arthur: They're covered in mulch.

Clark: No, no. Not mulch. **(Raising a finger)** Garnish.

Arthur: Idiot. The depressed are never going to eat these.

Clark: Sure they will. If you could see the number of times I've eaten things off the ground during my bouts of depression, you'd think I was one of nature's foremost grazers.

Arthur: **(Taking a step back)** You have depression?

Clark: Oh, sure I do. Sure I do. You can't be as jovial as I am without your fair share of depression.

Arthur: Is that what you're doing here?

Clark: Good heavens, no! I'm here to — **(Hesitating)** do a job for Agnes and Edwin. I suppose you heard how Edwin defrocked Agnes' father at family tea.

Arthur: **(Somberly)** Yes, I heard about that. These are dark times, Clark.

Clark: Dark times, indeed. Say, do you remember that time we kidnapped Dan the Bulldog?

Arthur: Back in college? Oh, yes, I remember it fondly.

Clark: I've been trying to piece together how we did it. Didn't we have to wait until Yale's football team was asleep before we snuck into their lodgings?

Arthur: Oh, no! Nothing that clandestine. In fact, we did it in broad daylight.

Clark: Did we really?

Arthur: Sure. Don't you remember? It was quite clever actually. It all had to do with Dan's psychology.

Clark: I didn't think bulldogs had psychology.

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Arthur: I didn't think so either, but there was something we learned in Latin class that convinced us otherwise.

Clark: Latin class?

Arthur: **(Pointing at his own chest)** I have psychology. **(Pointing at Clark's chest)** You have psychology. And if you conjugate further, you get he/she/it has psychology. We figured that probably included Dan. Anyway, all we did was loiter around the Yale cheerleader's practice session with a dog we borrowed from a friend. Dan being somewhat of a prima donna when it came to cheerleading, he was taking a fiver and grazing moodily in the pasture when he suddenly caught whiff of our Priscilla.

Clark: Priscilla being?

Arthur: Our friend's dog. For psychological reasons, it was absolutely key that we had a female bulldog with us. **(Becoming contemplative)** Although we weren't sure if it'd be more proper to call her a "heifer" dog.

Clark: A heifer dog?

Arthur: Well there's no such thing as a female bull. So, how can there be such a thing as a female bulldog?

Clark: **(Placing a thoughtful hand beneath his chin)** Yes, I see your point. But, let's not get lost in the semantics of the thing. What did Dan do when he smelled Priscilla?

Arthur: He did what was natural. He waddled over to her to partake in some playful repartee. Meanwhile, you were crouching in a nearby shrub.

Clark: Yes, now it's coming back. I had a burlap sack with me.

Arthur: That's right. When Dan got close, you jumped out and scooped him up like a sack of potatoes. It was as easy as that.

Clark: **(Thoughtfully to himself)** As easy as that...

Arthur: Why do you bring it up?

Clark: **(Dismissively)** Oh, no reason in particular. I say, is that Gwen?

(Gwen enters stage left with several forlorn guests played by extras.)

Gwen: I was so sorry to hear about your cousin, Mr. Glendale. But we're glad you could make it. Here, have one of our donuts. Our very own cook made them special for today. They're — **(Gwen spots the donuts covered with leaves and freezes in horror.)**

Arthur: Our donuts — Uh...Yes, they're covered with... **(Eyes Clark)**

Clark: Some local herbs.

Arthur: Very local.

Clark: To really ground the flavor.

Arthur: Uh...May this cure your depression! **(Hands Extra 1 a donut covered in leaves and twigs)**

(Extra 1 takes the donut despondently.)

Clark: Don't forget the seasoning. **(Sprinkles an extra helping of grass on the donut in Extra 1's hand.)**

(Extra 1 passes quietly by.)

Gwen: **(Angrily)** Arthur! What did you do?! **(Her tone changes dramatically, becoming welcoming as a second guest approaches the table.)** Oh, hello, Miss Ferguson! So glad you could make it. I want you to know that you're loved and cherished.

Arthur: Blessings to your depression! **(Hands Extra 2 a donut.)**

(Extra 2 looks down at the donut confused, as Clark ushers her along.)

Arthur: **(To Gwen)** We had to improvise.

Gwen: Improve?! You're feeding my guests compost! **(Her tone shifts again as another guest approaches)** Ah, Elliot. Welcome! You should know that your mother did love you. She just didn't know how to show it.

Arthur: Mothers are complicated creatures, Elliot. Have a donut!

Clark: Seasoning?

(Extra 3 waves him away vigorously.)

Arthur: **(To Gwen)** Everything is fine, Gwen. They're eating them aren't they?

(Extras 1, 2, and 3 nibble on their donuts. Extra 3 chokes. Clark slaps him on the back. Extra 3 recovers, and Clark gives Arthur a sanguine thumbs up. Halifax enters stage left and approaches Clark. Extra 4 and Phil enter stage right. Gwen welcomes them as Arthur continues distributing donuts.)

Clark: Ah, Halifax, finish unpacking our bags?

Halifax: Yes, sir. I was just depositing the last of your flannel trousers in the guest room, when Miss Dalliard entered the room in a somewhat distressed manner.

Clark: **(Nervously)** I don't suppose she was looking for the bathroom.

Halifax: No, sir. She was looking for you.

Clark: **(Sighs)** I was afraid of that. What did she want?

Halifax: She is requesting your company on the terrace.

Clark: Show me the way, Halifax. My taskmaster beckons. Let's get this kidnapping ordeal over with.

(Clark and Halifax exit stage left. Tabs Close.)

Scene 4 - The Terrace

(Tabs Open. Agnes is pacing nervously. Edwin is trying to make duck noises with his mouth. Clark and Halifax enter stage right.)

Agnes: Ah, Clark, you're finally — what on earth are you wearing?

Clark: Seersucker. Rather spiffy, don't you think?

Agnes: But why?

Clark: It's called uncompromising style, Agnes. I wouldn't expect you to understand.

Agnes: **(Frustrated)** Oh, Clark!

Clark: What? What's wrong with it?

Edwin: **(Stepping forward)** Let me handle this, Agnes. Don't you know, Clark? No one wears seersucker after Labor day. It invites comment!

Agnes: **(To herself)** I don't know why I bother anymore. I really don't. **(To Clark)** You're supposed to be inconspicuous, Clark! How are you supposed to do a kidnapping job when you look like a candy cane?

Clark: Ah, yes, but that's the genius of it. No criminal in their right mind would ever wear seersucker, so I'll be completely free from suspicion. When people see me in the streets, they will remark, "Why, look at that man in that luscious seersucker. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow him all the days of his life. And he shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever—"

Agnes: **(Annoyed)** All right. All right. Fine. As long as you get the job done, I don't care what you wear.

Clark: Wonderful! **(Rubbing his hands together)** Now, where is this wretched grandmother of yours? Chained up in the backyard somewhere?

Agnes: That's the issue. Whenever guests are over, she locks herself up in her room and refuses to come out.

Clark: Oh, that's no problem. We'll just lure her out into the open.

Agnes: But—

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Clark: I know. I know. She refuses to come out, but trust me. I've kidnapped before. It's all a matter of psychology. Tell me about this maternal forbear of yours.

Agnes: I already told you. She's bonkers. Just this morning I caught her chewing on the carpet.

Clark: No, I mean. What are her loves, her passions, the heifer dog to her bulldog?

Agnes: The what?

Clark: Don't worry about it. What's something that speaks to the very essence of her soul? The kind of thing that would entice her to leave the safety of her bedroom even at the risk of running into a few guests. **(Pausing to think)** Perhaps a nice juicy carpet placed outside her window would do the trick.

Agnes: There's nothing I can think of — unless...There is one thing that she can't seem to control herself around..

Clark: What? What is it?

Agnes: Halifax, would you go to the kitchen and ask Miss Bunkle if she has any potatoes to spare.

Halifax: Yes, ma'am.

(Halifax exits stage right with a smile on his face.)

Edwin: Your grandmother can't control herself around potatoes?

(Agnes walks to stage right to see if Halifax is out of earshot.)

Agnes: No, I just said that to get rid of Halifax. The truth is she can't control herself around butlers.

Clark: What?!

Agnes: You remember our butler Hemmings?

Clark: The old boy with the bad ankles?

Agnes: He resigned because Grandma chased him up a tree.

Clark: Really?

Agnes: And before him, we had Godwin. He was one of our best until Grandmother scared him into busy traffic.

Clark: Good golly! What's her deal with butlers?

Agnes: I don't think she has anything against them as a species. She just goes feral whenever they remind her of a particular butler from her past. Back when she was young, she knew a butler by the name of Chalmers. He was one of those standard issue butlers. You know the type. English, impeccable etiquette, a perpetually dignified face, and one of those figures that was charmingly bulbous.

(Clark and Edwin nod in understanding.)

Agnes: His most unique characteristic though was his voice. It was beautiful. Apparently at community functions, he used to serenade the whole village with the most wonderful opera. Naturally, Grandmother fell in love.

Clark: Ah, well, who could blame her?

Agnes: Oh, no one of course. You might say it was almost inevitable. The problem was Chalmers himself.

Clark: Was he egotistical?

Agnes: Egotistical out the wazoo! He spurned grandmother's affections and left her to seek fame and fortune. Grandmother has been taking her revenge on butlers that remind her of Chalmers ever since.

Clark: Well, it's awfully tragic. In fact, if I were less manly, I might even shed a tear for your grandmother —

(Edwin blows his nose loudly into a handkerchief.)

Edwin: **(Wiping away a tear)** Sorry.

Clark: — But I suppose it doesn't really help us.

Agnes: **(Thoughtfully)** You know, Edwin, if we place Halifax in the middle of the east garden, do you think he'd be visible from my grandmother's room?

Edwin: **(Shooting to his feet)** Definitely!

Agnes: And do you think, if she heard him singing opera she might think he was Chalmers himself!?

Edwin: With her eroded sense of reality? Most certainly!

Clark: Woah! Hold your horses! I'm not going to let you sic some rabid lady on my innocent butler. The poor fellow just fell in love.

