

THE HELLENWORTHS' UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE

by
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Characters

EDENBERRY HELLENWORTH F, 50's
 DOMINIC HELLENWORTH / DOC NICK M, 50's
 JENNIFER HELLENWORTH F, early 20's
 SNUGGLES MASTERSON M, 20's
 DETECTIVE LEO SNARK M, 40-60's
 GAIL HELLENWORTH F, early 30's

DELILAH F, 40-60's
 DOC PETE M, 30-60's
 NURSE SARA F, 20-30's
 NURSE ELLEN F, 20-60's
 NURSE JACK M, 20-40's
 ANESTHESIOLOGIST WILBUR M, 30-80's

A HOUSE 2-story colonial
 A HOSPITAL Huge
 A GARDEN Quaint and tidy
 A THEATRE Dark

A TOILET Porcelain; standard, non-commercial model
 A DEAD BODY In an early stage of decomposition

Setting

A suburb near a metropolitan area that contains a well-equipped hospital
 and
 the hospital

Time

Last week

Notes

The pace is farce-like fast. Never rushed. The overall rapidness can serve to underscore the moments of pause.

Characters

EDENBERRY: Her dialogue is fluttery and seems at times to be stream-of-consciousness.

DOMINIC: Reserved, perhaps seems a bit aloof.

SNUGGLES: Not too bright but has a heart of gold.

SNARK: Deft, devoid of emotion except a generous dose of black humor.

Set and scenes

Scene changes should be as instantaneous as possible. Suggestions: 1) Divide up the space on the stage; 2) Set each scene in full only once, and when the scene is revisited, show a minimalist version of it; 3) have all scenes be minimalist to begin with.

The fourth wall is crossed exactly twice: during SNARK's first scene, and during the play's final line.

The first three Operating Room scenes (Scenes 2 and 4 and 7) turn out to be EDENBERRY's dreams. (The fourth OR scene – Scene 17 – is real). So something about these three scenes (e.g. lighting or the general behavior of the actors) should feel different from the others. And generally, Scene 17 – the final OR scene – should perhaps seem a bit more serious. But it *should not be suggested to the AUDIENCE during these scenes that they are dreams.*

The Hellenworths' Uncertainty Principle

Act I

Scene 1

The Players:

DOMINIC HELLENWORTH

EDENBERRY HELLENWORTH

Scene: Dawn on a clear Monday in early June. The backyard of a house in the suburbs near Manhattan. Birds chirp. The rear facade of the house stands UC, with rear door and stoop UR facing driveway. A newspaper rests on stoop. Driveway lines the house on the right and leads upstage, presumably to the street. Three windows, from L, C, and R, on the first floor, face the yard; the narrow UC center window betrays a light inside. There is one window, UC on the second floor. The side of a garage is visible DR. A small garden plot lies DL near a pine tree (or a branch of a pine tree). A stethoscope dangles from branch of pine tree.

At Rise: Back door swings open as DOMINIC HELLENWORTH steps outside and retrieves newspaper. He wears green surgical scrubs and holds a coffee cup. Walks deliberately; seems to be looking for something. Approaches garden. Sips coffee. Scans garden. Spies stethoscope dangling from pine tree branch.

DOMINIC

Ah! (*Grabs stethoscope. Returns to garden and examines a plant leaf. Glances at newspaper.*)

EDENBERRY (*Off*)

Oh! Gh! Oh, damn it!

(*Sound of toilet flushing. Sound of water running.*)

Dominic, are you watching the tea?

(*DOMINIC hears her and slowly ambles back toward back door.*)

Dominic?

DOMINIC

I'm out here, coming.

(*Sound of metal and porcelain clinking. DOMINIC re-enters house. Off:*)

Nightmares again last night?

EDENBERRY (*Off*)

Did I wake you? I'm sorry, Darling.

DOMINIC (*Off*)

't's all right.

EDENBERRY (*Off*)

They're such strange dreams, almost like premonitions. Anything interesting in the paper?

DOMINIC (*Off*)

Doesn't look like it.

(Tea kettle begins to whistle and is then silenced. More clinking. Newspaper rustles.)

Looks like raccoons are up to something out there.

EDENBERRY (*Off*)

No! Goodness, again?

DOMINIC (*Off*)

It's all right, I'll take care of it.

EDENBERRY (*Off*)

Oh! But aren't you going in to work? *(Sound of tea being poured into a cup.)*

DOMINIC (*Off*)

I can run by Hardware Heaven on my way home.

EDENBERRY (*Off*)

Oh, would you? Would you get toilet paper, too? That would be just delightful, Dominic. But if you're trapping the animals, set them outside the garden, you won't disturb the garden, now will you?

DOMINIC (*Off*)

Course not.

EDENBERRY (*Off*)

Those plants look funny to me lately, but what do I know with my eyesight going. I wish I could simply know what they look like anyway when I'm not looking at them. Goodness, me, now, would you just look at me! Delilah will be here in half an hour, and here I am in my robe as though this were any other Monday.

DOMINIC (*Off*)

Far as I can tell, this is any other Monday.

EDENBERRY (*Off*)

Nonsense, how can you know, the day's scarcely begun yet.

DOMINIC (*Off*)

Well, I hope it'll pan out to have been any other Monday; I don't have the strength for any other kind of Monday this week.

EDENBERRY (*Off*)

And that buzzing. What is that? Do you hear that?

DOMINIC (*Off*)

Hear what?

EDENBERRY (*Off*)

That buzzing! (*Pause.*)

DOMINIC (*Off*)

No.

EDENBERRY (*Off*)

Goodness, do I have time to take a nap this morning? Look at the time! Look at that, would you! When did that happen?

(Sounds of hasty clean-up, and of keys jingling.)

DOMINIC (*Off*)

See you in a bit, Berry.

(Appears again on stoop.)

EDENBERRY (*Off*)

Oh, thank you, Dear, did I remember to remind you about toilet paper?

DOMINIC

Yup.

EDENBERRY

And you'll change the roll, right? You won't make me touch that filthy toilet?

DOMINIC

It's clean enough for a toilet, Berry.

EDENBERRY

It's a toilet. Filthy thing.

DOMINIC

(Appears on doorstep; exits up driveway.)

Have a good day, Berry.

EDENBERRY (*Off*)

Dominic, are these washed?

Scene 2

The Players:

DOC PETE

DOC NICK (DOMINIC)

NURSE ELLEN

NURSE JACK

NURSE SARA

ANESTHESIOLOGIST WILBUR

PATIENT

Scene: The same Monday, morning, say 7:30. An Operating Room. Entrance UL, with window in the door. Sink DR. Operating table stands DC; a second table with tray of medical instruments lies UR of operating table, and cabinet with many drawers stands UR of that. A conglomeration of blipping computer screens and a small desk are UR; this is ANESTHESIOLOGIST WILBUR'S station. Rear exit UR.

Clock, which is able to indicate 24-hour time, on UC wall. This clock runs in real time.

At Rise: PATIENT lies on operating table, head draped so that only the scalp incision site will be visible to the doctors (The incision site *can* also be visible to the AUDIENCE, but that's not necessary). DOC NICK stands sipping coffee. NURSE ELLEN and NURSE SARA pull on gloves. ANESTH WILBUR types on a keyboard as he watches one of the numerous monitors. An air of efficiency and energy pervades the room.

Note: This scene (and Scenes 4 and 7) turn out to be EDENBERRY's dreams. (The fourth OR scene – Scene 17 – is real). While it should not be suggested to the audience that this is a dream, something about this scene (e.g. lighting or the general behavior of the actors) should feel different from the other scenes, particularly Scene 17.

NURSE SARA

(Sorting surgical instruments)

Yankee Stadium? That sounds so exciting!

NURSE ELLEN

(Bustles around, organizing)

Yeah, well, I can think of more exciting things.

NURSE SARA

Did you go too?

NURSE ELLEN

No, he said it was guys-only. I took the kids to help me pick out paint. He was asleep on the couch when we got back.

NURSE SARA

So he didn't go to the game?

NURSE ELLEN

He didn't have to. He found one on tv.

NURSE SARA

But that's not the same.

NURSE ELLEN

Exactly. He didn't have to leave the couch.

NURSE SARA (*Laughs*)

Okay, we won't need the cavetron for an hour.

(Enter DOC PETE. To DOC PETE)

Good morning.

DOC PETE

Morning Sara.

NURSE SARA (*To NURSE ELLEN*)

Ellen, where do I store it for now?

NURSE ELLEN

(Quickly surveys instrument tray)

The drawer right behind you.

(NURSE SARA opens drawer in cabinet behind instrument tray. Adjusts contents until she fits in cavetron.)

DOC PETE (*To ANESTH WILBUR*)

Wilbur, she under?

ANESTH WILBUR

She's got the valium. About to administer propofol.

DOC PETE

Great.

ANESTH WILBUR

Say, is this one a vestibular tumor?

DOC NICK

(Sips coffee, and he and DOC PETE begin to set up. To DOC PETE)

Pete, you hear Sy's going out of business?

DOC PETE

Sy's Snacks?

NURSE SARA (*To NURSE ELLEN*)

The microscope too?

NURSE ELLEN (*To NURSE SARA*)

Yes. (*NURSE SARA reorganizes drawer contents.*)

DOC NICK (*To DOC PETE*)

Yep. The new gourmet place on the corner's blown it out of the water. They'll be gone in a month.

DOC PETE

Naw. That's too bad. (*Notices DOC NICK's wristwatch.*) Say, Nick, that a Rolex?

DOC NICK

Yeah.

DOC PETE (*Whistles*)

Silver! So I take it your grant came through? Congrats.

DOC NICK

Thanks. They're real bastards over there, too. They know they're running the block now that they ran off the competition.

NURSE SARA (*To NURSE ELLEN*)

It doesn't fit.

DOC PETE (*To DOC NICK*)

Who, the gourmet place?

DOC NICK

Yeah.

NURSE SARA (*To NURSE ELLEN*)

Ellen, the microscope won't fit.

DOC PETE (*To DOC NICK*)

So where're you going to go for coffee now?

DOC NICK (*Shrugs*)

The gourmet place.

ANESTH WILBUR

Which tumor is this one, guys?

NURSE ELLEN (*To NURSE SARA*)

Then leave it out but label it.

DOC NICK (*To ANESTH WILBUR*)

Vestibular schwannoma. Of course we won't know the nature of the beast for sure until we dig in.

ANESTH WILBUR

Just curious.

DOC NICK (*To DOC PETE*)

They never listen to your order. You say black. They drop in three creams and two sugars.

DOC PETE (*To ANESTH WILBUR*)

How's she doing? Vitals stable?

ANESTH WILBUR

So-so.

DOC PETE

Will they become stable?

ANESTH WILBUR

Nope. She's as ready as she'll ever be.

DOC PETE

All right, then, we're a go for launch.

ANESTH WILBUR

Not so safe to proceed, but safer than proceeding with a tumor in her head.

DOC PETE

Yep, it's all relative.

DOC NICK

They don't even give you napkins.

DOC PETE

That's a bitch, Buddy.

NURSE JACK

(Enter, carrying rumpled clothing and a scalpel)

Morning everybody.

DOC NICK

Morning Jack. How're those intermittent wrist spasms?

NURSE JACK

Better, thanks. Been practicing on blocks of cheese; I'm getting steadier (*indicating his scalpel*).

DOC NICK

That's good practice.

NURSE JACK

Old scrubs?

NURSE SARA

Sorry, I moved the bin. Behind the door.

NURSE JACK

Thanks. (*Dumps crumpled clothing offstage R. Returns and washes hands.*)

ANESTH WILBUR

All right, good to go.

DOC NICK

Facial monitors?

ANESTH WILBUR

All in place; all responsive.

DOC PETE

Everyone good?

(Various expressions of assent. DOC PETE pulls on gloves; takes his position at operating table.)

Great. Ellen, light, please?

Scene 3:*The Players:*

EDENBERRY
 JENNIFER HELLENWORTH
 DELILAH MULROONY
 SNUGGLES MASTERSON

Scene: The same June Monday, around noon. The kitchen of the Hellenworth home. Square table sits DL, surrounded by four chairs. Sink, countertop, fridge, window R. Oven and garbage can UC. Back Door R; Hallway L. The room is clad in tan and yellow tones, and window lets in bright sunshine.

Clock, which is able to indicate 24-hour time, on UC wall. This clock runs in real-time.

At Rise: EDENBERRY and DELILAH sit at table enjoying wormwood tea and pear cake. Enter JENNIFER, briskly, through the back door, as:

EDENBERRY

So I told him, you'd never catch me dead growing marigolds. Not *dead*. Marigolds? What child's play!

DELILAH

Yes, but the raccoons wouldn't bother you anymore!

(Both women burst into giggles. EDENBERRY is taking a sip of tea, and snuffs it up her nose accidentally, which escalates the giggling.)

EDENBERRY *(Amid giggles)*

Oh! Jennifer! Hello! Well this is a surprise!

JENNIFER

Hi Mom. Classes are cancelled today. I thought I'd drive Dad to meet that patient after hours, if you want the car.

EDENBERRY

Oh, that's sweet of you to think of it. Why are classes cancelled?

JENNIFER

Snow day.

EDENBERRY

It hasn't snowed since March.

(Enter SNUGGLES through back door; a large pipe wrench protrudes from his shirt pocket.)

JENNIFER

Yeah, weird.

EDENBERRY

Jennifer, you remember Mrs. Mulroony? She's visiting for a few days from Maine, for my birthday. Playing hookie!

(DELILAH giggles.)

JENNIFER

Your birthday's Saturday.

EDENBERRY

Close enough.

JENNIFER *(To DELILAH)*

Hi. This is my boyfriend Snuggles Masterson. He does tech theatre on campus.

DELILAH

Glad to meet you.

SNUGGLES

Hi.

DELILAH

Hello!

SNUGGLES

Mind if I use your bathroom?

EDENBERRY

Of course not, not at all, down the hall to your right, do you remember?

SNUGGLES

Yeah. Thanks. *(Exit SL.)*

EDENBERRY

Sit down, Honey, you came just in time, we just finished packing teas. Can I get you a cup of wormwood?

JENNIFER *(Doesn't sit)*

No thanks. Is Dad around?

EDENBERRY

He'll be in in a moment.

JENNIFER (*To DELILAH*)

Didn't you used to live here?

DELILAH

Yes, right over on Argyle. We moved three years ago. Maine's spectacular, have you been up there?

JENNIFER (*Uninterested*)

No. It sounds really great, though.

EDENBERRY

(*Hushed, to JENNIFER*)

Is Snuggles a nickname?

JENNIFER

His mom named him after a teddy bear. Leave it.

DELILAH

Oh, it is breathtaking up there. My husband loves it, except when he gets frostbite. He just can't stand that!

(*EDENBERRY and DELILAH giggle. A tremendous metallic crash resounds from offstage.*)

EDENBERRY

What was that?

JENNIFER

Sounds like Snuggles dropped his cochlear implant again. Listen, is Dad coming in soon? I have a paper due, so I kinda need to get back.

EDENBERRY

Jennifer is writing her PhD dissertation.

DELILAH

Really? What are you studying?

JENNIFER

Scanning techniques for central nervous system pathologies in humans.

EDENBERRY (*Proudly*)

She is pursuing her PhD in Nervous People.

DELILAH

Yes, you told me. It must all be way over my head.

JENNIFER

(Absently, looking out window)

Oh, I'm sure that's not true.

DELILAH

Well, it *sounds* very lofty, at least.

JENNIFER

What's Dad doing with that trowel?

EDENBERRY

He's digging a trap. Outside the garden. He promised, *outside* the garden.

JENNIFER

What for?

EDENBERRY

He caught some animal ferreting around again. Probably raccoons. Thank goodness he noticed! With my eyesight, I could be selling my customers half-chewed leaves! Can you imagine?
(Giggles.)

JENNIFER

Jeeze, you're in a happy mood.

(A faint clang is heard off stage.)

So, Mom, did you get a chance to nap today?

EDENBERRY

I did, Honey, thank you for asking. Bizarre dreams again, though, as always.

JENNIFER

That's good.

DELILAH

Raccoons are adorable, don't you think so?

JENNIFER

So is Dad going to work?

EDENBERRY

If he finishes in time. He promised to clean the bathroom when he's through.

JENNIFER

Why don't you clean it for once?

EDENBERRY

(Giggles incredulously.)

That filthy place? Never so long as I live!

(Enter SNUGGLES SL carrying a toilet. As dialogue ensues, SNUGGLES lugs toilet across kitchen and Exits out Back Door.)

JENNIFER

(Begins to follow SNUGGLES)

Okay, so then we'll go ahead and let Dad finish digging. Maybe we'll stop by later. I'll call first.

EDENBERRY

(Sees toilet)

What are you doing?

JENNIFER

Don't worry, we'll bring it back by Thursday.

EDENBERRY *(Rising)*

What?

JENNIFER

You've got Gail's old bathroom upstairs, don't you?

EDENBERRY

Yes, but – but I've told you it's haunted!

JENNIFER

It's not haunted, Mom.

EDENBERRY

It is too! There is a distinct presence in there at times!

JENNIFER

Just 'til Thursday, Mom, we'll put it back just the way it was, I promise. Snuggles will even paint over the chipped parts.

EDENBERRY

But - ! I – You didn't take the plunger, did you? That's a brand new plunger.

JENNIFER

No, the plunger's there. Tell Dad I'll call later to see if he still wants a ride, okay? *(Exit)*

EDENBERRY *(Yelling after JENNIFER)*

Be careful of the seat cover, don't mat it down! I got that on sale at Hardware Heaven for a fraction of its original price!!

(Pauses, bewildered. Collects herself, returns to table, sits, and

fingers her teacup. With a dismissive lightness:)
Ah, kids. (*DELILAH giggles.*)

Scene 4

The Players:

DOC PETE

DOC NICK

NURSE ELLEN

NURSE JACK

NURSE SARA

ANESTHESIOLOGIST WILBUR

STUDENTS 1, 2, 3

PATIENT

Scene: Monday, early evening, shortly after 5pm. Operating Room. Sounds of beeping. Perhaps a music album plays faintly. A teddy bear from the hospital gift shop sits on a shelf out of the way.

At Rise: PATIENT lies on operating table. DOC NICK is finishing up tumor removal; NURSE ELLEN and JACK and ANESTHESIOLOGIST are at work. DOC PETE waits, and STUDENTS look on.

Note: This scene (and Scenes 2 and 7) turn out to be EDENBERRY's dreams. (The fourth OR scene – Scene 17 – is real). While it should not be suggested to the audience that this is a dream, something about this scene (e.g. lighting or the general behavior of the actors) should feel different from the other scenes, particularly Scene 17.

DOC NICK

Just about ready here. Do we have a space in Recovery?

NURSE ELLEN

Yes, they're ready for us.

DOC NICK

Good.

DOC PETE

Ready?

DOC NICK

Yep. Just about ten percent of the cells remaining. I say we're ready to close. Done with the Cavetron, Jack.

(DOC NICK and DOC PETE switch places, as JACK takes Cavetron from NICK and– during the overlapping line below – hands DOC PETE scalpel. SNUGGLES appears in window of door, holding metal mop. Peers in furtively.)

DOC PETE

Scalpel, Jack? (*Takes scalpel.*)

DOC NICK (*As he cleans himself up*)

Students still here? Where are the students?

STUDENT 1

We're here (*indicates his companions*).

STUDENT 2 (*Anxious to please*)

Cute teddy bear. (*STUDENT 1 kicks him.*)

DOC NICK

Shouldn't you kids be asking questions? Ask some questions.

(*Slight pause. SNUGGLES sees someone coming and vanishes from the window.*)

STUDENT 3 (*Forcedly friendly and nerdy*)

Why did you decide to specialize in Neurofibromatosis Type II, Doctor Hellenworth?

(*NURSE SARA enters from door UL, joins with preparations.*)

DOC NICK

(*Alluding to the quality of STUDENT 1's question*)

Okay, that's a start. Well, NF Two is interesting. The disease can give rise to multiple tumors throughout the nervous system, and those manifest in a broad array of symptoms. Loss of vision, tinnitus.

STUDENT 3 (*Shyly*)

S – so that's why?

DOC NICK

Ah, who knows. You can't make decisions and simultaneously understand them. Understanding comes later. Or never.

DOC PETE (*To STUDENTS*)

Here, everybody, lean in, you'll want to see the closing.

NURSE SARA (*Notices teddy bear.*)

Wilbur, that thing isn't sterile.

(*SNUGGLES re-appears at window. Tries to wave at DOC NICK.*)

DOC PETE

Ah, it's fine, it's out of the way.

(SNUGGLES drops metal mop while trying to wave at DOC NICK, and mop clangs loudly on the floor. The sound startles DOC PETE, and his hand jerks.)

Ah! Fiddlesticks.

(SNUGGLES vanishes.)

NURSE SARA

What?

DOC PETE

Nicked the seventh nerve.

(Pause. No one is sure what to say. DOC PETE shakes his head at himself. Then explains to STUDENTS)

Her face is now permanently paralyzed in the expression it was in when we gave her the valium. Wilbur?

ANESTH WILBUR

(Examining facial monitor readout)

Yep, looks that way.

STUDENT 2

Oops *(shuffles feet)*.

ANESTH WILBUR

But watch it, if you stop now, there's still a chance she'll be able to wiggle her left ear.

DOC PETE

Right. *(Pause.)* All right, life goes on.

ANESTH WILBUR

Or not.

DOC PETE

(Overlapping with ANESTH WILBUR)

Now we'll use fat from her abdomen to plug her skull back up nice and tight –

DOC NICK

(Looking at PATIENT, chuckling)

Hey Pete, did you view the incision from over here where I'm standing?

DOC PETE

No. What's wrong?

DOC NICK

Nothing, it's just funny - the shape of the cut reminds me of the outline of a cloud.

DOC PETE

No kidding?

(Moves over next to DOC NICK; looks at PATIENT. Amused)

Oh, I see what you mean. A cirrus cloud?

DOC NICK

Yes, exactly.

ANESTH WILBUR

I don't see a cloud.

DOC NICK

You might have a bad angle.

NURSE ELLEN

I see a cloud. Wait, I think I see – *(squinting)* – a bunny rabbit.

NURSE SARA *(Squeals, delighted)*

Oh yeah! It is a bunny rabbit!

DOC PETE

I don't see a bunny rabbit.

ANESTH WILBUR *(To NURSE ELLEN)*

You can't see both a cloud and a bunny rabbit at the same time.

NURSE ELLEN

Why not?

ANESTH WILBUR

It just seems like having your cake and eating it.

NURSE ELLEN

So it's a cloud in the shape of a bunny rabbit.