Agnes: Well, I'm sorry Clark. You either use Halifax as bait or I send this letter to your mother. **(Retrieving an envelope from her pocket and waving it at Clark)**

Clark: You would stoop this low?

Agnes: I would.

Clark: And force me to sacrifice my own butler?

Agnes: Yup.

Clark: (Sighs, defeated) You have no heart, Agnes.

Agnes: And you have no choice, Clark. Edwin, show him to the east garden.

(Tabs Close.)

Scene 5 - Lawn

(Arthur and Gwen are surrounded by Phil, Extras 1, 2, 3, and 4, who look miserable as they cough and choke on their donuts.)

Arthur: You know, I never realised how enjoyable charity work was. Really warms the heart to know that you're doing something good.

(Gwen slaps Arthur with an empty platter.)

Gwen: This is all your fault!

Arthur: My fault? How is it my fault?

Gwen: Not only did you ruin all of our donuts by fertilizing them, but you also gave every single one of the disgusting things away. And now just look at the guests.

Arthur: **(Looking around at the guests before placing his hands in his pockets and avoiding eye contact with Gwen)** To be fair they were miserable when they got here.

Gwen: **(Rubbing her temples)** All we had to do was hand out a few donuts. Just donuts! And somehow we couldn't even do that right. My charity career will never recover from this.

Arthur: Don't be ridiculous, Gwen. We can still salvage this.

Gwen: **(Sarcastically)** Is that so? And how are we going to do that? Pray tell.

Arthur: By leaning into our mistakes and owning them.

(Millicent Durns enters stage right, richly dressed and dignified.)

Gwen: Arthur, please just stop talking. You're making my head hurt. **(spotting Millicent)** Oh, Arthur, she's here!

Arthur: Who?

Gwen: Mrs. Durns! The millionaire! I must get her out of here before she sees what a disaster this is.

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(Gwen runs up to Millicent Durns with a bright smile and shakes her hand.)

Gwen: Mrs. Durns, we're so honoured to have you here today. I'm afraid there's been a slight problem and we've had to cancel the whole —

(Phil taps Gwen on the shoulder.)

Phil: Excuse me, could I get a replacement donut? **(Bashfully)** I didn't want to bring it up earlier, but there appears to be a bit of grass on mine. **(Holds out a donut with a heaping pile of grass on top)**

Millicent: **(Inspecting the donut through her glasses)** Good gracious!

Gwen: **(Nervously)** Uh...We —

(Arthur puts his hand over Phil's shoulder and guides him away from Gwen and Millicent as Gwen and Millicent watch.)

Arthur: For heaven's sake, Stanley. Your name is Stanley is it not? **(Winks at Gwen)**

Phil: It's Phil.

Arthur: Well, Stanley, how do you expect to ever recover from your depression if little pieces of grass are going to keep you from enjoying an otherwise delicious donut? You know, Stanley, this is exactly why you're miserable.

Phil: **(Confused)** It is?

Arthur: Of course it is. You're allowing the setbacks in life to stop you from enjoying all the joy and beauty that this world has to offer.

Phil: I thought it was just my unemployment.

Arthur: No, Stanley, your unemployment is just one of the issues in your life. You really have so many more. And you're letting them all control you. Deep down you know I'm right. I know you do. So eat that donut. Fight through the grass.

Phil: But I'm allergic to grass.

(Gwen facepalms.)

Arthur: I'm sorry?

Phil: I'm allergic to grass. Just look at this rash I got from tripping over the hose this morning. **(Holds arm up to show Arthur)**

Arthur: **(Pushing Phil's arm away)** Yes, Stanley, I know you're allergic. Why else would I have put so much grass on your donut? **(Confidently)** It's all to prove a point. The sweetness of the donut is worth the rash. Just like the happiness in this life is worth all the pain.

Phil: I never thought of it that way.

Arthur: **(Grabbing Phil by the shoulders and making strong eye contact)** You want to beat your depression, don't you?

Phil: (Emotionally) Desperately.

Arthur: Do you want to enjoy your life?

Phil: More than anything.

Arthur: Good! So, grip that donut firmly by its haunches and take a bite!

(Fighting through tears, Phil shoves the donut into his mouth and starts eating voraciously.)

Millicent: How extraordinary!

Gwen: Huh?

Millicent: The way that man inspired the other to overcome his allergy to grass.

Gwen: Ugh...yes, it's uh...just one of our rehabilitation techniques.

Millicent: I must say, when I heard of your little charity, I expected another silly donut distribution. But this **(Pointing at Phil)** — well, it speaks for itself.

Phil: **(Now eating the donut crumbs that have fallen to the ground)** Stupid grass. Stupid employment office. I'll show you.

Gwen: Yes, we really... pride ourselves in our ability to... cure people of their depression.

Millicent: Discouragement is such a terrible thing! Terrible! And yet, most treatments I've seen from others just involve hand holding and puppy visitation hours. Tell me more about your programs here, Miss?

Gwen: Miss Burgess. Miss Gwen Burgess. Our programs are wide and varied. We start off with the donuts, as you can see, then have a few testimonies, a motivational speech or two, and then we like to end on some communal self-care meditation.

(Arthur picks Phil off the ground and dusts off his coat.)

Arthur: Excellent, Stanley. Now go clean yourself off inside. And do something about your hair. You're embarrassing yourself.

(Arthur pushes Phil off stage left.)

Arthur: **(To the rest of the guests)** As for the rest of you, go and find some other toppings to add to your donuts. Remember. You must chew through your depression.

(Extras 1, 2, 3, and 4 scurry off stage left. Arthur approaches Gwen and Millicent.)

Gwen: Allow me to introduce you to Arthur Pikney.

(Arthur coughs expectantly.)

Gwen: My fiancé.

(Arthur coughs again.)

Gwen: **(Resigned)** And one of our lead experts on depression.

Arthur: **(Taking a deep bow)** Enchantée, mademoiselle.

Millicent: **(Bashfully)** Oh, a gentleman too. It's nice to meet you, Doctor. You are a doctor, I presume.

Arthur: Naturally, good madame, a doctor of depression in all of its forms.

(Gwen rubs her temples.)

Millicent: Tell me, Doctor, what led you into the field?

Arthur: Why Madam, just the path leading from the house to the garden. **(Pointing offstage)**

Gwen: **(Clearing her throat)** She means your medical field, darling.

Arthur: But of course. That's just a little joke I like to tell sometimes when I'm among friends. **(Chuckles)** Let's see. What led me into the field of depression? **(Pausing)** I suppose you could say that I did not find the depression field as much as it has found me. **(Placing his hand on his heart)**

Millicent: **(Chuckling)** Isn't that so often the case?

Arthur: **(Chuckling)** It is! It is, indeed.

(Gwen nervously laughs the loudest and longest of all, appearing to be nearing her breaking point.)

Gwen: Why don't we show you around the grounds, Mrs. Durns?

Millicent: I would adore that.

Gwen: **(Still laughing)** Follow me.

(Millicent, Gwen, and Arthur exit stage left. Edwin and Clark enter stage right.)

Edwin: There, you see that window? **(Pointing upstage)** That's Agnes' grandmother's room. It's probably best to place Halifax here. **(Edwin stands at a spot located up center stage)** And we can hide behind this rose bush. **(Edwin points to a bush located down stage left.)**

Clark: I don't feel right about this, Edwin. If anything happens to Halifax, I don't think I shall ever forgive myself.

Edwin: He'll be fine. Halifax can run, can't he?

Clark: I don't know. I've never seen him. He's just so darn punctual and well-mannered, he hardly ever rushes for anything. Of course, I've seen him tumble down the stairs, but even that didn't top 4 miles an hour.

Edwin: Don't worry, when one's life is on the line, all forms of decorum get thrown out the window. He'll run all right. It may not be pretty, but he'll run.

(Halifax enters stage right carrying a sack of potatoes.)

Clark: Let's just hope he'll be able to outpace Agnes' grandmother.

(Halifax clears his throat. Edwin and Clark jump.)

Clark: **(Startled)** Halifax! It's you!

Halifax: Forgive me, sir. Miss Dalliard said I could find you here. I've brought the potatoes.

Clark: Potatoes?

Halifax: Miss Dalliard led me to believe that you required these for bait, sir.

Clark: Oh, right. **(Chuckling nervously)** How could I forget? I'll take those off of you.

(Clark grabs the sack of potatoes and immediately heaves them at Edwin. Edwin nearly collapses from the weight. Recovering, he walks them over to the rose bush and places them down in front of it.)

Halifax: Will that be all, sir?

Clark: No, no, Halifax. There's just...one more thing.

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Halifax: Sir?

Clark: You know, you've done a lot of strange things for me over the years.

Halifax: Yes, sir.

Clark: And you've always been very...dutiful — dare I say sacrificial.

Halifax: Thank you, sir.

Clark: **(Fondly)** Remember that time you tackled the milk man for me.

Halifax: My scars remind me daily, sir.

Clark: And that time you dressed up as my mother?

Halifax: That is one incident I do try to forget, sir.

Clark: Time and time again, Halifax, you've been by my side, **(Placing a hand on Halifax's shoulder and becoming emotional)**, which is why it pains me to have to call upon your name again.

Halifax: It would be an honor to offer my assistance, sir.

Clark: Well, this next request might jolly well be the strangest of them all. And, well — I need you to comply without any questions.

Halifax: **(Confused)** Sir?

Clark: **(Wiping a tear from his eye)** Yes, Halifax I can't explain why, but I need you to stand in this exact spot **(Pointing to the spot up center stage)** and look perfectly appetising.

Edwin: Clark, don't forget the opera.

Clark: Right, the opera. The pièce de résistance. Halifax, I don't suppose you know any opera songs.

Halifax: Oh, yes, sir. Opera was a favorite of my mother's. She used to sing "Ave Maria" to me every night as a boy.

Clark: **(Chuckling emotionally)** Of course she did. Why wouldn't she?

(Halifax hands Clark a handkerchief. Clark wipes his tears away.)

Clark: I need you to sing it for me, Halifax.

Halifax: Now, sir?

Clark: **(Nodding his head somberly)** Now, Halifax.

Halifax: As you wish, sir.