ANESTH WILBUR

I think it looks like two women having sex.

NURSE SARA

Of course you would think that.

ANESTH WILBUR

(Referring to DOC PETE)

Hey, *he's* the one who *drew* it!

NURSE SARA *(Dismissive)*

You're too far away to see it right, anyway.

ANESTH WILBUR

(Joins vantage point of NURSES for a moment)

Oh, okay, I guess I'll give you bunny rabbit.

DOC PETE

I still don't see it.

ANESTH WILBUR

(Pretending to try to grab DOC PETE's scalpel)

But here, maybe if I add a little tail -

DOC PETE

(Snatching the scalpel away, as others laugh at ANESTH WILBUR's joke)

You guys are ridiculous.

ANESTH WILBUR

Hey, if you severed the seventh nerve, at least no more tumors will grow on that one, right?

NURSE SARA

Wilbur.

ANESTH WILBUR

I'm just saying, "at least". *(Thinking of a way to justify the question.)* That's important for the students, right? *(To STUDENTS)* You guys should be paying attention to this. Every event is a learning opportunity, no matter how grim. Right?

(STUDENTS exchange glances, then stare at their feet.)

Scene 5

The Players:

JENNIFER
SNUGGLES

Scene: Tuesday morning. JENNIFER's apartment bedroom. Bed DR; door to hall UR; dresser and extremely-expensive entertainment center DL; window UC, which looks out onto the orange brick facade of a building 20 feet away. The borrowed toilet stands against wall UL.

At Rise: JENNIFER sits on bed with laptop, pausing her typing now and then to vent frustration at her malfunctioning keyboard. SNUGGLES stands staring out window at brick wall.

JENNIFER (*Punching keyboard*)

Kinda nasty, Dad with the raccoons, isn't it? He's not exactly trained to kill.

SNUGGLES (*Absently*)

Mm-hm.

JENNIFER

I'm surprised Mom's letting him near the garden in the first place. She can be so insane. But I guess killing raccoons isn't exactly her thing. Anything unsanitary, she'll flee like it'll give her the plague. I don't think she's cleaned the bathroom in her life.

(Pause; waits for SNUGGLES to respond; he doesn't. Suddenly stops typing, frustrated.)

Agh! Stupid thing! The "a" key is, like, super-glued up. Did you spill something inside this?
(Examines keyboard)

SNUGGLES

No.

JENNIFER

I can't write a dissertation without an "a" key. I'll have to take it in. Maybe when I go back to pick up Dad in a few minutes. You wanna come?

SNUGGLES

Mmh-hmm. *(Pause.)*

JENNIFER

Babe, wanna tell me what's wrong?

SNUGGLES

Mmh-hhm.

JENNIFER

Snugg? (*Waits for him to hear her.*) What's the matter?

SNUGGLES

Nothing.

JENNIFER

You're being quiet.

SNUGGLES

'Cause you're working.

JENNIFER

You feel guilty, don't you?

SNUGGLES

No. About what?

JENNIFER

You think we upset Mom?

SNUGGLES

No. (*Pause.*) She didn't seem exactly *happy*.

JENNIFER

That was all show, Babe. It's not every day that a dramatic moment comes along in that house, believe me. It may creep her out to use Gail's bathroom, but that's good for her. Mom doesn't get upset for real, so long as you stay away from her plants.

SNUGGLES

It's not the greatest way to impress her. "Hi, nice to see you again, now please excuse me while I rob you."

JENNIFER

Oh. You're mad at me.

SNUGGLES

I'm not mad at you.

JENNIFER

You resent me for roping you in.

SNUGGLES

No I don't.

JENNIFER

Then what is it? There's *something*.

SNUGGLES

There's not something. Why do you think there's something?

JENNIFER

Snugg.

SNUGGLES

I asked my mom.

JENNIFER

Oh good!

SNUGGLES

We can't bring the toilet there. She's having friends over for Monopoly.

JENNIFER (*Appears discouraged.*)

Oh.

SNUGGLES

I'm sorry.

JENNIFER

That's okay. Thanks for asking her.

SNUGGLES

The theatre's still an option. It's empty at night.

JENNIFER

Okay.

SNUGGLES

Well, until the cleaning crew comes in around 1am. But the lights are off automatically until midnight, so we'll have to work in the dark 'til then. It's to save money. That okay?

JENNIFER (*Looks a bit overwhelmed*)

Okay.

SNUGGLES

Don't worry; we'll make it work.

(He squeezes her hand encouragingly. She smiles at him. He resumes staring out at brick wall.)

Scene 6

The Players:

EDENBERRY HELLENWORTH

DOC PETE

Scene: Tuesday around 1:30pm. A small doctor's examination room. Exam table DC. Sink and counter DL. Spare chair DR. Various instrument trays and cabinets Upstage.

At Rise: EDENBERRY sits on edge of exam table, waiting, looking sleepy. Knock on door.

EDENBERRY

Come in?

DOC PETE

(Enter wearing surgical scrubs)

Hello, Ms. Hellenworth.

EDENBERRY

Doctor Trey.

DOC PETE

It's been a while. Since the staff picnic a couple years ago, wasn't it?

EDENBERRY

Yes, I think so! How lovely to see you again. You know, I had a dream about you yesterday.

(Shakes his hand, stifling a yawn.)

DOC PETE

Really.

EDEBERRY

Yes. So strange.

DOC PETE

Well, all dreams are strange, aren't they?

EDENBERRY

I suppose that's true.

DOC PETE

I understand you've been experiencing some vexing problems?

EDENBERRY

Vexing! Yes, that's the word exactly. Vexing.

DOC PETE

What's the trouble?

EDENBERRY

Well. (*Sigh.*) The toilet's too far away and my ear buzzes. (*Pause.*)

DOC PETE

Is that one complaint all together, or two separately?

EDENBERRY

Two separately.

DOC PETE

I see. The toilet's too far away. Are you referring to incontinence?

EDENBERRY (*Embarrassed*)

I hate to phrase it like that. I'm not that old, you know; I've only just hit menopause.

DOC PETE

Incontinence is not always age-related. It could be a sign of muscle weakness or a serious illness.

EDENBERRY

Oh! Thank goodness.

DOC PETE

Can you describe the problem?

EDENBERRY

Well, there's not much to it. Nature's need arrests me out of the clear blue sky, it seems, and I sometimes am unable to respond quickly enough. To compound the problem, our main toilet is gone at the moment, so I have to get all the way upstairs to the spare half bath. And to compound the problem further, my eyesight isn't what it used to be. But of course that's my own fault for not renewing my glasses prescription.

DOC PETE

Your toilet is – did you say it's gone?

EDENBERRY

Well, it should be back by Thursday. (*Pause.*)

DOC PETE

That must be a relief. Now, did this problem come on suddenly?

EDENBERRY

Yes, about a month ago.

DOC PETE

Does it interfere with your work?

EDENBERRY

I work from home, thank goodness.

DOC PETE

Can you describe a typical work day? Is it physically straining?

EDENBERRY

I wouldn't say so. I sell herbs and teas at a farmer's market. First thing in the morning, I prepare teas from the previous day's harvest, then I head into the garden to tend what needs tending. I head to the market around two, arrive home around five, and the day's done.

DOC PETE

That doesn't sound strenuous.

EDENBERRY

Oh no, it's zen-like. I can sip tea while I garden!

DOC PETE

Have you experienced other weaknesses, dizziness, headaches, changes in hearing?

EDENBERRY

Only the ear buzzing.

DOC PETE

Ah, yes. Which ear?

EDENBERRY

The left. At first I thought a mosquito had finagled its way in there. They're all over the yard.

DOC PETE (*Examining both EDENBERRY's ears*)

When did it start?

EDENBERRY

Monday.

DOC PETE

Last Monday?

EDENBERRY

Yesterday Monday.

DOC PETE

Yesterday?

EDENBERRY

Yes.

DOC PETE (*Politely hiding surprise*)

Have you noticed a loss of hearing?

EDENBERRY

No.

DOC PETE

Have you been able to identify any trends since, uh, yesterday? For example, does anything bring on the buzzing, such as a stressful situation?

EDENBERRY

It just comes and goes.

DOC PETE

Have you identified any circumstances under which the incontinence or buzzing improves?

EDENBERRY

Yes! One. Gardening.

DOC PETE

Gardening?

EDENBERRY

While I'm gardening, yes. Especially with my wormwood. Wormwood is so infinitely versatile, it's my absolute favorite perennial. The buzzing gets better, *and* I'm often able to make it to the bathroom on time. Of course, later it all comes right back.

DOC PETE

You referred to gardening as zen-like. Do you find that it relieves stress?

EDENBERRY

I suppose it must. I do adore it!

DOC PETE

All right. Now, what about your family history, Mrs. Hellenworth?

EDENBERRY

Oh, I don't think this is a problem I can justly blame my husband for. Although he is responsible for many other problems. Try getting him to wash a teapot.

DOC PETE

Sorry, let me clarify. In diagnosing an ailment, one of the most important things I can ask you about is whether your family has a history of similar problems.

EDENBERRY

Oh. Well, let me think. Dominic has never experienced buzzing, and I've never known him to wet himself. He doesn't go near my herbs, either. I am rather overprotective of them. They comprise my income, after all.

DOC PETE

What about blood relations, specifically?

EDENBERRY

My daughter hasn't reported any trouble.

DOC PETE

Other children?

EDENBERRY

Jennifer is *(pause; appears misty-eyed)* ... Jennifer's an only child.

DOC PETE

How about your older relatives? We're all products of those who created us, you see. Any history of neurological disorders like MS or Parkinson's, for example?

EDENBERRY

Goodness! No.

DOC PETE

Inner ear problems?

EDENBERRY *(Thinks)*

My aunt had her ear removed once. Or they gave her an ear? I can't quite recall.

DOC PETE

What was she suffering from?

EDENBERRY

I don't know, I was very young at the time.

(DOC PETE's pager buzzes; he looks at it.)

DOC PETE

Ms. Hellenworth, I'm needed in the OR. Frankly I have no idea what's wrong with you, but we'll begin with non-invasive tests of brain, spinal, and peripheral nervous system functioning, and do a full blood panel. Let me schedule you for a regular appointment during my clinic hours.

EDENBERRY

That would be delightful, Doctor, thank you.

DOC PETE

You're welcome. Please, follow me, I'll show you to the appointment desk.

Scene 7*The Players:*

DOC PETE

DOC NICK

NURSE JACK

NURSE SARA

NURSE ELLEN

ANESTHESIOLOGIST WILBUR

JENNIFER

SNUGGLES

Scene: Tuesday evening. Operating Room.*At Rise:* The mood is frantic. PATIENT is in distress. All monitors bleep as NURSES and DOC PETE surround PATIENT, trying to shock him back into cardiac rhythm.*Note:* This scene (and Scenes 2 and 4) turn out to be EDENBERRY's dreams. (The fourth OR scene – Scene 17 – is real). While it should not be suggested to the audience that this is a dream, something about this scene (e.g. lighting or the general behavior of the actors) should feel different from the other scenes, particularly Scene 17.

NURSE JACK

Clear!

(Others are backed away from PATIENT. JACK administers shock; waits; everyone looks at heart monitor, which remains dead.)

Clear!

(Repeats cycle. Enter DOC NICK, who surveys the scene.)

Clear!

DOC NICK *(Rushes to ANESTH WILBUR's station)*

What happened?

ANESTH WILBUR

Asshole went into cardiac arrest the second he came off the anesthetic.

DOC NICK

Asshole?

ANESTH WILBUR

After everything we just went through for her? I didn't even get lunch.

NURSE JACK

Clear!

DOC PETE (*Discouragingly*)

Jack, we're at ninety seconds.

NURSE JACK (*More emphatically*)

Clear! (*Repeats shock.*)

DOC PETE

Jack! Enough.

NURSE JACK (*Ignoring DOC PETE*)

Clear!

(Repeats shock. Sneezes into his sleeve. Heart monitor springs to life; heartbeat is re-established. Relief is palpable. Pause.)

DOC PETE

All right. Get her out of here.

(While the following dialogue ensues, NURSE ELLEN, NURSE SARA, and NURSE JACK transfer PATIENT from the operating table to a different bed, and NURSE ELLEN wheels PATIENT offstage.)

NURSE ELLEN

Wilbur, go wash up and come back.

ANESTH WILBUR

I'm not done here.

NURSE ELLEN

You're not sterile. You sneezed into your sleeve.

ANESTH WILBUR

You think I'm gonna wipe my sleeve on the patient?

DOC PETE

Wilbur, go wash up and come back.

(ANESTH WILBUR exits. DOC PETE to DOC NICK)

Where have you been? You've been gone for hours.

DOC NICK

I finished the resection.

DOC PETE

I could have used your consultation on the closing.

DOC NICK

I had to help Edenberry with the garden.

DOC PETE

Again? Knocking off at two in the afternoon on a Tuesday to garden?

DOC NICK

It's the only time I've got. You don't know what she can be like. I'm sorry, I figured you'd have finished hours ago. We never go this late unless something goes wrong.

DOC PETE (*Exasperated*)

Something went wrong.

DOC NICK

Yeah, I got that.

DOC PETE (*Notices DOC NICK's black wristwatch*)

Jeeze, Nick, *another* Rolex!

DOC NICK (*Hastily covers watch with sleeve*)

No, this is the same one.

DOC PETE

I thought it was silver.

DOC NICK

Is it done?

NURSE SARA

She's stabilized for now; she's fine (*pause*) for now.

(A thunderous racket is heard as a white object crashes down through one of the squares of the drop ceiling, and falls directly onto – or through - operating table where PATIENT had just been lying. The object appears reminiscent of a fragment of the lid of a toilet tank. A breathless pause.)

NURSE JACK

Uh.

NURSE SARA

What is it? Is it part of a light fixture?

DOC NICK

How could a light fall down?

DOC PETE (*Looking up*)

There's a hole in the ceiling.

(JENNIFER and SNUGGLES appear at window in the door DL, peering in anxiously. From this vantage point, they are not visible to those inside OR. SNUGGLES wears a hospital-facilities-employee identification tag.)

ANESTH WILBUR *(Re-enter)*

Hey, anyone see an individually-wrapped twizzler lying around?

DOC NICK

Wilbur, this large white object just crashed through the ceiling onto the operating table.

ANESTH WILBUR *(Looks at white object.)*

Huh.

NURSE JACK

Yeah.

ANESTH WILBUR

It crashed through the ceiling?

(JENNIFER begins yelling at SNUGGLES from outside the luckily-soundproof glass.)

NURSE SARA

Just now.

ANESTH WILBUR

Should we pick it up? *(Pause.)*

DOC PETE

Not sure. *(Pause; everyone stands there uncertainly.)*

ANESTH WILBUR

It could be a bird. Sometimes birds get caught in the electrical wire on the roof. We're near the river; it could be a seagull.

(JENNIFER pulls a "Facilities Manager" cap onto SNUGGLES' head and points insistently toward OR door.)

DOC PETE

Wilbur, there are nine floors above us. How could a bird crash through nine floors?

ANESTH WILBUR

Depends on how high it fell from. It coulda fallen a few thousand feet and someone threw it to give it a head start?

NURSE SARA

Who would do such a thing?

SNUGGLES

(Enters wearing "Facilities Manager" cap, hiding his face so that DOC NICK doesn't see it)

I'll take it from here, everyone, thanks.

(Walks toward operating table. JENNIFER disappears from Exit window.)

DOC PETE

All right, looks like maintenance is already ontop of it.

(PETE, NICK, SARA, JACK, ANESTH prepare to leave OR as the following dialogue ensues and lights fade to black.)

ANESTH WILBUR

I'm talking about a bird in a dive. Not with spread wings, that'd mean a lot of air resistance. I mean a projectile. Given enough initial momentum –

DOC PETE *(To ANESTH)*

Wilbur, you shoot all the Propofol you want on your own time, but don't do it on my watch. Understand?

(Bickering continues as HOSPITAL STAFF move to Exit, while SNUGGLES struggles to move the white object.)

ANESTH WILBUR

Hey, I minored in biophysics, I'm not making this up.

NURSE SARA

It doesn't have feathers, Wilbur.

ANESTH WILBUR

No? *(Looking)* It coulda lost them on the way down.

DOC PETE

That's it. Wilbur, I'm writing you up for possession.

ANESTH WILBUR

You can't prove a thing.

Scene 8

The Players:

JENNIFER (Voice)

SNUGGLES (Voice)

NICK (Voice)

Scene: Tuesday night, later, around 11pm. The campus stage of the university that JENNIFER and SNUGGLES attend.

At Rise: Lights down; stage is pitch black. Brief sound of clanging, and of a large heavy metallic object being dragged a short distance.

JENNIFER (*Voice*)

Thanks for getting the theatre option to work out, Babe.

SNUGGLES

Sure.

JENNIFER

You're sure all the doors are locked?

SNUGGLES

I told you, the place is deserted 'til about one in the morning when the cleaning crew comes in. No one rehearses in here after hours on Tuesdays.

JENNIFER

So that gives us just about two hours.

SNUGGLES

Here.

JENNIFER

Hear what?

SNUGGLES

The larger monkey wrench. Take it.

JENNIFER

No thanks, this one's good.

(Sound of metal on metal.)

You didn't find a flashlight? I can't see the hand in front of my face.

SNUGGLES

Neither of your hands are in front of your face.

JENNIFER

You're hilarious, Babe. Are you sure you can't do anything about the lights?

SNUGGLES

Nah, sorry. They stay off 'til midnight. It's to save money. They'll come back up automatically.

JENNIFER

Why do they come on at midnight?

SNUGGLES

So that they're back up for the cleaning crew. They show up around 1 or 2am.

JENNIFER (*Sound of pawing through plastic*)

Where does the hose go?

SNUGGLES

Onto the tube.

JENNIFER (*Scuffling and rummaging*)

Where's the tube? Damn it! I need to see the instructions.

SNUGGLES

This is kinda starting to take forever, Babe.

(*Scuffling and rummaging continue.*)

Scene 9*The Players:*

DOC PETE

DOC NICK

Scene: Tuesday, 11:35pm. DOC NICK's office.

At Rise: DOC NICK sits at his desk, trying to concentrate on a chart he's reading, absently shredding a piece of paper with his fingers and tossing shreds on carpet. Keeps distractedly glancing down at the growing pile of shreds, then at the office door, as if waiting for something to happen. Sound of footsteps in hall. DOC NICK jumps up, alert.

DOC PETE (*Enter*)

Hey, buddy, go home.

DOC NICK (*Sits back down.*)

Oh.

DOC PETE

You're jumpy. Get some rest.

DOC NICK

Guess I'm nervous. Tomorrow's case is tricky. I'm looking over the chart.

DOC PETE

Yep. Good to be prepared.

DOC NICK

You see the janitor out there when you came in?

DOC PETE

Nope.

(Regarding chart in his hand)

I'm checking over your wife right now, actually.

DOC NICK (*Subtly sarcastic*)

Oh. Right. The ghost in the upstairs bathroom.

DOC PETE

Ghost?

DOC NICK

Oh, not a ghost this time? Wait – is it the gardening-dependent ear buzzing?

DOC PETE

Yes, in part. That could be something real, Nick. Anything in her family history that you know of?

DOC NICK

Her aunt had N Two.

DOC PETE

So there's potential.

DOC NICK

It's not likely, Pete.

DOC PETE

Sure, N Two usually presents before age 30, but onset in later years certainly occurs. Any other family members I should know about?

DOC NICK (*Appears suddenly misty-eyed*)

I suspect not.

DOC PETE

Wasn't there someone else on your side, Gabby, or Gail, or something like that?

DOC NICK

Pete, I love Berry, but whatever's wrong with her head, I doubt it'd show up on MRI, if you get what I mean.

DOC PETE

We should err on the safe side. And we got her an MRI.

DOC NICK

That's a thoughtful birthday present.

DOC PETE

It's her birthday?

DOC NICK

This weekend. (*Flicking another paper shred onto floor*) Where's the janitor? Where is he?

DOC PETE

Why don't you pick them up yourself, Princess? You've got a few minutes to burn.

DOC NICK (*Suddenly impatient*)

Did *you* complete a seven-year fellowship so you could pick up garbage? (*Pause.*) Sorry, Pete. I'm tired.

DOC PETE

No sweat, buddy.

DOC NICK

Want to review this morning's case?

DOC PETE (*Takes chart from DOC NICK*)

Yes. (*Reading*) Triple-level anterior lumbar discectomy on a fifty-three-year-old paraplegic male. Patient presented with severe neck pain after falling off a camel at the San Diego Zoo. The zoo incident turned out to be a lucky break, as it led to the discovery and ultimate resection of a tumor of the thoracic spine. Loss of upper extremity sensation escalated over the following year, at which point he consulted a homeopath who prescribed bush flower extracts and memory-foam pillows. Patient was rushed to ER after life-threatening allergic reaction to bush flower extract ...

Scene 10*The players:*

JENNIFER

SNUGGLES

DEAD BODY

DETECTIVE LEO SNARK

Scene: Tuesday, a few minutes before midnight. The campus stage.*At Rise:* Lights down; stage is black. Scuffling and rummaging. Sound of heavy object being dragged.

Ugnnh! (*Thud.*) Ow! Damn!

JENNIFER

Why do you keep moving it?

SNUGGLES

I'm trying to get a better angle.

JENNIFER

This is definitely taking forever, now, Babe.

SNUGGLES

Are you still trying to make me feel guilty?

JENNIFER

About this taking forever? Sure.

SNUGGLES

You know what I'm talking about. About whatever's been making you pissy ever since we took Mom's toilet.

JENNIFER

If I'm pissy it's 'cause this dime bag's almost empty.

SNUGGLES

So buy more. (*A lighter clicks and flicks on briefly.*)

JENNIFER

Can't.

SNUGGLES

JENNIFER

Why not? (*Sound of metal clattering on wood.*) I dropped the wrench at your feet; can you hand it back? (*Sound of scuffling.*)

SNUGGLES

It's not here.

JENNIFER

Yes it is.

SNUGGLES (*More scuffling*)

No, it's nowhere, Babe. (*Giggles.*)

JENNIFER

Nevermind. (*Footsteps and scuffling.*) Got it. (*Sound of metal on metal.*)

SNUGGLE

This is the life, isn't it?

JENNIFER

I thought you were bored.

SNUGGLES (*Giggling*)

Not anymore.

JENNIFER

Jeeze, that smells. It's so fresh. Where do you get weed that fresh?

SNUGGLES

(*Scuffling, rummaging, etc, continue through this line.*)

Yeah. ... Woah, it's dark. ... Isn't it way dark in here, Babe? ... Babe? (*Scufflings stop.*)

JENNIFER

What?