(Halifax takes his place. Clark and Edwin retreat behind the rose bush. SFX "Ave Maria" begins playing. Halifax sings along dramatically. Edwin and Clark watch, stunned.)

Edwin: Well, slap me silly, and call me Susan. He's amazing!

Clark: Of course, he is. The little angel would be.

(Clark begins to sob into the handkerchief. Edwin pats Clark's back. After some moments of Halifax serenading the audience, a bush on stage left rustles.)

Edwin: Look, Clark! Over there!

Clark: What? Where?

Edwin: Just there! I saw movement.

Clark: **(Wiping away the last of his tears)** Is it her?

Edwin: I can't tell.

(Miss Bunkle's head peaks above the bush. She is watching Halifax intently.)

Edwin: Yes, that's her!

Clark: We must be quick, Edwin! Hand me the net.

Edwin: What net? You never told me to bring a net.

Clark: Oh, you moron! You always bring a net.

Edwin: How was I supposed to know?

(Miss Bunkle creeps closer to Halifax.)

Clark: We don't have time for this! Halifax is a sitting duck!

Edwin: Get out of there, Halifax! Oh, why doesn't he run?

Clark: By Jove! He's lost himself to the music.

(Halifax is gesticulating with his eyes closed, fully immersed in his singing.)

Edwin: **(Tugging on Clark's sleeve)** Clark, the potatoes!

Clark: You can eat later, Edwin!

Edwin: **(Grabbing the sack of potatoes)** No, we can use the sack!

(Edwin empties out the sack of potatoes. Potatoes roll everywhere.)

Clark: Brilliant! Give me that.

(Clark grabs the burlap sack and takes a step forward, but slips on the potatoes. Edwin tries to help him up, but likewise slips and falls to the ground.)

Clark: Quickly, Edwin. She's about to pounce.

(Miss Bunkle creeps closer to Halifax. Clark and Edwin slip in the potatoes again. Clark grabs hold of Edwin's ear.)

Edwin: Ow! My ear!

Clark: Hold still!

(Clark stands on Edwin and uses his decumbent body to launch himself over the perimeter of potatoes. Clark throws the bag over Miss Bunkle's head. She struggles and screams. Edwin trips on the potatoes again. Falling forward, he grabs hold of Clark's pants. Clark lets go of the potato sack and clutches his own waistband instead.)

Clark: Agh! Stop it, Edwin! Let go of my pants!

(Clark backs over Edwin and falls to the ground. Miss Bunkle, struggling with the bag over her head, turns and runs off stage right.)

Clark: Confound it, Edwin! You've let her get away!

Edwin: **(Pained)** Ugh! You landed on my kidneys.

(Clark and Edwin finally untie themselves and run off stage right. Halifax continues singing as the stage fades to black. Tabs Close. Intermission.)

Act 2
Scene 1 - Lawn

(Tabs Open. Gwen, Arthur, and Millicent enter stage right.)

Millicent: Is someone singing...opera?

Gwen: **(Confused)** uh...

Millicent: I just love the opera! Don't you?

Gwen: Oh, quite.

Millicent: Is it part of the treatment, Doctor?

Arthur: Hmm? Oh — but of course!

Millicent: How fascinating! I'd love to hear how it works.

(Gwen and Arthur trade nervous glances.)

Gwen: Yes, well — you see — sometimes the depressed just need to have a good cry.

Millicent: A good cry?

Arthur: Oh, yes! You have to understand that these depressed types struggle with self-expression. Good cries will often help them unleash all of that bottled up emotion and really begin to heal.

Gwen: We will often prescribe uh...a good dose of opera.

Arthur: Ten minutes twice a day with a glass of water.

Gwen: And never on an empty stomach.

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Millicent: Ingenious!

Arthur: Oh, you flatter us, Mrs. Durns! How will we ever stay humble?

(Millicent, Arthur, and Gwen chuckle pompously.)

Millicent: Well, I must say, between all the gardens and opera music, you two have certainly created a peaceful setting in which your patients can relax.

Arthur: Yes, Mrs. Durns, everything you experience today has been intentionally designed to create a loving and secure atmosphere around our depressed. As I

always like to say, you can't get over your depression until you immerse yourself in a completely safe and peaceful environment.

(Miss Bunkle screams from offstage. Arthur, Gwen, and Millicent all jump.)

Millicent: Good heavens! What was that?

Gwen: **(Nervously)** Whatever it was. We have nothing to do with —

Arthur: **(Holding a hand up to Gwen)** Ah, the song of the chickadee. Quite beautiful in the autumn.

Millicent: **(Baffled)** A Chickadee?!

Arthur: That's right. Didn't you hear it? It kind of resembles the sound of someone coughing up mucus on the first day of spring.

Millicent: It sounded like a woman screaming for help!

Arthur: A scream? Oh no, no. A scream for help would've sounded like this.
(Screaming) Help! **(Returning to conversational tone)** So you see, it's really quite different.

(Miss Bunkle screams "Help!" from offstage. Millicent, Arthur, and Gwen all jump.)

Millicent: There it was again! That was definitely a cry for help!

Arthur: Uh...

Gwen: Oh, Mrs. Durns, that was just Arthur's echo.

Arthur: Genius! I mean, yes! Just an echo.

Millicent: **(Astonished)** An echo?!

(Gwen and Arthur nod in unison. Miss Bunkle, with a potato sack covering her head, enters stage left and runs across the stage, screaming. Edwin and Clark are following closely behind her.)

Clark: Don't let her get away, Edwin!

(Edwin gasps for air. Miss Bunkle runs past Millicent, Gwen, and Arthur before exiting stage right. Clark and Edwin follow her offstage.)

Millicent: **(Clutching at her pearls)** Good heavens! That poor woman was being chased.

Arthur: A woman being chased? Here? Ha! You surprise me, Mrs. Durns. This is a safe place. No doubt it was just some of the local children playing tag.

Millicent: Children? One of them had a moustache!

Arthur: A moustache? Oh, you can't go by that. You've been in the city too long, Mrs. Durns. Out here in the country, children are bred like workhorses. They are often confused for adults and almost always have facial hair.

(Millicent looks at Gwen in utter confusion. Gwen simply smiles and plays with her hair. Miss Bunkle comes running back on stage, screaming. Clark and Edwin are just behind her. She trips directly in front of Arthur. Clark, running too fast, trips over Miss Bunkle and flies over her. Edwin tipping his hat at Gwen and Millicent, likewise trips on Miss Bunkle and lands on Clark.)

Millicent: You call those children?!

Arthur: Oh, they're the ones you just saw? Ha ha, no they're not children. These two **(Gesturing towards Clark and Edwin)** are some of my assistants. And this one here **(Gesturing his foot towards Miss Bunkle)** is being treated for her fear of the dark. You see, we cover her head and make her run around until she finally realises that she can't escape the darkness...It makes sense if you think about it.

(Arthur helps Miss Bunkle to her feet. As soon as she's standing, she elbows Arthur in his stomach. Arthur grunts, and Miss Bunkle runs toward stage left. She trips over Clark and Edwin and collides with the garden bench where she is knocked out cold. Gwen buries her face in her hands.)

Millicent: Oh, the humanity!

Arthur: **(Clutching his stomach)** Don't worry! I'm used to it. Occupational hazard, don't you know?

Millicent: Not you! That poor woman! She's been knocked senseless!

Arthur: Oh that! She'll be fine. **(Waving a hand)** In the medical field, we call tripping into a rustic bench a mild sedative. We often use such techniques to get our patients to sleep. **(To Clark and Edwin)** You two wouldn't mind carrying her to her bed? When she wakes, have her listen to some opera. Doctor's orders.

Edwin: **(Confused)** What?

Clark: Come on, Edwin.

(Clark starts to lift Miss Bunkle onto the bench. Edwin helps him. The two then each grab an end of the bench and lug it off stage left.)

Millicent: **(Weakly)** Excuse me, Doctor. Am I given to believe that you regularly use such violent methods to sedate your patients?

Arthur: Hmm? Oh yes! It calms them right down and it's certainly better than horse tranquilizer. Trust me I'm a doctor. **(Rubbing his hands together)** So, let's talk donations. How much were you interested in pledging today, Mrs. Durns?

Millicent: **(Feeling her forehead)** Gwen, dear, if you wouldn't mind calling me a taxi, I'd like to make it to the station before the hour is up.

(Millicent exits stage left.)

Gwen: Oh, Arthur! You absolute fool! **(Directed offstage)** Mrs. Durns wait!

(Gwen runs offstage left.)

Arthur: But Gwen, it's not my fault!

(Arthur trots after her, exiting stage left. Tabs close.)

Scene 2 — Lawn in Front of Garden Shed

(Tabs Open. Agnes enters stage right and begins pacing back and forth impatiently. Her father, Walter, enters stage left apprehensively, his back to Agnes. Spotting her father, Agnes clears her throat. Walter jumps into the air.)

Walter: **(Placing his hand on his heart and breathing deeply)** Oh, Agnes, it's only you. I was worried you were one of your mother's guests or worse, your sad excuse for a fiancé.

Agnes: Oh, Dad! When are you going to get over that? Edwin just pulled down your pants. It's not like he's...vegetarian or anything.

Walter: **(Astonished)** Just pulled down my — ?! The man might as well have disbarred me!

Agnes: Don't be so dramatic, Dad. It's only pants.

Walter: Only pants? **(Emphatically)** Have I taught you nothing, Agnes? Our country was built on pants. When Jefferson authored the Declaration of Independence, what do you think was keeping his knees warm? When Lincoln gave the Emancipation Proclamation, what was protecting his shins from mockery?

Agnes: Dad, please. Think of your blood pressure. All I'm saying is that there's more to Edwin's personality. He doesn't just pull down pants. He has...qualities.

Walter: Ha! Name one.

Agnes: Well, he can play the kazoo, and uh...Oh he writes the most groundbreaking poetry. No one thought it was possible to rhyme anything with orange. But Edwin said "Watch me! I'll do it with 'door hinge!'"

Walter: **(Checking his watch)** I'm sorry, Agnes, I don't have time for this. I've got to get to your grandmother. It's time for her morning constitutional.

(Edwin and Clark enter stage right. Clark is carrying a small rope.)

Edwin: But what's going to happen when she wakes up?