SNUGGLES

You ever seen a place this dark?

JENNIFER

Nope. (*Scufflings resume through the next two lines.*)

SNUGGLES

Kinda sexy. ... Kinda sexy being here in the pitch black, just you and me, isn't it?

JENNIFER

Yep. Just you and me and the hundred other people in here who we can't see because it's pitch black.

SNUGGLES (*Suddenly paranoid*)

What?! (*Hasty footsteps.*) What do you mean? Who's here?

JENNIFER

I'm screwing with you, Hon. Relax.

SNUGGLES

Who's here?!

JENNIFER

Hon, you're paranoid.

SNUGGLES

This is creeping me out. Aw, man, this is really creeping me out. Jennifer let's go.

JENNIFER

Snugg! That stuff's potent, you went from bored to psychotic in one hit. Where've you been scoring it? Did you change dealers?

SNUGGLES

Can we please go?

JENNIFER

I'll take a break soon. It's gotta be almost midnight. Take a nap until the lights come back. Okay?

(Lights Up. SNUGGLES is standing. A hose and a few plastic tubes lie around. JENNIFER kneels on floor, clutching a wrench. At her knees slumps a DEAD BODY.)

JENNIFER

(*Begins to apply wrench to DEAD BODY, but then, suddenly seeing it, shrieks, stops before hitting it, and pulls away. Drops wrench. Jumps to her feet.*)

What?! Is THAT!

SNUGGLES (*Looks*)

Aah – whu – ?

JENNIFER

How - ?

SNUGGLES (*Puzzled and interested, but not alarmed*)

Who is it?

JENNIFER

I don't know!

SNUGGLES

Is he dead?

JENNIFER

I don't know!

SNUGGLES

Did you kill him?

JENNIFER

No!

SNUGGLES

You were pounding him with a wrench.

JENNIFER

I was working on the toilet! It was a *toilet!!* (*Pause. Looks desperately at SNUGGLES*) It was a toilet, you know that! Then the lights come back and – and here's *this*.

SNUGGLES

The toilet turned into a dead guy in the dark?

JENNIFER

No! I don't kn - No, what?!

SNUGGLES (*Thinks*)

The toilet turned into a dead guy when the light came back?

DETECTIVE SNARK

(*Enter. Wears beige trench coat, Fedora hat, and acts very detective-y.*)

Hello, Kids, perhaps I can be of assistance.

SNUGGLES

W – ?

JENNIFER

Who are you?

SNARK

Detective Leo Snark. Theatre Division. I just happened by and overheard the last bit of your conversation.

(SNUGGLES peers suspiciously/bewildered-ly out at AUDIENCE. Throughout the rest of this scene he intermittently peers around trying to figure out how SNARK got in and who else might be out there.)

JENNIFER

You just happened by?

SNARK

It's my job, Buttercup. What seems to be the trouble?

JENNIFER

I – I don't know!

SNARK *(Indicating dead body)*

Who's this?

JENNIFER

I don't know!

SNARK *(To SNUGGLES)*

Sir? Is this man familiar to you?

SNUGGLES

How'd you get in here? This place is locked after hours.

SNARK

You appear to be dodging my question.

SNUGGLES *(Alarmed)*

Ah! No! No, I don't know!

SNARK

(Removes notepad from pocket)

Care to describe what happened?

JENNIFER

(Bewildered but willing, since she's so distraught)

I – okay, I was working on a toilet, in the dark, and then the lights came up, and suddenly the toilet was gone and this body was here!

SNARK

Ah, the old dead-body-for-a-toilet swap. That's a new one.

SNUGGLES

We think it happened in the dark.

JENNIFER

When else could it have happened, Genius?

SNARK

Settle down, kids, whaddya say we help each other get to the bottom of this curious affair, eh?

Scene 11

The Players:
EDENBERRY
DOMINIC

Scene: Wednesday, a few seconds after midnight. The shot of the HELLENWORTH home from the backyard. There is now a garbage can L by garage.

EDENBERRY (*Off*)
Mmhr ... Clear! (*Pause.*) Again. Clear!

DOMINIC (*Off*)
Berry.

EDENBERRY (*Off*)
Clear! No! Call it.

DOMINIC (*Off*)
Berr, you're dreaming.

EDENBERRY (*Off*)
No! Clear! Clear! Clear!

DOMINIC (*Off*)
Berry, Hon. Berry.

EDENBERRY (*Off*)
Mrhhgs?

DOMINIC (*Off*)
You're having that dream again.

EDENBERRY (*Off*)
Um. Uh. (*Pause.*)
Oh! Damn it! Damn it damn it damn it! Get out of the bed.

DOMINIC (*Off*)
What?

EDENBERRY (*Off*)
Get out, move to the couch, Darling, I wet it again, I'm so sorry.
*(Sound of heavy footsteps stomping. Dim light on behind window UL.
Sound of door opening, lighter footsteps scurrying. Light on behind
window UC (the downstairs bathroom). Sudden cry of surprised dismay.)*

Aghh! I keep forgetting it's gone! I could *throttle* that child! And with Gail's ghost flitting about upstairs, I swear she's up there sometimes ...

(Light UC off. Footsteps continue, even more hurriedly. EDENBERRY appears on back doorstep, carrying balled-up bedsheets at arm's length in front of her. Hoists them into garbage can L by garage, slams garbage can closed irritably/tiredly. Exits back into house as she begins grumbling again. The following dialogue is to be executed appropriately over the course of the subsequent set of stage directions.)

... stubborn and bullheaded, that's what she is. Lord knows she doesn't get it from me. Bad enough having a filthy toilet, let alone no toilet. Sometimes I swear I'll give that child a piece of my mind, what it takes to live the way I do, with real-life ailments and a real-life income that needs coming-in, it's not all roses and daisies once you hit the real world, Young Lady, I'll have you know. You can't go hijacking people's toilets willy-nilly and expect no tangible repercussions. Now I feel like already a day's work's been done and it's not even five hours to daylight yet.

(Footsteps pound up stairs. Light on in C upstairs window - Gail's old bathroom. Silence, flush, and running water. Footsteps pound back downstairs.)

Dominic, Darling, do you want to come back to bed? I haven't made it up again, I'm too tired. But it's clean. You can come back.

DOMINIC

Hnggrfh. *(Pause.)*

EDENBERRY

Well, I'll turn this off for you, anyway. Sorry to upset you. *(UL light off. Pause.)* It's our daughters' faults, you know. Dead or alive, they make trouble.

Scene 12*The Players:*

JENNIFER

SNUGGLES

DEAD BODY

DETECTIVE LEO SNARK

Scene: Wednesday, one minute after midnight. The campus stage.*At Rise:* Immediate continuation of previous scene. SNARK, SNUGGLES, and JENNIFER stand on stage; DEAD BODY lies on floor. SNARK takes notes.

SNARK

Now, given the severely-suggestive circumstances in which I've happened across you, I s'pose you're both happy to answer a few questions without a lawyer present?

SNUGGLES

Okay.

JENNIFER

I guess.

SNARK

Where'd you two acquire this alleged toilet?

JENNIFER

From my mom's house.

SNUGGLES

But it wasn't alleged, it was real. I've used it.

SNARK (*To SNUGGLES*)

Sparky, is it?

SNUGGLES

Snuggles.

SNARK

What do you do, Snuggles?

SNUGGLES

I study lighting design here at the theatre. And I'm a janitor at a hospital.

SNARK

Why were you here after hours?

JENNIFER

He was keeping me company. It's secure here. There's plenty of room, nobody around.

SNARK

Pretty isolated and deserted, eh?

JENNIFER

At this hour, at least. *(Pause.)* Am ... Am I under ... suspicion?

SNARK

Hard to say. You do sound genuine about this toilet story, and you seem genuinely surprised about this dead guy, which indicates to me that producing a dead guy had not been your goal.

JENNIFER

No!

SNARK

Moreover, you're not the stereotype I'm looking for. Seems to me, I want a big tall strong guy with access to a heavy instrument. Like a monkey wrench.

JENNIFER

(Pointing tentatively to wrench that has fallen on floor)

Like that monkey wrench?

SNARK

Hard to say.

JENNIFER

But this man was killed with a wrench?

SNARK

Beats me. That's for the coroner to say and us to find out.

JENNIFER

Then why are you looking for someone with a wrench?

SNARK

Psychology's what counts, Doll. Someone who totes around a wrench is usually looking for trouble.

SNUGGLES *(Thinks)*

I was carrying around a wrench earlier this week, but only on account of the toilet.

SNARK

Were you. It's Funny.

JENNIFER

What's funny?

SNARK

I was just thinking, it's always the trick in a Whodunit that the real culprit turns out to be the guy you least suspect. The initial suspect is usually a red herring. So if I were to immediately suspect your boyfriend here and take him in for questioning and maybe lock him up for the night, then he should eventually get cleared. Right?

(Pause. JENNIFER and SNUGGLES look nervous.)

Hey, lighten up, kids, a little humor. It helps. Trust me, I grew up with four sisters. Anyway, in real life the initial suspect is usually the guy who did it, and there's never any mystery, and the whole thing gets wrapped up in no time. Three years, tops, if no appeals court gets involved. Sounds pretty dull, eh? Let's hope this isn't real life.

JENNIFER

Um. But do you think you'll get to the bottom of it?

SNARK

Too soon to say, Kitten. Not every question has an answer. Did you hear or see anything strange or otherwise noteworthy while the lights were out?

JENNIFER

I can't say.

SNARK

And you are Jennifer Hellenworth, daughter of Dominic and Edenberry Hellenworth?

JENNIFER

Uh. Yes.

SNARK

Your father married to your mother?

JENNIFER

Yes. *(SNARK scribbles in notebook.)* Is that suspicious?

SNARK

I'll say.

JENNIFER

Oh, you know my mother?

SNARK

We went to high school together. I sat behind her in comp sci.

JENNIFER

There was no comp sci when my mother was in high school.

SNARK

Well maybe it was home ec. I'm hazy on the details, I never went to class.

JENNIFER

Detective, do you plan to look into where my toilet might be? I promised my mother I'd have it back to her by tomorrow.

SNARK

Sorry, Honeycomb, inanimate objects out of my jurisdiction.

JENNIFER

Who should I take it up with?

SNARK

Well, since it isn't a toilet anymore, you might try the Identity Theft people. Or Hardware Heaven might be interested. I'm more interested in this dead guy.

JENNIFER (*Sigh*)

This all sounds like it's getting to be a lot of trouble.

SNARK

There's always trouble when the lights go out, Sweetheart.

JENNIFER

But this is all pretty strange, I don't know what to make of it. It's almost as if the light changed the toilet into a dead guy!

SNARK

As if your ability to observe the thing changed it?

JENNIFER

Yeah!

SNARK

Hm.

JENNIFER

What is it, Detective?

SNARK

Just thinking. Who turned the lights back on?

SNUGGLES

No one. They come on automatically at twelve.

SNARK (*Startled*)

No observer turned the lights back on?

SNUGGLES

Nope.

SNARK (*To himself, ruminating*)

No observer turned the lights back on. ...

SNUGGLES

Look, is this gonna take long? I need to start my shift in a couple hours.

Scene 13

The players:
EDENBERRY
DOMINIC
INTRUDER

Scene: Wednesday, 5am. The HELLENWORTH kitchen. Tea kettle rests on stove.

At Rise: Sound of alarm clock ringing. Alarm stops; brief pause. Sound of sheets rustling and footsteps.

EDENBERRY

(Enter drowsily. Picks up kettle lid; runs finger across rim of lid and examines finger.)

Greasy! Ah, Dominic. Brain surgery's a cinch, but it would be a disaster to wash a tea kettle, I suppose, wouldn't it.

(Licks finger.)

Oh, who cares, even. I'm not washing it, heavens. It won't matter anyway.

(Places lid on kettle without bothering to wash lid.)

What with so much to tend to. Maybe I can nap before market ...

(Opens fridge, removes plastic baggies full of freshly-cut leafy greens. Begins chopping them on counter, and loading the choppings into kettle, as the following dialogue ensues. DOMINIC enters.)

I'm sorry about last night, Darling.

DOMINIC

Not your fault, Berry.

(DOMINIC's sole mission in this scene is to find and pour and drink a glass of water, which he does over the course of the following dialogue.)

EDENBERRY

Doctor Trey seems to think he'll be able to help me.

DOMINIC

Pete's a good guy. Anyway, if Jennifer doesn't have that thing back in a day or so, I'll grab a new one. *(Searches cabinet.)*

EDENBERRY

Oh, would you? That would be wonderful.

DOMINIC

'Course. Isn't there a clean glass?

EDENBERRY *(Laughs)*

Ha! A clean anything?! After the mess you make when you get home, I wouldn't wonder. Dishes don't magically clean themselves overnight, Darling. *(Examining her fingers again.)* Speaking of which, were you cooking with the vegetable oil last night?

DOMINIC

Whatever it was you had out on the counter. I try to disturb as little as I can, I always get home so late.

EDENBERRY

Oh, I know, Darling.

DOMINIC

I only made the rest of the penne.

EDENBERRY

I know, Darling. I was only wondering where the oil had gone.

DOMINIC

I'll use less.

EDENBERRY

Oh, don't, Darling, I was just happy you didn't use up the butter this time. But next time finish up the gnocchi pasta, will you? You know I can't eat that shape.

DOMINIC

Gnocchi do not look like vaginas, Berry.

EDENBERRY

They absolutely do so look like vaginas. I cannot eat miniature vaginas. *(Scavenging in the cupboard)* Now, where's that brownie mix? I swear to goodness I had some. *(Digging far back)* I like to put out sweets to attract the children, so that they drag their mothers over –

DOMINIC

I'm jumping in the shower. *(Kisses her.)*

EDENBERRY

Have a good day, Darling. Tonight I'll make the sofa up for you just in case.

(DOMINIC flashes her the thumbs-up sign as he moves to exit.

EDENBERRY continues to rummage through cabinet throughout end of her line.)

I just hate using that upstairs. Gail *does* haunt it, you know. I can't see her, because she won't stay still, but I know she's there.

(At this line, DOMINIC halts for a moment. EDENBERRY continues her following line without pause, continuing to rummage, as DOMINIC

glances back at her for a moment, then exits.)

Now, goodness, *where* is that box?

(As EDENBERRY's monologue continues, an INTRUDER's face appears at window. Is clad in black, perhaps except for her eyes or face. Watches EDENBERRY, careful not to be seen.)

It was here just a few days ago, or did I put it downstairs in the pantry? Or with my eyesight it's probably sitting here right in front of me and I can't even see it ... Well, they'll have to go without this week, then. Goodness, perhaps I can go back right now and catch a few winks before garden time. If I can muster the nerve to use that bathroom again first ...

(Takes a few moments to clean up as she continues to mutter, and as INTRUDER watches. Then EDENBERRY exits and INTRUDER's face disappears from window.)

END OF ACT I

ACT II

Scene 14

The Players:

JENNIFER
 SNUGGLES
 DETECTIVE SNARK

Scene: Wednesday, a few minutes past 5am. The campus stage as before.

At Rise: DETECTIVE SNARK is examining the scene and jotting on notepad. JENNIFER and SNUGGLES sit on stage floor.

SNARK

(Taps and fiddles with one particular light fixture, and looks back at DEAD BODY to see if anything has changed. Nothing has changed. SNARK jots down a final note in notebook.)

Well that just about does it.

SNUGGLES *(Jumps to attention)*

It does it?

SNARK

For now, just about.

JENNIFER

So Snugg can go to work?

SNARK

Well the way I see it, Sweetheart, there's one glaring omission in your story. So far, you've only described what *you* saw while you were up on this stage with the toilet and the dead guy – and not what anybody else saw.

JENNIFER

How do I know what anybody else saw?

SNARK

That's for you to tell me.

JENNIFER

But no one else saw anything.

SNARK

Ah. So you admit to knowing what other people saw?

JENNIFER
No!

SNARK
Then what is the meaning of your previous statement?

JENNIFER
No one else was here, so how could they have seen anything?

SNARK
When?

JENNIFER
When what?

SNARK
No one else was here when?

JENNIFER
When the light came back.

SNARK
When, when the light came back? Before it came back, as it was coming back, or after it had come back?

JENNIFER
I don't know, before, I guess.

SNARK
Before the light came back, no one was here to see anything?

JENNIFER
Right.

SNARK
How do you know no one was here? You couldn't see anything. (*Pause.*)

JENNIFER
I could hear. I didn't hear anything either.

SNARK
If you were deaf, wouldn't I still be here?

JENNIFER
Look, I'm just trying to help.

SNARK

Who are you trying to help, Sugar? You or me or the dead guy?

JENNIFER (*Growing annoyed and flustered*)

Would you stop calling me Sugar? My name is Jennifer.

SNARK

I haven't called you Sugar before.

JENNIFER

Yes you have! You have since you walked in here!

SNUGGLES

No Babe, he hasn't used Sugar yet. Sweetheart. Cupcake, once. Not Sugar. (*Pause.*)

JENNIFER

My name is *Jennifer Hellenworth*. Don't you remember that from your stupid notes?

SNARK (*Checks notepad*)

That's right; slipped my mind.

JENNIFER

How do we know you're even who you say you are? A detective who just happens by? That doesn't make sense.

SNUGGLES

Yeah. Detectives are taller. (*Or use some other adjective if the actor playing SNARK is tall.*)

SNARK

Ms. Hellenworth, would you care to name one thing that – at the moment – does make sense?
(Pauses briefly to give her time. JENNIFER appears tongue-tied; looks to SNUGGLES for help. SNUGGLES does not help.)

Anything?

(JENNIFER looks to AUDIENCE for help. SNARK follows her gaze and seems to indicate to AUDIENCE that they are welcome to help her if they can. SNUGGLES follows her gaze too, as it makes him even more suspicious, but he doesn't seem to understand whom she could possibly be looking at.)

All right.

(Whips out inch-thick folder from coat and hands it to JENNIFER.)

Here's my identification, board certification, and psychiatric evaluation file. I keep it on hand for an emergency. Read at your leisure.

JENNIFER

Don't you need it in case of an emergency?

SNARK

Keep it; it's a copy. (*Dons hat.*) I'll be in touch. (*Exit.*)

Scene 15

The Players:

INTRUDER

Scene: Wednesday, around noon. The backyard shot of the Hellenworth home.

At rise: Upstairs light is on in bathroom, and bathroom window is open. A figure clad in black sneaks into yard from DL. If possible, a one-use travel shampoo protrudes from a pocket. It's okay if we see her face, since the audience doesn't know who she is yet.

INTRUDER

(Approaches house cautiously, ducks by garage DR. Waits, watches. Notes light in upstairs bathroom. Hurriedly approaches garden; twists a few leaves off, getting dirt on her clothing in the process; shoves leaves into pocket; returns to ducking by garage DR. Dusts off dirt while she waits.

Sound of toilet flushing and water running; light in upstairs bathroom turns off.

INTRUDER waits a few more moments, then approaches house UC in a duck. Climbs up wall into the open window of the upstairs bathroom.)

Scene 16*The Players:*

EDENBERRY

DETECTIVE SNARK

Scene: Wednesday, a few minutes later: still around noon. EDENBERRY's garden.*At Rise:* EDENBERRY is in the garden. Sets down trowel and picks up teacup, which she had placed in the grass. Takes a sip and sighs, satisfied. Wipes brow.

EDENBERRY

Ah, all right. Ready for market.

SNARK (*Enter from side of house*)

'Xcuse me, Ma'am, good afternoon.

EDENBERRY

Oh! Good afternoon.

SNARK

I apologize for trespassing through your yard, but the house windows were all locked.

EDENBERRY

That's quite all right. (*For some reason starts giggling.*)

SNARK

Are you Mrs. Edenberry Hellenworth, graduate of Ciggs High School class of ____ (*some appropriate year*), mother of Ms. Jennifer Hellenworth, and owner of a medium-sized eggshell-white porcelain toilet designed for private home use?EDENBERRY (*Startled out of her giggling*)

Why, yes.

SNARK

Detective Leo Snark. Theatre division. And Ciggs High School, same year. You probably don't remember me, I didn't show up much.

EDENBERRY

Theatre division! Oh, my, how dramatic. Is my toilet all right?

SNARK

That's a tricky question to answer, Ma'am, but I'd say there's no cause to worry.

EDENBERRY

Oh. Did you say you're a detective?

SNARK

That's right, Ma'am.

EDENBERRY

How exciting!

SNARK

Mind if I ask you a few questions about your activities last night? (*Advances into garden.*)

EDENBERRY

Oh! Detective, would you mind please remaining outside the dirt?

SNARK

Oh. (*Backs out of garden.*) Kindly describe your activities last night, please, Ma'am?

EDENBERRY (*Looks at watch*)

Well, I was just about to ... Oh, I can spare a few minutes. I was home. I came back from the market around 5:30.

SNARK

Then what did you do? (*Starts visually examining garden's plants.*)

EDENBERRY

Not much, I gathered leaves for teas, ate dinner, went to bed.

SNARK

You made teas?

(*Fingers a leaf, which clearly ruffles EDENBERRY. Immediately lets go of leaf and shoves hands in pockets.*)

EDENBERRY

No, I save that for mornings. I wake up, prepare teas, find time to nap if I can, work in the garden, go to market from 2 to 5.

SNARK

You're a nap fan, Madam?

EDENBERRY

Oh, goodness, yes! Only lately napping hasn't felt so restful.

SNARK

No?

EDENBERRY

I've been having nightmares. About scalpels and teddy bears. And all the while I'm helpless, just lying there. They make no sense!

SNARK

I do believe that is the rule for dreams, unfortunately.

EDENBERRY

To be about scalpels and teddy bears?

SNARK

To make no sense.

EDENBERRY

I suppose that is true.

SNARK

Now, your description of your schedule: wake, prepare teas, nap, garden, market. Is that rather routine?

EDENBERRY

Oh, yes, it's clockwork. It's not much of a drama, like a Theatre Division detective must be accustomed to (*giggles.*)

SNARK

No cause to sell yourself short, Ma'am, these bushes are delightful. Exceedingly lush, with a subtly bitter aroma. Wormwood, am I right?

EDENBERRY

(Flushes with pleasure, as she examines a leaf)

Oh! Yes, they're my pride and joy. I've been trying to do better at finding damaged leaves, ever since my husband caught animals prowling. It's not easy, what with my eyesight going.

SNARK

Have you considered hiring help?

EDENBERRY

Never! No one sets foot in here, not even family, so long as I can help it. Things must be done just so. (*Notices leaf she's been examining.*) That's funny.