Clark: That's why we're going to tie her up, Edwin. Haven't you been listening?

(Edwin and Clark notice Agnes and Walter. Clark hides the rope behind his back.)

Clark: Agnes! We were just looking for you.

(Edwin licks his palm and adjusts his hair. He then approaches Walter with an outstretched hand.)

Edwin: Ah! Judge Dalliard. It's good to see you again —

Walter: **(Taking several steps back)** That's close enough, young man. I —

(Edwin stumbles.)

Walter: **(Clutching his own waistband)** Agh! You get back, you beastly creature! Leave me alone!

(Walter turns and runs off stage left.)

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Edwin: But, sir! Wait! I have a poem to show you. Oh...bunyuns!

Clark: Drop it, Edwin! Remember. We have the real prize!

Agnes: You mean you've done it? You've actually got her?

Clark: **(Proudly)** Does the deer panteth for water?

Agnes: Well? Where is she?

Clark: We parked her in yonder garden shed while we fetched some rope. Figured it'd be apropos to tie her up in the traditional manner.

Agnes: Clark, you absolute sensation! I knew you could do it.

Clark: I confess, it was touch and go for a second there. But when it came down to the wire, I just remained calm and remembered my training.

Edwin: Now, wait just a minute! I helped too!

Clark: Please Edwin, don't fish for praise. It isn't manly. Besides, you nearly botched the whole thing up when you lost your footing and latched onto my pants like a child learning how to walk.

Agnes: Oh, Edwin! Again?

(Edwin bows his head in shame.)

Clark: I understand if tripping is fundamental to your character, Edwin, but this reaching for gentlemen's pants is a bad habit. It simply won't do in our modern society.

Edwin: I don't do it on purpose. Everytime I reach out, pants just appear before me.

Clark: Just stop reaching for things then. Embrace the face plant. Break your nose if you must.

(Edwin feels his nose furtively.)

Agnes: Well, what matters is we got her in the end. You said you were about to tie her up? May I —

Clark: Oh, would you like to do the honors?

Agnes: If you don't mind.

Clark: Not at all. Not at all. She is your flesh and blood.

Agnes: Oh, thank you!

(Clark hands Agnes the rope and reaches for the door handle to the garden shed.)

Clark: **(Hesitating)** Now, I should warn you. She may or may not be...hibernating.

Agnes: Hibernating?

Edwin: He means stone cold unconscious.

Clark: Edwin, please. It isn't polite.

Agnes: What happened?

Clark: She may have tripped and, well —

Edwin: Without any pants to grab hold of, she dove headlong into a bench.

Agnes: A bench?

Clark: One of those sturdy garden benches sprinkled about the property. It was an accident, I assure you.

Agnes: Oh, I'm sure she's fine. You could hit grandma with a bus and she'd walk away with only a scratch and a hankering for butterscotch.

Clark: **(Happily relieved)** Well, in that case, bully!

(Clark proudly flings open the garden shed door, revealing Miss Bunkle sitting against the wall with her head slumped over. Agnes leans forward.)

Clark: **(Checking his watch)** Now, Edwin. I advise you to give it a few hours before returning her to Agnes' father. The longer the good judge has to panic, the more indebted he'll be to you.

Agnes: **(Angrily pointing at Miss Bunkle)** Who on earth is that?

(Clark and Edwin look at Agnes in confused silence.)

Clark: Why, that's your dear babushka!

Agnes: That is not my grandmother!

Clark: But — you — I —

Agnes: You pea-brained nitwits! You kidnapped the wrong woman!

Edwin: I had no part in this!

Clark: Edwin, you specifically pointed her out to me! When you saw her, you practically screamed "Thar she blows!"

Agnes: **(Intensely)** Edwin!

Edwin: But — but I could've sworn it was her. I mean, who else could it be?

Clark: Who else, indeed?

(Clark inspects the body closely.)

Edwin: Please, Agnes. It was an honest mistake.

Agnes: I've never been one to throw the baby out with the bath water, but I think, in your mother's case, she would've done the world a huge favour!

Edwin: You can't say that to me. I'm your fiancé!

Agnes: Don't remind me!

Clark: Agnes, can you identify the remains? I don't know the local congregation like you do.

(Agnes moves the hair out of the body's face.)

Agnes: It's Miss Bunkle!

Edwin: The cook? But what was she doing out there?

Clark: She must've been listening to the dulcet tones of her beau, Halifax. **(Running both hands through his hair)** Oh, golly! Halifax will never forgive me for this.

Edwin: This is not the time to worry about your domestic life. What are we going to do with her?

Clark: We let her go, of course!

Edwin: She's not a bass! We can't just catch and release her. She'll go to the police.

Agnes: He's right. That's the last thing we need. No, as far as I'm concerned, nothing has changed. My grandmother is still out there and the plan is still in place. Miss Bunkle will just have to be another kidnapping victim for Edwin to save.

Clark: But Agnes —

(SFX. "Nessun Dorma" begins playing faintly from offstage.)

Agnes: I don't want to hear it, Clark. Consider this little accident a trial run. Now, at least, you know you can do it.

Clark: Agnes, please!

Edwin: Quiet! Do you guys hear that?

Clark: It's Halifax. He's still singing.

Agnes: After all this time?

Clark: We never told him to stop.

Edwin: I've got to hand it to him. The man has pipes.

Clark: Wait! If this isn't your grandmother and Halifax is still singing, then that means...

(Walter enters stage right in a frenzy.)

Walter: Agnes, your grandmother! I — I —

Agnes: Spit it out, Dad!

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Walter: I was in the middle of feeding her her daily pound of meat when she heard singing. She screamed "Chalmers!" and launched herself out the window!

Clark: Oh, golly! Halifax is in peril!

(SFX "Nessun Dorma" suddenly cuts out as Halifax screams from offstage.)

Clark: **(Running off stage right)** Hold on, Halifax! I'm on my way!

(Tabs Close.)

Scene 3 — Lawn in Front of the Garden Shed

(Tabs Open. Agnes is waiting by the garden shed, keeping watch when Edwin enters stage left wiping his brow.)

Agnes: Edwin, what happened?

Edwin: Clark was too late. By the time he reached Halifax your grandmother had done her damage and disappeared.

Agnes: Is Halifax...dead?

Edwin: Worse, I'm afraid. Clark says he may never buttle again.

Agnes: But why? What did grandmother do to him?

Edwin: That's the mystery of it. Halifax was laying in the fetal position with a skinned elbow and complaining about the most frightful charley horse. But it's the psychological damage that concerns me. He couldn't remember his own name, and just kept muttering things about great weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Agnes: And what about Clark?

Edwin: Oh, he's an emotional wreck. When he found Halifax, he fell on his knees and tore his garments in the most biblical manner.

Agnes: Then I suppose he can't be counted on anymore.

(Agnes begins sorting through the garden tools leaning against the garden shed.)

Edwin: No, I suppose not. He took Halifax into the house and refuses to leave his side. He — what are you doing?

(Agnes picks up a shovel.)

Agnes: Yes, this should do the trick. Here you go. **(Hands shovel to Edwin)**

Edwin: **(Taking the shovel weakly)** What's this for?

Agnes: To help you kidnap grandmother of course.

Edwin: Me?! But Clark —

Agnes: Clark is out of commission now. It's up to you to finish the job.

Edwin: But I don't know how to kidnap.

Agnes: Just do what you did with Miss Bunkle.

Edwin: But we just knocked her out.

Agnes: I know! Hence the shovel.

Edwin: Agnes! I can't —

Agnes: Oh, for heaven's sake Edwin! For once in your life, man up and do as a woman asks you.

Edwin: But —

Agnes: You know, sometimes I feel like I'm the only one fighting for this relationship. I plan this whole scheme, recruit Clark, even forgive you for kidnapping the wrong person, and you can't even swing a simple shovel for me.

Edwin: Swing a shovel? You're asking me to bludgeon your grandmother.

Agnes: That's right! She's *my* grandmother. My only grandmother. Just another one of the many sacrifices that you can add to my list. And what have you brought to the table? Hmm? Besides pulling down my father's pants and putting us in this situation, I can't think of anything!

(Edwin is speechless. He merely splutters with intensifying incoherence.)

Agnes: **(Indignantly crossing her arms)** That's what I thought. Gaping like a goldfish as per usual. Well, that makes my decision easy then. If you can't manage this very straightforward task, you won't need to worry about the plan because our engagement will be at an end!

(Agnes storms off stage right. Edwin watches her leave. Looking slowly down at the shovel in his hands, he gulps. He closes his eyes and takes a weak swing.)

Edwin: **(To himself)** Come on, Ed. You can do better than that. Be a man!

(Edwin leans a rake against a wheelbarrow to use as a target. He backs up from it, grits his teeth, closes his eyes, screams, and takes a swing. The rake falls to the stage. Edwin looks down at the recumbent rake and covers his mouth as if sick. He grabs the empty potato sack and holds it up to his mouth for a moment to collect himself. An idea comes to him. Setting up the rake again, he throws the sack overtop of it, closes his eyes, screams again, and takes another swing with the shovel. The rake falls again. Edwin opens one eye and looks down at the rake. He breathes a sigh of relief. Taking the sack and shovel with him, he exits stage right. Millicent, Arthur, and Gwen enter stage left.)

Gwen: Wait, Mrs. Durns! Please don't go.

Millicent: I'm sorry Gwen. I have a reputation. I cannot be associated with a charity who tranquilizes their patients with garden furniture.

Arthur: Mrs. Durns. We only employ the garden bench technique because...because of an extreme lack of funding. We would love to be able to afford traditional means of anesthetic, but you see, that's exactly why we need your help. Besides, a little rough and tumble is good for people. It can really shore up the immune system.

Millicent: **(Scoffing laugh)** Ha!

Gwen: Mrs. Durns, you're tired and your blood sugar is low. Why don't you sit down and relax? I'll go see if our cook can make some more of those donuts.

Millicent: Oh, forget the donuts. Just call me a taxi!

Gwen: Yes, ma'am. Right away.

Arthur: **(Quietly to Gwen)** But Gwen —

Gwen: **(Quietly to Arthur)** I know, I know. I'm just going to stall. You keep her here and see what you can do.