SNARK

How about an eye doctor?

(Enter SNUGGLES at rear door of house; raps on door, waits.)

EDENBERRY

Actually, I'll be seeing a doctor tomorrow. (*Proudly*) He is going to take a picture of my brain!

(SNUGGLES tries to open door; it's locked. Suddenly sees EDENBERRY and SNARK; hurries to leave.)

SNARK

I wish you an excellent time.

EDENBERRY

Thank you! *(Back to leaf)* But that's funny, now isn't it. That's not raccoons, is it, would you say?

SNARK *(Looks)*

I would not consider myself an authority in that area, Ma'am.

EDENBERRY *(Sees SNUGGLES)*

Snuggles? Why Snuggles, is that you?

SNUGGLES

(Freezes. Turns to face them, eyeing SNARK)

Hi, Mrs. Hellenworth. Um. there's no farmer's market today?

EDENBERRY

Oh, I'm running a little late. *(Proudly)* This police detective has stopped by to speak with me, you see.

(Waits for SNUGGLES to be impressed; SNUGGLES looks at his feet.)

You've been by a lot this week. Are you looking for Jennifer again?

SNUGGLES

Um. Yes.

EDENBERRY

I haven't seen her since you two took off with our toilet. She isn't at her apartment or on campus?

SNUGGLES

Oh that's a good idea, I'll look there. Thanks.

EDENBERRY

You'll have the toilet back by tomorrow, as promised?

SNUGGLES

Um ...

(SNARK watches him.)

Yeah, definitely.

EDENBERRY

Marvelous. Can I offer you a cup of tea before you go?

SNUGGLES

No, thank you, I better find Jennifer.

EDENBERRY

It's always a pleasure to see you, Snuggles.

SNUGGLES

Yeah. You too. (*Hazards a parting glance at SNARK; Exit.*)

EDENBERRY

My daughter's latest beau. Such a sweet boy, isn't he? (*Giggles.*)

SNARK

He's a mother's dream. Mrs. Hellenworth, thank you for your time.

EDENBERRY

Oh, you're absolutely welcome! If there's anything else you need, please, don't hesitate to drop by. I'm about to drive in to the market, can I drop you anywhere?

SNARK

Thanks, but I keep my trajectory classified while on duty.

EDENBERRY

Of course. You must have oodles more detectiv-ing to do before the day's done, I'm sure! Can I offer you a cup of tea before you go?

SNARK

I'd like that.

Scene 17*The Players:*

DOC PETE
 DOC NICK
 NURSE ELLEN
 NURSE JACK
 NURSE SARA
 ANESTH WILBUR
 DETECTIVE SNARK

Scene: Wednesday, a few minutes later: around 12:15pm. Hallway outside Operating Room. On a shelf or bench sits a teddy bear from the hospital gift shop.

At Rise: DOC NICK ambles up and down hall near intercom. Inside OR, PATIENT lies on table, surrounded by DOC PETE and NURSES; ANESTH WILBUR sits at his station and looks bored.

Note: The first three OR scenes (Scenes 2, 4, and 7) turn out to be EDENBERRY's dreams. This scene is real. Something about this scene (e.g. lighting or the general behavior of the actors) should set it apart from Scenes 2, 4, and 7.

ANESTH WILBUR (*Speaking through intercom*)

I spy ... I spy ... something that starts with B.

(*Waits. Looks expectantly at DOC NICK. DOC NICK ignores him.*)

I spy something that starts with B. (*Waits.*) C'mon, Nick.

DOC NICK

So help me, Wilbur, if it's brain again.

ANESTH WILBUR (*grins*)

Okay, C.

DOC NICK (*Disinterestedly*)

Scalpel.

ANESTH WILBUR

I said C.

DOC NICK

I said scalpel.

NURSE SARA

That's S, Doctor.

DOC NICK

Canary?

ANESTH WILBUR

Where do you see a canary in here?

SNARK

(Enters hall, breezes past DOC NICK, enters OR, leaving door gaping Open. SNARK seems friendlier than usual and appears to be in a really good mood.)

Good day, everybody, and what a spectacular day it is. Detective Leo Snark, Theatre Division.
(Startled reactions from DOCS and NURSES.)

DOC PETE

You're not sterile! Get out of here!

SNARK

Oh! Right!

(SNARK returns to doorway and wipes his feet on the linoleum; re-enters OR. Giggles. DOC PETE appears astounded.)

DOC NICK *(From hall, through intercom)*

What is a Theatre Division?

SNARK

Ah, you scientist types. So inquisitive.

DOC PETE

How did you get in?

SNARK

I always pop up when there's a dead body nearby. It's my job.

DOC PETE

Who's dead?

SNARK *(Indicating PATIENT)*

Him, of course.

DOC PETE *(Exasperated)*

He's not dead, he's under anesthesia!

SNARK

Oh. That's all right, I'm also here to see Doctor Dominic Hellenworth.

DOC NICK (*Via intercom*)

Me?

SNARK

Are you Doctor Dominic Hellenworth?

DOC NICK (*Via intercom*)

(*Noting that SNARK knows his name, DOC NICK appears nervous.*)

Yes.

SNARK

Then, yes, you. (*Giggles.*)

DOC PETE (*Commanding*)

Sir, the rules imposed here are not suggestions. They are absolute limits.

SNARK

Of course. I'll bet limits are critical in your line of work. But in my line of work, it's critical to ignore them. Limits interfere with one's ability to locate and harass possibly-innocent suspects.

DOC PETE

(*Fed Up, turning back to PATIENT*)

Take it outside. And close the damn door.

SNARK

Straight away.

(*Exits OR to join DOC NICK, shutting door after him. Notices teddy bear.*)

Cute teddy bear.

DOC NICK

(*Nervous but trying to hide it by making conversation*)

Yes, it's from the hospital gift shop. I bought my daughter one years ago.

SNARK

By the way, does a young maintenance guy named Snuggles work here?

DOC NICK (*Still hiding nervousness*)

Snuggles? Friend of mine delivered a baby here named Snuggles about 20 years ago. We laughed over it for weeks.

SNARK

You appear to be avoiding my question.

DOC NICK

Yes, I think someone named Snuggles works here.

SNARK

Are you the father of Ms. Jennifer Hellenworth?

DOC NICK

Yes ... ?

SNARK

Have you met your daughter's new boyfriend?

DOC NICK

I've met some in the past. I don't know if she's made a recent update.

SNARK

Your daughter's new boyfriend is Snuggles the maintenance guy.

DOC NICK

No kidding. Small world.

SNARK

I saw him this afternoon by your backyard garden. Your wife was the only one home, but he wasn't there for her. He didn't seem to be there for Jennifer either. Any idea who or what he might have been there for?

DOC NICK

You were at our house?

SNARK

That's right, Doctor. Your wife's a delightful woman, and quite a dedicated gardener! And (*surveying the room*) a quite the dreamer.

DOC NICK

I'm surprised she let you back there. She keeps the yard pretty family-only.

SNARK

Then I'm flattered by her exception in my case. I'm investigating an apparent magic act performed in the dark late last night. It involves the steel monkey wrench that Snuggles lent to your daughter, and the household toilet that your daughter pilfered from your wife.

DOC NICK

Is Jennifer in some sort of trouble?

SNARK

She seems right as rain to me. Mind describing your activities yesterday, into the evening?

DOC NICK

I was in surgery until late, went home, ate, went to bed.

SNARK

That your typical routine?

DOC NICK

Pretty much.

SNARK

(Notices smudge of dirt on DOC NICK's sleeve; giggles)

OR can be a dirty place, can't it?

DOC NICK

Oh, I went home this afternoon to help my wife in the garden. *(Pause; watches SNARK giggle.)*

Is that funny?

SNARK

Not particularly. You help your wife garden?

DOC NICK

As she needs it. Lately I've been getting rid of pests.

SNARK

Ah. *(Eyes teddy bear again. To himself:)* Dreams of scalpels and teddy bears ... *(To DOC NICK)* Does your wife know all your staff here?

DOC NICK

(Tired of this endless string of surprising questions)

Yes. She met them all at our staff picnic a few years back. Why?

SNARK

Nothing much, I mentioned that your wife is quite the dreamer. Seems she's been having nightmares about this operating room. *(To himself:)* Wonder why.

DOC NICK

My wife has a vivid imagination.

SNARK

That seems true enough. Thanks, that's all for now. Say, is there a snack machine anywhere around here?

Scene 18

The players:

INTRUDER

EDENBERRY

Scene: Wednesday, a few minutes later: around 12:30pm. The Hellenworth backyard.

At Rise: EDENBERRY is just finishing up in garden. INTRUDER's face appears at upstairs bathroom window, C. INTRUDER watches GAIL as she packs up.

EDENBERRY

(As she packs up, she examines leaves again.)

So strange. Probably my eyesight. Damn my eyesight! *(Exiting into house UR)* All right, to market.

INTRUDER

(Watches EDENBERRY enter house, and immediately climbs out of upstairs bathroom window and lowers herself down onto lawn. Snatches a few more leaves from garden. Exits DL.)

Scene 19*The Players:*

DOMINIC

DETECTIVE SNARK

Scene: Thursday around 3:00 pm. The Hellenworth backyard.*At Rise:* DOMINIC stands in garden, stooping down by wormwood bushes. Works for about 30 seconds in the garden. SNARK enters from side of house.

SNARK

Good afternoon, Doctor Hellenworth.

DOMINIC

(Straightens up quickly, startled)

Detective!

SNARK

So you *are* in the garden.

DOMINIC

That surprise you?

SNARK

Nope. You said your wife asked you to help.

DOMINIC

Yes.

SNARK

Good thing she's not home.

DOMINIC

Why?

SNARK

She told me she spits nails if she catches a soul near the place. *(Pause.)*

DOMINIC

Her memory isn't what it used to be.

SNARK

Her eyesight either, eh?

DOMINIC

You're in a serious mood today, Detective.

SNARK

Ah, yes. Yes, yesterday I was excessively happy, wasn't I? That's not like me. In fact, it is so not like me, that I was compelled to drop by yet again, particularly at a time when your wife would be out.

DOMINIC

How did you know she'd be out?

SNARK

As everybody who knows her knows, she's at the farmers' market from two to five every afternoon. Speaking of which, I spoke with your secretary yesterday. She noted that whenever you knock off work, you do it between 1:30 and 6. (*Pause.*)

DOMINIC

I try to stay out of her hair.

SNARK

True. On a related note, as you just cited, I was extremely happy yesterday. Which is no big wonder, since directly before meeting you, I enjoyed a relaxing cup of tea with your delightful wife.

DOMINIC

Oh. That's nice.

SNARK

Sure was. Your wife brews delicious teas. She gathers the leaves fresh from the garden, I understand.

DOMINIC

Yep.

SNARK

Yesterday we had her favorite. Wormwood. Have you helped her cultivate the wormwood?

DOMINIC

Maybe. I'm not familiar with wormwood.

SNARK

Those bushes you were tending when I arrived – those are wormwood. You tend bushes of whose identities you are ignorant?

DOMINIC (*Shrugs*)

A bush is a bush, as someone once said. Anyway, I wasn't tending them, I was weeding.

SNARK

Ah. Well, allow me to educate you. Wormwood leaves are wide and flat, with five-or-so leaflets. They can grow a few feet tall. The kind your wife has here are a deep green and slightly oily in appearance. They're relatively easy to identify.

DOMINIC

So they are.

SNARK

Unless your eyesight is failing, of course.