(Gwen exits stage left.)

Arthur: Listen, Mrs. Durns. No charity is perfect. This is our first day. You have to expect there to be some bumps in the road.

Millicent: I can overlook bumps in the road. What I can't overlook is you putting bumps on your patients.

Arthur: So one of the depressed got hurt, so what? I'll tell you the same thing I tell all my clients. Look on the bright side.

Millicent: Look on the bright side? The only bright side to look at are the bright purple bruises on that patient of yours.

Arthur: **(Chuckling)** You know, you're very good at twisting my words, Mrs. Durns, but —

Millicent: Twisting your words? The only things getting twisted are the —

Arthur: **(Impassioned)** Yes, I know! The depressed! You've made your point! One of them got laid out on a garden bench, but you know what, Mrs. Durns? At least we didn't hurt her feelings! You need to realise that on the outside, the depressed are some pretty tough babies. It's their insides that's really the fragile part. And as long as that's not getting hurt, they can take a punch or two. In fact, I dare say some of them may even welcome it. Because though a sucker punch may sting, at least it gets the depressed out of their heads and back into their bodies. At least, it makes them feel alive again! So, if you actually care about them, you'll leave it to the professionals, whip out that checkbook of yours, and patiently wait for me to name a number.

Millicent: **(Intensely)** Is that supposed to inspire me?

Arthur: **(Quailing)** Well, that all depends. Did it?

Millicent: Let me make this very clear to you, Doctor. If you think that after all I've seen today, I'm still going to write you a check, you're sorely mistaken.

Arthur: Cash will do just fine.

Millicent: Oh, that's good! How about a lawsuit?

Arthur: What? You can't sue us.

Millicent: I'm Millicent Durns! I can sue whomever I want. In fact, as soon as I'm out of here, that's exactly what I intend on doing. Goodbye, Doctor.

(Edwin jumps in from stage right with a battle cry. He throws the potato sack over Millicent's head. Millicent screams. Edwin grabs his shovel, grits his teeth, shuts his eyes, and swings. Millicent falls limply to the stage floor. Arthur stands blinking.)

Edwin: Ha ha! I did it! I actually did it! **(Kisses the shovel triumphantly)** Take that Agnes! And you thought I wasn't man enough!

Arthur: **(Stunned)** Edwin! What was that for?

Edwin: Ah, Arthur! Were you standing there to behold my glorious victory?

Arthur: Victory?!

Edwin: No doubt you have many questions. Don't worry. In the fullness of time, all shall be made clear to your ignorant mind. For now you may rest assured knowing that my manliness is no longer in question.

Arthur: **(Sarcastically)** Oh good. Well thank heavens for that! Perhaps you'd feel even better if you were to decapitate me with a flower pot. Or, what's more, I'll fetch Gwen and you can run her over with a wheelbarrow. I'm sure that'll do wonders for your manhood!

Edwin: **(Proudly)** That won't be necessary. I am but a simple man. Bashing Agnes' grandmother with a shovel is all that I require.

Arthur: Well, let me congratulate you. You've caught an even bigger fish than you think. This fine catch is none other than Millicent Durns, the millionaire.

Edwin: Who?

Arthur: Millicent Durns, the esteemed benefactress whom I've spent the entire day flattering and beguiling.

Edwin: What?! **(Stoops over body)**

Arthur: And now, thanks to you, all that hard work has gone down the drain.

Edwin: Oh, not another one! **(Runs hands through hair)**

Arthur: Well, Edwin, what do you have to say for yourself?

Edwin: What? What do you mean?

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Arthur: Come! Come! This is your fault and you know it!

Edwin: Arthur, I'm— I'm sorry!

Arthur: I don't want your sympathies. I want a donation!

Edwin: A donation?!

Arthur: That's right. She was my millionaire. I saw her first, and you broke her. You owe me.

Edwin: **(Nervously fumbles in his pockets)** But all I've got are a couple of nickels.

Arthur: Well then, we'll just have to sell your left kidney. Come here you little worm!

(Edwin screams as Arthur tackles and wrestles him. Nickels fly everywhere. Gwen enters stage left.)

Gwen: The station said they were all out of taxis Mrs. Durns. Looks like you'll have to — **(Spots the wrestling pair)** Arthur! What's going on?

Arthur: **(To Edwin)** Do you feel manly now? Huh?

Gwen: **(Pulling on Arthur's collar)** Arthur! Stop it! Stop it!

Arthur: I just started, Gwen. Just let me get in a few good ones!

(Gwen finally pulls Arthur off of Edwin. Arthur bites his fist and walks away, still fuming.)

Gwen: **(Noticing the unconscious body)** Is that Mrs. Durns?

Arthur: Why don't you ask that pathetic lump of dough you call your brother? **(Gestures towards Edwin)**

Edwin: I can explain everything, Gwen! I thought she was Agnes' grandmother.

Gwen: **(Ignoring Edwin)** Oh, Arthur, please tell me you got a donation from her.

Arthur: **(Defensively)** Hmm? Well, no. I mean, I was close. She had just asked me to name a number, when Edwin jumped in and introduced her to his shovel.

Gwen: **(Fiercely)** Edwin, you little...**(Grabs the shovel and winds up to hit Edwin.)**
(Edwin whimpers. Arthur grabs the shovel, restraining Gwen.)

Arthur: No, Gwen! He's not worth it!

Gwen: He's my brother. It's my right!

Arthur: **(Considers for a moment)** That's fair. Proceed.
(Arthur lets go of the shovel and Gwen winds up.)

Edwin: No, Gwen. Please!

Gwen: Just one, Edwin. Hold still.
(Agnes enters stage right dragging a female extra. Gwen, Arthur, and Edwin look at her, stunned.)

Agnes: Gwen, what are you doing?

Gwen: **(Lowering the shovel)** What am I doing? What are you doing?

Agnes: That's none of your business.

Gwen: **(Pointing at the extra)** Is that one of my guests?

Agnes: I don't know what you mean.

Gwen: That's one of my guests, isn't it?

Arthur: First Clark trips that woman into a bench, then Edwin clubs our donor, and now you, Agnes?

Agnes: Oh, Edwin! Don't tell me you knocked out the wrong woman again!

Edwin: Oh that doesn't matter, Agnes. **(Points at the extra)** You did it! You actually got her!

Agnes: Of course, I got her. Do you actually think I'd make the same mistake as you and attack the wrong woman?

Gwen: Why are you attacking any women at all? Are you two killers?

Edwin: No, not killers **(Correctively raises a finger)**. Kidnappers.

Arthur: Well, go kidnap somewhere else. We're trying to run a charity here.

Gwen: **(Hopelessly)** Oh what difference does it make, Arthur? Edwin annihilated our chances of getting a donation when he annihilated Mrs. Durns.

Edwin: I did not annihilate her!

(Millicent begins to stir.)

Edwin: You see? She's fine. She just needed her beauty sleep.

Gwen: Oh no! She's waking up! Quick! What are we going to tell her?

Agnes: Don't ask me.

Edwin: I know! Tell her a bird flew into the back of her.

Arthur: **(Sarcastically)** Yes, Edwin, because she's a window.

Edwin: I'm sorry, Arthur. I don't hear you coming up with any ideas.

Arthur: That's because I have enough self-control to keep my stupid ideas to myself.

Gwen: Both of you be quiet!

Millicent: **(Groans)** Where am I?

(Gwen raises the shovel and drops the end on Millicent's head. Millicent collapses to the ground again.)

Arthur: Gwen! Why?

Gwen: **(Panicked)** Because no one had any ideas and I don't want to deal with her.

Arthur: Don't want to deal with her?! You sound like a murderer.

Agnes: You aren't being helpful, Arthur!

Gwen: No he's right. What have I become? Using violence to solve my problems — why, **(Points at Edwin and Agnes, horrified)** I'm just like you two.

(Gwen sinks to the ground in despair.)

Edwin: **(Insulted)** Well, you could be worse.

Gwen: Oh yeah, Edwin? How could I be worse than you?

Edwin: Well, you could be her, for instance. **(Kicks Mrs. Durns)** Or her. **(Pointing at the body Agnes dragged in)** Or even her! **(Swings open the garden shed door, revealing Miss Bunkle tied up and gagged.)**

(Gwen and Arthur recoil in shock.)

Arthur: Another one?

Gwen: Where did she come from?

Agnes: **(Facepalms)** She was Edwin's first try.

Edwin: **(Indignantly)** I prefer the term practice run.

Agnes: Oh? And how did that work out for you?

Edwin: Would you drop it, Agnes. I said I was sorry. Besides, why does it matter when you got your grandmother in the end?

Agnes: Oh for heaven's sake! **(Pointing at the female extra at her feet).** This isn't her!

Edwin: What? But you said —

Agnes: I know, I know. I just couldn't admit I made the same mistake as you. This is just some depressed woman who happened to look like my grandmother from the back.

Gwen: I knew it!

Agnes: Oh, calm down, Gwen! You just knocked out your own donor.

Arthur: **(Thoughtfully counting on his fingers)** Good golly! Am I the only one who's gone today without knocking out some poor buster?

(Clark, whistling, enters stage left pushing a wheelbarrow that contains a motionless male extra.)

Arthur: **(Sarcastically)** Oh, wonderful! How perfectly splendid!

Clark: Oh, hello everyone. Sorry to interrupt. Didn't realise you were having a little soiree — though I'm a little hurt I wasn't invited.

Gwen: **(Glumly)** Oh, Clark, you too?

Clark: What's going on here? What's wrong with everyone? Why do these bodies look more alive than any of you? Moreover, why are there so many bodies?

Edwin: They're just a few more mishaps, Clark.

Clark: More mishaps? You mean you two have been continuing the kidnapping without me? Well, isn't that just fine! Listen Agnes, I know I never wanted the job, but when I accepted it, I assumed you had full confidence in me. And now I find that you two have been going behind my back. Tuh!

Agnes: We thought you were with Halifax. Edwin said you were inconsolable.

Clark: Oh, I was. Absolutely, I was. But that didn't mean I was quitting the job. We Caraways have more honor than that. When we give our word, we give our word. If I tell you I'm going to kidnap your grandmother, I'm darn well going to do it.

Edwin: **(Inspecting the body in the wheelbarrow)** But, Clark, this isn't even a woman.

Clark: Hmm? Oh, him. No, he isn't Agnes' grandmother. Another mistake, I'm afraid.

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Agnes: For goodness sake.

Clark: Yes, I made a bloomer all right. Now that I get a good look at him, he looks nothing like a grandmother. In fact, I think he's just one of the depressed.

(Gwen groans ruefully.)

Arthur: Well, I hope you three kidnappers have learned a valuable lesson. If you're stupid enough to plan a kidnapping, don't trust a couple of other idiots to do it. Not only do you make things worse for the rest of us by sabotaging perfectly good charities, but you also end up with four unconscious bodies on your hands.

Clark: **(Laughs to himself)** "Four." Ha!

(Agnes, Edwin, Gwen, and Arthur all stare at Clark. Clark quails under their gaze.)

Gwen: Is there something funny about the number four, Clark?

Clark: No, not particularly.

Agnes: Good, because the way you laughed made it seem as though —

Arthur: — as though there were more than four bodies.

Clark: More than four bodies? Ha! Of course there aren't more than four. Do you see anymore? One, two, three, and the cook in the shed. That makes four.

Edwin: **(Pointing off stage left)** Hold on. Who's sticking out from behind that tree?

Clark: Oh, that. Yes, what I meant to say is that there are four here — in this relative vicinity — not including the one I hid behind that tree.

Arthur: So they're five?!

Clark: In this broader vicinity?

Agnes: **(Angrily spreading her arms out)** In this whole wretched vicinity!

Clark: In that case, nine.

Gwen: Nine?!

Clark: That I'm aware of.

Edwin: You, hypocrite! You got after us for just these two!

Clark: I never said I was innocent.

Agnes: Do any of them happen to be my grandmother?

Clark: Uh — No. But they'd probably make good grandparents someday.

Arthur: Why'd you do it, Clark?

Clark: Oh, I don't know. I guess the attack on Halifax by Agnes' grandmother did a number on me. All I could think about was getting revenge. I was so blinded by my own rage that I began seeing grandmas in places where there weren't any. Everyone I came across looked like her, so I incapacitated them all, convinced that the entire time I was doing the Lord's work. But when all was said and done, I looked around me, and it was as if I were standing among the ruins of Carthage.

Gwen: Not my depressed!

Clark: Yes, I'm afraid you're fresh out of them...But hey! There's a silver lining. At least you can say that they aren't feeling depressed anymore.

Arthur: I doubt they're feeling much of anything, Clark.

Clark: Beggars can't be choosers.

Edwin: **(Thoughtfully)** You know, there might actually be a silver lining for us too, Agnes. Think about it. Now that there are nine out of the way, the next person we knock out is even more likely to be your grandmother. It's like Edison said about light bulbs. We have not so much as failed to kidnap your grandmother as much as we have discovered nine ways of kidnapping someone else.

Agnes: Kidnapping is not a process of elimination, you pear-shaped oaf!

Barbara: **(From offstage)** Gwen! Oh, Gwen! Where are you? I'm back.

Gwen: **(Panicked)** Oh no! It's Mrs. Dalliard! She's back! Quick! Get rid of the bodies.

Arthur: What? All nine?!

Clark: Oh, there's no need, I've already hid about half of them.

Gwen: Just get rid of whatever's left, but do it quickly! Agnes, please help me distract your mother.

Agnes:

All right! All right! You three get to work.

(Agnes and Gwen exit stage right. Tabs Close.)

Scene 4 — Lawn in Front of the Garden Shed

(Tabs Open. Clark, Edwin, and Arthur are pushing their weight against the garden shed door.)

Clark: Why won't this thing shut?

Edwin: Someone's leg is sticking out.

Arthur: Well, tuck it in then!

(Edwin pushes the leg into the garden shed. The door still fails to latch as Arthur and Clark continue to push their weight into it.)

Clark: **(Straining)** Gosh! They're packed in there like sardines.

Arthur: **(Straining)** That's because you just chucked them in there without any organisation. If you had only listened to me and we put the large ones on the bottom and stacked the smaller ones on top, this wouldn't be a problem.

Clark: Well I didn't think we had the time to sift through them slowly like they were memories in a scrapbook. In case you forgot, Arthur, we're in a hurry.

(After one final push, the garden shed door finally latches shut.)

Edwin: **(Picking up a shoe)** Wait! Someone dropped a shoe. **(Moves to open the door.)**

Arthur: Edwin, don't! You open that door and we'll be buried in an avalanche of depression.

Edwin: But what do I do with it?

Clark: Just get rid of it. It's not worth opening Pandora's box.

Gwen: **(From offstage)** Wait, Mrs. Dalliard, where are you going?

(Barbara enters stage right with Gwen and Agnes in tow.)

Agnes: Yes, mother, what's the rush?

Barbara: **(Looking back over her shoulder)** I'm just going to throw this cloth over the table, dear. Why do you two sound so worked up?

(Edwin pushes the shoe into Arthur's hands. Arthur forces the shoe into Clark's hands. Clark pushes it back into Edwin's hands. The three continue in this fashion.)

Barbara: **(Unfurling the tablecloth)** I really do apologise for taking so long. You wouldn't believe how difficult it was to find the right tablecloth in town. And you know how important tablecloths are. I wasn't going to let Millicent Durns think we were some second-rate charity just because we served donuts on bare tables. Ha!

(As Barbara turns around to see Arthur, Clark, and Edwin, Edwin finally chucks the shoe off stage left, Walter cries painfully from offstage.)

Barbara: Where is Millicent by the way? Have any of you seen her?

(Clark and Arthur lean dramatically on the garden shed door as if deep in thought. Edwin squats and poses like the Thinker.)

Arthur: **(Exaggerated)** Hmm...Mrs. Durns? Can't say I've ever heard the name before. Have you, Clark?

Clark: **(Exaggerated)** You know, I think she's that apothecary, though I haven't seen any apothecaries around. Have you, Edwin?

Edwin: **(Exaggerated)** I don't even know what an apothecary is. Do you, Agnes?

Agnes: **(Confused)** What?

Barbara: **(Clears throat)** Mrs. Durns is not an apothecary. She is one of the country's most renowned philanthropists.

Edwin: **(Crossing his arms)** Well, I don't know what that is either.

Barbara: **(Turning to Agnes)** You've picked a clever one, haven't you dear? **(Turning to Gwen)** By the way, Gwen, where are all the depressed?

Gwen: The depressed? Oh, uh, there aren't any here.

Barbara: What? No depressed?

Gwen: Nope.

Barbara: No downtrodden?

(Gwen shakes her head.)

Barbara: No down-on-their luck?

(Gwen shakes her head.)

Barbara: Not even a single discouraged farmer?

Agnes: They must've had their fill of donuts.

Barbara: Nonsense, Agnes. This is Pennsylvania.

(Walter enters stage left, holding a shoe in one hand and rubbing his forehead with the other.)

Walter: Who on earth is chucking their shoes around?

Barbara: What are you talking about, Walter?

Walter: Someone hove their shoe at me while I was taking a nap.

Edwin: **(Chuckles)** Well, it can't be one of us. We're all wearing our shoes.

Walter: **(Reading the inside label of the shoe)** Property of P. Haverty. Who's P. Haverty?

Barbara: Why, that's Phil Haverty. He's been struggling with low self-esteem. He told me he intended on coming today.

Walter: Well, you can tell Phil that his self-esteem doesn't give him the excuse to throw his dirty shoes at people.

Barbara: Gwen, how is Phil's shoe here if no one came?

Gwen: What? Oh — uh...

Agnes: When Gwen said that no one was here, she meant that there was no one here *anymore*.

Gwen: Yes, that's right. Plenty of the depressed came today, including Phil, but everyone's gone home by now.

Barbara: Already?

Clark: Their depression was fixed just like that! **(Snaps)**
(Edwin nods enthusiastically in agreement.)

Barbara: I'm sorry, who are you again?

Clark: Me? Oh, I'm Clark. I'm —

Arthur: He's one of the depressed.
(Edwin nods somberly in agreement. Arthur elbows Clark.)

Clark: Yes, I'm depressed all right. **(Leans tragically on the garden shed door.)**

Arthur: **(Clears throat)** He means he was depressed until he was cured by the donuts.

Clark: **(Standing up straight)** Yes, that's what I meant. Those donuts changed my life.

Arthur: Gwen did an amazing job! You should be very proud of her.

Barbara: **(Suspiciously)** Yes, I'm sure she did, but I'm still confused. How did Phil leave a shoe behind?

Agnes: Oh, mother, you know these rustic types. They can't keep their feet contained. They're always strolling around in their bare feet.

Walter: **(Revolted)** Strolling around in their bare feet?

Arthur: Of course! It's practically a country custom!

Barbara: Phil would never do such a thing. The man's allergic to grass!

Walter: **(Angrily)** And that still doesn't explain why his shoes are falling from the sky!

Clark: A sign from heaven. Who are we to question it?

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Edwin: Maybe we should wait and see if any more of Phil comes down. **(Glances towards the sky)**

(Everyone else follows suit, though with varying degrees of confusion. Halifax limps onto stage left, his arm in a sling.)

Clark: Halifax! What are you doing up? You should be in bed.

Halifax: Excuse me, sir. I thought I would conceal myself in the garden shed.

Clark: What? You will do no such thing, Halifax. It... it isn't proper.

Halifax: Yes, sir. It's just that, under the circumstances, I thought—

Clark: No, Halifax, I forbid it.

Halifax: But, sir. She's coming after me.

Clark: What? You mean—

Halifax: Yes, sir, she's tracked my scent!

Clark: Get behind us, Halifax! There's no way she can take us all at once.

(Halifax retreats behind Clark, Arthur, and Edwin.)

Walter: Who are you talking about?

Clark: Your blasted mother, that's who!

Barbara: Prudence? Your butler talks as if she's a rabid animal.

Halifax: With all due respect, madam, she is!

Barbara: Preposterous! She may be a little rough around the edges but she'd never attack the domestic staff.

Agnes: That's not true, mother. You remember what happened to our last two butlers.

Walter: They were asking for it. Mother isn't really a danger to anyone.

Clark: Well, just you wait and see.

(Prudence slowly walks on stage. Clark shields Halifax with his own body.)

Prudence: **(Meekly)** Oh, hello, everyone. Happy Easter!

Clark: Back you barbarous brute! It's September!

Walter: Don't talk to my mother that way! She's just confused.

Prudence: **(Holding out hard candy)** Would anyone like a butterscotch?

(Edwin reaches for a sweet, but before he can take one, Clark slaps the sweets out of Prudence's hands.)

Clark: You can drop the sweet old lady charade. We will not fall for it!

Prudence: Are these your friends, Agnes? Oh, how nice.

Gwen: Halifax, are you sure she attacked you?

Halifax: Yes, Miss Burgess. She is capable of the most extreme cruelty.

Clark: Don't tell me you're succumbing to her charms, Gwen.

Prudence: **(Poking Walter in the side)** You've lost weight, Walter. You need to be eating.

(Miss Bunkle groans from inside the garden shed.)

Barbara: What was that noise?

Prudence: You see, Walter. I can hear your stomach grumbling.

Walter: Stop it, Mother, that wasn't me. It sounded as if it came from the garden shed.

Arthur: From the garden shed? Why would anything be coming from the garden shed?
(Casually leans on the doorframe.)

Edwin: It was probably just a passing breeze. **(Leans on the doorknob and inadvertently twists it.)**

(The door swings open. Miss Bunkle, Phil, Millicent, a female extra, and a male extra tumble out onto the stage floor. Walter and Barbara watch,

speechless. Edwin shrugs. Arthur scratches his forehead. Clark bites his lower lip. Gwen buries her head in her hands. Ignoring everything, Prudence unwraps a hard candy and eats it happily.)

Walter: Well, I'll be blessed!

Barbara: **(Flabbergasted)** Phil? Miss Ferguson? Mr. Glendale? What — How — Why?

(Miss Bunkle groans again. Arthur, Gwen, Agnes, Edwin, Clark, and Arthur look at one another nervously. In a moment of inspiration, Agnes slowly puts her hands on her hips and inclines her head towards Prudence.)

Agnes: **(Exaggerated frustration)** Grandma!

Prudence: Yes, dear.

Agnes: **(Shaking her finger at Prudence)** What were those people doing in the garden shed?

Walter: What?!

Barbara: **(Amazed)** You don't actually think that she put them there?

Clark: Aha! There's your proof! First she attacked my butler, and then all of your guests.

Gwen: **(Fake surprise)** Oh my goodness! So that's where everyone from the charity went. **(Pointing at Prudence)** She's been storing them in the garden shed.

Arthur: **(To Prudence)** You ought to be ashamed of yourself. This is no way a woman your age should behave! For shame!

Edwin: **(Rubs his forefinger with his other forefinger.)** Bad grandmother!

Prudence: Oh dear, have I broken wind?

Clark: Far worse than that. You have broken the law!

Walter: No, not my mother. She can't have done this. She wouldn't.

Clark: There's no point living in denial, Judge Dalliard. Your mother has probably hidden bodies all over the property. Why, just look behind that tree. **(Exits stage left and immediately drags the body of an extra back onto stage left)** And here's one in this leaf pile. **(Pulls in another extra's body from off stage right.)** It's appalling! There's probably one tucked under the donut table and another one —

(Gwen grabs Clark's arm and shakes her head at him subtly.)

Clark: Yes, well...you get my point. I wouldn't stop looking until you've found at least nine!

(Miss Bunkle rolls over.)

Halifax: Bridget! **(Helps Miss Bunkle to her feet)** She got you too? Oh, where does the violence end?

Miss Bunkle: What? What's going on?

Halifax: Don't worry, good madame. You're safe now.

Miss Bunkle: Who are you?

Halifax: Don't you recognise me? It's me, Craig.

Miss Bunkle: **(Confused)** Craig?

Clark: **(Disgusted)** Craig?

Miss Bunkle: What's happened to me? Where am I?

Halifax: It's all right. Everything will make sense once I've explained it. Come along, let's get you something to drink.

(Halifax escorts Miss Bunkle off stage left.)

Walter: I just never would've thought that my mother was capable of such destruction. How could I be so blind?

Arthur: Well, that's where you went wrong. By underestimating her, you have failed to honor your mother. And that's one of the commandments.

Clark: If you ask me. Those who can't keep their mothers from misbehaving don't deserve to have one.

Barbara: But I don't understand. Why would she do this?

Agnes: She probably acted out of fear. You told her the depressed were coming after all.

Prudence: Depressed? Where? Someone hand me my knitting needles!

Walter: She's right, Barbara. We drove her to this. This is our fault!

Barbara: Oh, Walter! Think of the disgrace. We'll have to resign from our positions. We may even have to relocate.

Agnes: **(Snaps her fingers)** That won't be necessary, Mother! No one needs to know what grandmother has done this day!

Barbara: But what are you going to do? How are we going to explain this to everyone?

Agnes: Edwin has a plan that will fix everything.

Edwin: What?

Agnes: But he will only follow through with it on one condition.

Edwin: I will?

Agnes: Yes, Edwin. Didn't you want to ask my parents something?

Edwin: I did?

Agnes: Clark, can you remind him?

Clark: Edwin, didn't you want their blessing to marry Agnes?

Edwin: Oh yeah!

Walter: Huh?

Barbara: Can we talk about this later, Agnes?

Agnes: I'm sorry, Mother. Edwin is adamant.

Edwin: That's right! Bless me, confound it!

Agnes: It's either you give him your blessing or grandmother goes to jail. Can you imagine the embarrassment, Father?

Walter: Both options are embarrassing!

Agnes: Then you'll have to pick your poison, but choose quickly. Some of them are beginning to wake up!

(Some of the bodies begin to stir.)

Walter: **(Angrily)** Oh fine! Marry our daughter!

Edwin: **(Closing in for a hug)** Father!

(Before he can reach Walter, Clark restrains Edwin by the back of his collar.)

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Walter: Just clear my mother's name!

Agnes: Leave it to Edwin! Now, get grandmother far away from here before everyone starts waking up and pointing fingers!

Walter: Come on, Mother!

Prudence: Is it dinner already?

(Walter and Barbara escort Prudence off stage left.)

Gwen: So what's the plan, Edwin? What are we going to do with all of these unconscious people? **(Gestures at the stirring bodies)**

Edwin: I don't know. I assumed Agnes had the plan.

Gwen: Agnes?

Agnes: I haven't figured it out yet.

Gwen: What?! So, we just blamed your grandmother for our misdeeds, only to end up back where we started with a bunch of bodies on the ground and no explanation.

Edwin: We're not back where we started. Agnes and I can get married now.

Gwen: Yes, and your wedding will be behind bars once we're arrested for knocking out half the county and storing them in a garden shed.

Arthur: Hold on. Did you guys hear what Halifax was just saying?

Clark: That he answers to Craig? Yes, I'm still recovering.

Arthur: No, not that. Miss Bunkle couldn't remember anything. **(Gestures at the remaining unconscious bodies)** They probably won't remember anything either.

Edwin: So what? They're going to wonder what happened to them.

Arthur: We'll just feed them some story.

Edwin: What story?

Arthur: I don't know. A story that makes all of this look intentional. A story that—

Gwen: Leans into our mistakes and owns them.

Arthur: Exactly!

(Clark nods approvingly.)

Agnes: **(Together)** What?

Edwin: **(Together)** What?

Arthur: Gwen, how were you going to end the event today?

Gwen: With the communal self-care meditation, that's it!

Edwin: The what?

Gwen: The meditation! We sit together and, with the help of some breathing exercises, we liberate ourselves from our negative emotions.

Clark: **(Revolted)** Sounds pretty drippy if you ask me.

Gwen: Oh, it is! You feel like a total schmuck, but the depressed really get into it. And anyway, that's not why I bring it up. We can use the meditation to veil the fact that everyone's unconscious. Don't you see? When they wake up, they'll find themselves surrounded by all of us meditating peacefully. Naturally, they'll assume they just fell asleep.

Agnes: So what?

Gwen: They'll be just like Edwin when he falls asleep in church.

Edwin: What?

Gwen: They won't suspect a thing because they'll be too embarrassed to even admit they've been unconscious.

Edwin: Hold on! I do not fall asleep in church!

Gwen: You see? He can't even admit it. I rest my case.

(Edwin looks confused.)

Arthur: It's brilliant, Gwen! Just tell us what we need to do.

Gwen: **(Grabbing the arm of one of the unconscious bodies)** We've got to arrange so they look like they've been meditating. **(Drags the body away from the others.)** Help me put them into nice neat rows.

(Clark, Arthur, Edwin, Agnes, and Gwen begin to drag and roll the bodies into rows. Edwin trips on a body and collapses on another.)

Agnes: For goodness sake, Edwin! Be careful!

Edwin: **(Picking himself up and addressing the body)** I do beg your pardon!

Gwen: Now you're stepping on Phil!

Edwin: What? **(Looks down at his feet)** Oh!

(Edwin backs up and bumps into Arthur, causing him to drop the unconscious body he's carrying.)

Arthur: Watch where you're going!

(Arthur pushes Edwin. Edwin trips on another body and tumbles to the floor.)

Clark: Edwin, please!

(Hiking up his trousers as he stands, Edwin finally manages to help Arthur move a body. They plop it down on the stage floor face down, its arms and legs splayed in random directions.)

Gwen: Not like that, you nincompoops. They're supposed to look like they've been meditating, not like they've been hit by a truck.

Clark: You need the artistic touch, boys. See? Mine looks like he's at a Roman symposium.

(Clark proudly steps aside, revealing an unconscious body lying on its side and resting its head in one hand.)

Clark: Put him up in a toga and he'll look just like Cicero.

Gwen: We don't have time to play dress-up, Clark. Just organise them into rows. They'll be awake at any moment.

(Tabs Close.)

Scene 5 — Lawn

(Tabs open. Agnes, Clark, Edwin, Gwen, and Arthur are standing among the unconscious bodies of Phil, Millicent, and the extras, now organised into neat rows.)

Arthur: They're waking up. Get into position!

(Agnes, Clark, Edwin, and Arthur lie down on the stage floor intermingled with the unconscious bodies. Gwen sits crossed legged, facing them all.)

Gwen: **(Eyes closed)** Now, everyone, inhale and exhale...In and out...Push out all of that negative energy and feel the fresh air course through your lungs.

(Agnes, Clark, Edwin, and Arthur breathe in unison. One by one the unconscious, except Millicent, begin to wake up and open their eyes, dazed.)

Gwen: Now breathe in and hold it.

(Agnes, Clark, Edwin, and Arthur inhale deeply.)

Gwen: Do you feel that? Do you feel that pressure?

Clark: **(strained)** Oh, I feel it!

Gwen: That's your sadness, bucking in its stall like a wild bronco. It was never meant to be tamed. Turn it loose! Let it roam the frontier.

(Some of the extras sit up and look around confused.)

Gwen: And... exhale.

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(Agnes, Clark, Edwin, and Arthur exhale in unison.)

Gwen: As you breathe out, feel all of that anger and frustration leave your body and repeat after me. "Skedaddle, Depression! Ride free and ride home!"

(Agnes, Clark, Edwin, and Arthur repeat. Some of the extras mumble the words, still confused.)

Gwen: **(Opens her eyes and stands)** Well that concludes our meditation— the final activity for the day.

Clark: Gosh, that was bracing. I feel like a new man.

Arthur: **(Meekly raises his hand)** Instructor Gwen, I may have fallen asleep for a little bit.

Gwen: **(Places hands on hips)** Oh, Arthur. I specifically warned not to do that. You wasted all that time and healing.

Arthur: **(Shamefully)** I'm sorry.

Gwen: **(Sternly)** Did anyone else fall asleep?

(The extras and Phil shake their heads sheepishly.)

Gwen: Good, you better not have. Well, thank you all for joining us today at Donuts for the Depressed. And remember: don't let anything stop you from filling the void in your life. Just because donuts exist with gaping holes within them, it doesn't mean you have to.

Clark: Here! Here!

Edwin: Amen.

(Clark, Agnes, Edwin, and Arthur begin clapping. Phil and the extras join in on the applause under obligation. Clark, Agnes, Edwin, and Arthur all stand up. Phil and the extras stand up, but are unbalanced and almost topple over. Arthur, Edwin, and Clark usher the extras towards stage right. They stagger and falter at every step.)

Clark: Great work today!

Edwin: Congratulations!

Agnes: One foot in front of the other, Diane.

(Edwin and Clark escort the depressed off stage right. Arthur helps Phil to his feet. Mrs. Durns finally regains consciousness.)

Millicent: **(Groans)** Oh — where am I?

Gwen: You're at Donuts for the Depressed, but I'm afraid the event is over.

Millicent: (Sees Gwen) It's you! What did you do to me?

Gwen: Well we tried to cure you of your melancholia, but judging from the amount of drool on your face, you've been napping for most of the meditation.

Millicent: Meditation? What on earth are you talking about?

Gwen: Agnes, were we not just meditating?

Agnes: Of course!

Gwen: And Phil, did some of us fail to stay awake?

Phil: Hmm? Oh, not me! I stayed awake for the entire thing!

Gwen: There! You see?

Millicent: B—but what about that doctor?

Agnes: Doctor? What doctor?

Millicent: That depression doctor — Dr. Pikney!

(Arthur hides his face from Millicent.)

Millicent: He made his patients eat grass-covered donuts, listen to opera, and knock themselves unconscious on the garden benches!

Agnes: (Kneels by Millicent) Oh, Mrs. Durns... Sweet, naive Mrs. Durns. You were obviously dreaming.

Millicent: Dreaming?

Gwen: Of course! Does any of that sound like a real charity?

Phil: Hold on! I remember that stuff happening too—

(Arthur elbows Phil in the stomach. Phil grunts.)

Arthur: Look, Stanley! An employment office!

(Arthur pushes Phil off stage right.)

Gwen: **(Coughs)** As we were saying, Mrs. Durns. It was all just a dream.

Millicent: You mean none of that was real?

(Agnes and Gwen nod enthusiastically. Millicent considers for a moment, and then sighs.)

Millicent: Oh, what a relief! I thought I was going mad.

Gwen: No, Mrs. Durns. It was just your depression.

Agnes: **(Crossing her arms)** Maybe next time you won't sleep through the treatment!

Millicent: What? Oh, I'm so sorry.

(Millicent stands, but staggers. Gwen catches her. Edwin and Clark enter stage right.)

Agnes: What kind of person falls asleep in the middle of a charity? I mean, really! Here Gwen is trying to care for those in need and all you can do is roll in with your fancy scarves and snore up a storm during our quiet time.

Millicent: **(Appalled)** Did I really snore? Oh, what a fool I've made of myself. Here, I know it isn't much, but please take it as a sign of my deepest apologies.

(Millicent procures cheque book and scribbles quickly into it before ripping out a check and handing it to Gwen. Gwen's eyes grow large at the sight of the check.)

Agnes: **(Grabbing the check from Gwen)** Ha! Is that all?

Millicent: Oh, you're right! Where are my manners?

(Millicent writes another check and hands it to Gwen. Gwen staggers.)

Millicent: Now, I don't suppose you could just push me in the general direction of the station.

Clark: **(Grabbing Millicent by the shoulders and turning her so that she faces stage right)** If you just continuously trip in that direction, you'll eventually hit it. Just watch out for the rails.

Millicent: Thank you. Good day.

(Millicent stumbles off stage right.)

Gwen: **(Turning to Arthur)** We did it, Arthur! We actually did it!

Arthur: You did it, Gwen. That meditation stuff was some of the finest manipulation I've ever witnessed!

Gwen: **(Flattered)** Oh, stop.

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Arthur: I know what I have to look forward to in our marriage.

Gwen: What can I say? I've learned from the best.

Arthur: You don't have to say that.

Gwen: I mean it. Come on, let's go show this check to Mrs. Dalliard. **(Turns to Agnes)** And thanks for all the help, Agnes. I'm sorry if my charity interfered with your kidnapping.

Agnes: And I'm sorry if my kidnapping ruined your charity. A round of tennis later?

(Gwen nods. Arthur and Gwen exit stage left.)

Clark: **(Sighs)** Golly! If that doesn't warm your heart, I don't know what will? Am I right, Edwin? **(Puts arm around Edwin's shoulders.)**

(Edwin nods dumbly.)

Clark: I dare say, everything has worked out nicely. You and Agnes finally have the parents' approval to marry and Arthur and Gwen have the donation they've always wanted. What would old Billy Shakespeare say?

Edwin: All's well that ends well.

Clark: Exactly, Edwin! The ends justify the means.

Agnes: **(Turning abruptly on Clark)** If you think this absolves you of kidnapping everyone but my grandmother, you are deluding yourself, Clark. In fact, I have half a mind to send this letter **(Procures envelope)** to your mother immediately.

(Clark gulps.)

Agnes: But seeing as you did sacrifice your own butler and nearly killed the cook, I cannot deny that you were committed to the cause. So in the spirit of charity, here. **(Hands Clark envelope.)**

Clark: Thank you, Agnes. **(Tears envelope into pieces.)**

Agnes: Let's go, Edwin. We had better get Father's blessing in writing before he tries to back out of it.

(Agnes and Edwin exit stage left. Halifax enters stage left.)

Clark: Ah, Halifax, you'll be happy to learn that I am no longer under Agnes' tyrannical thumb. You're looking at a self-governed man.

Halifax: Congratulations, sir.

Clark: By the way, how is Miss Bunkle?

Halifax: The ringing in her ears has stopped, but she is having some difficulty remembering her childhood.

Clark: Too bad!

Halifax: Not as bad as one might be inclined to think, sir. Miss Bunkle had one of those disappointing childhoods.

Clark: Ah, so getting attacked by Agnes' grandmother was a blessing in disguise.

Halifax: I would not go so far as to suggest that, sir. The woman has suffered.

Clark: **(Guilty)** Yes, I suppose you're right.

Halifax: Miss Bunkle is also under the impression that it was not the elder Mrs. Dalliard, but *you* who attacked her, sir.

Clark: What?!

Halifax: She claims to have witnessed a flash of seersucker before a sack was thrown over her head.

Clark: You mean, she —

Halifax: Yes, sir.

Clark: And you know that I —

Halifax: Yes, sir.

Clark: **(Rubs the back of his head)** Ah, I see. And what did you tell her?

Halifax: I told her that she must be mistaken, sir — that you would never intentionally harm someone unless you had very good reason.

Clark: **(Smiling weakly)** You're a good man, Halifax.

Halifax: Thank you, sir.

Clark: You know what? Why don't I go back to the city, and you stay on here for a while and take a few days off?

Halifax: A few days off, sir?

Clark: You're right! Make it a week. No! Two weeks! It's about time I learn how to de-lint myself and you can stay here to help Miss Bunkle piece her childhood back together.

Halifax: That is extremely thoughtful of you, sir. **(Inclines Head)** Thank you.

(Halifax turns to leave.)

Clark: Oh, before you go. I have one last question.

Halifax: Sir?

Clark: What's this business about you being called Craig?

Halifax: Craig is my Christian name.

Clark: Really? Sounds pretty ungodly to me...Is it short for Craigory?

Halifax: No, sir, though I believe the name is of Irish origin.

Clark: Ah, that would explain it. Could I call you, Craig? I don't think it shall ever replace Halifax, but perhaps I'll throw it in now and again for the sake of variety.

Halifax: If you wish, sir.

Clark: And maybe you could call me Clark. You've earned it, after all.

Halifax: Thank you, sir.

Clark: Well, goodbye, uh... Craig.

Halifax: Goodbye **(Clears throat)** Clark.

Clark: **(Clutching his stomach)** Let's never do that again, Halifax. I about lost my lunch.

Halifax: And I too, sir.

Clark: Yes, well, I'll go splash some water into my face and you go have a lie down.

Halifax: Right away, sir.

(Clark exits stage right. Halifax exits stage left. Tabs Close. The End.)