DOMINIC

Of course.

SNARK

Especially unless your eyesight is failing *and* you've got weeds growing directly behind your wormwood which, to first approximation, resemble wormwood.

(Silence.)

I noticed them yesterday. Mrs. Hellenworth hasn't, of course, the wormwood camouflages them so effectively, especially to someone who can't see much anyway. Poor lady, she sure's got her work cut out for her. Weeds crop up in the most random places, don't they?

(Silence.)

Oh, but I've interrupted you, haven't I. It isn't as though you have until the end of Time before your wife comes back, is it? Forgive me. You did say you were busy weeding, didn't you?

Scene 20*The Players:*

JENNIFER

PHONE (Voice)

ROB (Voice)

ANOTHER VOICE (Voice)

SNUGGLES

Scene: Thursday, 3pm. JENNIFER's apartment bedroom.*At Rise:* JENNIFER sits on bed, looking up a webpage on her laptop. Dials a phone number, listens.

PHONE

Welcome to the Hardware Heaven, your source for all your home shopping needs! For electronics, press One. For kitchenware, press Two ...

(JENNIFER presses Zero.)

Sorry! I did not understand your selection. Please try again.

JENNIFER

Aw, fuck.

PHONE

You said, "Furniture." Is that correct? If that is correct, press or say One. If that is not corr –

JENNIFER

No.

PHONE

Sorry! I didn't not understand your selection. *(Pause.)* For electronics, press One. For kitchenware, press Two ...*(JENNIFER presses Zero.)*

Sorry! I did not und –

JENNIFER

Jesus!

PHONE

You said, "Paints." Is that correct? If that is correct, press or say One. If that is not correct, press or say Tw –

JENNIFER

Two. *(Pause.)*

PHONE

Main Menu. Welcome to the Hardware Heaven, your source for all your home shopping needs!
For Electronics, press One ...

(JENNIFER presses "Speakerphone", lays cell on desk while she surfs internet. PHONE VOICE blasts around room.)

Sorry, I did not understand your selection. Please try again. For electronics, press One. For kitchenware, press Two. For all other departments, press Three.

(5-second pause.)

Sorry! I did not understand your selection. Please try again. For electronics, press One. For kitchenware, press Two. For all other departments, press Three.

(5-second pause.)

To speak to a customer service representative, press Zero.

(JENNIFER presses Zero.)

All of our agents are currently assisting other callers. Your call is important to us. Please wait!
Your call will be answered in the order in which it was received.

(Click. Soft elevator music. Cheery voice)

You can reach us on the web at www.websitethatwontansweryourquestion.com ...

(PHONE rambles on about what the caller can find if he or she goes to this website, followed by soft elevator music.)

All of our agents are currently assisting other callers. Your call is imp – *(Click.)*

ROB *(Voice; lethargic)*

Hardware Heaven this is Rob how kin I help you.

JENNIFER *(Grabs phone)*

Hi! Do you sell self-cleaning toilets?

ROB

Hold. *(Click. Soft elevator music.)*

JENNIFER

Motherfucker!

PHONE

All of our agents are currently assisting other callers. Your call is important to us. Please wait!
Your call will be answered in the order in which it was received.

(Click. Soft elevator music. Click.)

ANOTHER VOICE

Yo, Appliances.

JENNIFER

Hi. Do you sell self-cleaning toilets?

VOICE

Uh ... *(~ 10-second pause.)* Yeah. Like, tons of 'em. Like, billions.

JENNIFER

Great. How late are you open?

VOICE (*Aside*)

Theo, how late we open? (*Pause. Into phone*) Nine.

JENNIFER

Great, thanks. (*Click.*) What about over the weekend? (*Pause.*) Hello?

Scene 21*The Players:*

DOC NICK
 SNUGGLES
 SNARK

Scene: Thursday, 7:00 pm. DOC NICK's office.*At Rise:* DOC NICK sits at desk, examining list of patient expenses. Enter SNUGGLES wearing maintenance ID and carrying a broom.

DOC NICK
 About time you showed up.

SNUGGLES
 I've been looking for you at your house.

DOC NICK
 Haven't been home much this week.

SNUGGLES
 I don't know how to communicate with you, ever since –

DOC NICK
 I know, the damn toilet's thrown everything off. But I never said you could take any in advance of payment.

SNUGGLES
 What are you talking about?

DOC NICK
 Well, *someone's* been in the garden.

SNUGGLES
 Mrs. Hellenworth said it was raccoons.

(DOC NICK regards him disdainfully)
 It's not me, I swear. Why would I be hanging around having bullshit conversations with Mrs. Hellenworth every chance I get, if I wasn't desperate? *(Pause.)*

DOC NICK
 That's a strong point. And you have been one of my most reliable buyers. Until this week, of course.

SNUGGLES

Well, who else besides Jennifer knows the garden?

(NICK's eyes flicker with a sudden thought.)

What?

NICK

Nothing. Anyway, I have to close up shop.

SNUGGLES

Seriously? Why? Is it Patient Services?

DOC NICK

No, nothing like that, thank god. The police found the garden. Or some detective, I don't understand who he exactly is. Frankly, I don't understand what the hell's going on, but I need to nip this enterprise in the bud before he starts digging deeper.

SNARK *(Enter)*

G'evening, Doctor Hellenworth and Snuggles.

DOC NICK

Ah, Christ.

SNARK

So the raccoons were framed, eh?

DOC NICK

Detective, you've got me in a corner, what else do you want from me?

SNARK

What's this about Patient Services?

DOC NICK

Nothing. Patients complain.

SNARK

Why?

DOC NICK

Because they can.

(DOC NICK picks up his pager and reads screen.)

Looks like I'm wanted in the OR immediately.

SNARK

At 7pm?

DOC NICK

The ER, then. Whatever. Next time, make an appointment with my secretary. (*Exit.*)

SNARK (*To SNUGGLES*)

So Snuggles, you've been engaged in business with Doctor Hellenworth?

SNUGGLES

I think I shouldn't respond to that question.

SNARK

Good thinking. Say, there's a pretzel spill in the hallway you might want to look into.

(SNUGGLES hastily exits with broom. SNARK watches him leave; as soon as he's gone, SNARK approaches patient paperwork on DOC NICK's desk; starts reading.)

Scene 22

The Players:
 EDENBERRY
 DOC PETE
 SNARK

Scene: Friday morning. An exam room at the hospital.

At Rise: EDENBERRY sits in a chair, waiting. Knock at door.

EDENBERRY

Come in!

DOC PETE (*Enter*)

Good morning.

EDENBERRY

Happy Friday, Dr. Trey! I postponed this morning's brewing. You sounded rather insistent on the phone.

DOC PETE

Yes. Your MRI results came back.

EDENBERRY

Oh! My brain picture?

DOC PETE

Yes.

EDENBERRY

How exciting! Are you excited?

DOC PETE

(Unsure of how to answer, as he brings a computer monitor to life)

Well ...

EDENBERRY

Oh, that's all right, Doctor. Not every question has an answer.

DOC PETE

(Brings up image on screen. It does not matter whether the AUDIENCE can see the screen, but if they can: the image shows a brain MRI with two symmetric and gigantic lesions, one on either side of brain.)

Do you see these two large white areas?

EDENBERRY

Yes.

DOC PETE

These are two tumors growing on the nerve connecting your brain to your auditory and vestibular systems, on either side of your head. They are most likely not malignant, although only a biopsy will say for certain. They can explain the buzzing in your ear that you have described. It is most likely that you have Neurofibromatosis Type Two. This is a disease characterized by multiple non-cancerous tumors of the central and peripheral nervous system. Let me emphasize that if it is Neurofibromatosis Two, then these lesions are *not cancerous*.

EDENBERRY

NF Two, you don't say.

DOC PETE

You are familiar with this disease?

EDENBERRY

I've heard of it. But are you sure? It's only one picture.

DOC PETE

True, just a single measurement was made. But these images are pretty unambiguous.

EDENBERRY

Are you certain they belong to me? You could have mixed mine up with the lady who went before me; I noticed she looked a tad under the weather.

DOC PETE

That would be exceedingly unlikely.

EDENBERRY

But not impossible?

DOC PETE

For your sake, it's safer to assume we got it right.

EDENBERRY

But that doesn't look one bit like what my brain *feels* like.

DOC PETE

I imagine not. Things can seem paradoxical to neurology patients.

EDENBERRY

Well. Would they explain my – other problem?

DOC PETE

Incontinence is not common in patients with N Two, but it is not unheard of. The nervous system controls the muscles of the bladder. N Two can cause spinal lesions as well as those you see on your brain MRI. Spinal lesions can inhibit many bodily mechanisms, including bladder control. We have already scheduled you for a spinal MRI. Now, you say you have heard of this disease. There are genetic tests we can perform in order to confirm the diagnosis.

EDENBERRY

Genetic tests?

DOC PETE

It is a genetic condition. Your aunt had it.

EDENBERRY

She did? She died too.

DOC PETE

Died too?

EDENBERRY

Long ago.

DOC PETE

(Doesn't understand but moves on.)

Well, over the past few decades, this condition has become manageable in some cases.

EDENBERRY *(Appears surprised)*

It has? That's odd. *(Knock at door.)*

DOC PETE

(Hesitant; looks at EDENBERRY, who doesn't seem terribly distraught.)

Er – come in?

SNARK *(Enter)*

Good morning, Doctor Trey, Mrs. Hellenworth.

DOC PETE *(Jumps up, irate)*

You!

EDENBERRY *(Delighted)*

Detective! What a surprise!

SNARK

Your patient file indicated you'd be here. Am I intruding?

DOC PETE

Are you intruding?!

EDENBERRY

Of course not, please join us. Dr. Trey was just informing me that I have a genetic neurological disease.

SNARK

That is rotten news, Ma'am. Have you considered getting a second opinion?

DOC PETE

Mrs. Hellenworth, surely you don't want this man to remain while we discuss your treatment?

EDENBERRY

Why ever not? (*Pause.*)

DOC PETE

As you wish. Treatment for N Two depends on the stage of the disease. Your tumors are advanced and require removal.

EDENBERRY

I thought you said that they aren't cancerous.

DOC PETE

Most likely they are not, but they still must be removed.

EDENBERRY

How – do you propose to remove them?

DOC PETE

The only means of removing tumors this large is invasive surgery through the skull.

EDENBERRY

Do you mean you want to cut my head open?

DOC PETE

With your consent. We cannot guarantee the preservation of your hearing or facial function. Your ability to breathe and eat unassisted might be encumbered, but that's not terribly likely. And as these tumors are affecting your vestibular system, you will probably require rehabilitation in order to walk again. (*Pause.*)

EDENBERRY (*To herself*)

And now *this* feels like a dream.

DOC PETE

I'm sorry?

EDENBERRY (*Bringing herself back*)

Oh, I'm sorry, Doctor, you were discussing walking. Will I walk again?

DOC PETE

Most likely yes.

EDENBERRY

But I might be deaf and have a paralyzed face and need a breathing tube?

DOC PETE

Those are possibilities with low but significant probability.

EDENBERRY

What options do I have?

DOC PETE

None. (*Pause.*)

EDENBERRY

So then it's all settled? (*Pause.*)

DOC PETE

(Looks at her in concern, given that her attitude suggests that she does not grasp the gravity of the information he has just given her. But continues.)

We'll need to set a date. You'll be out of commission for several months, so you'll need to clear your schedule.

EDENBERRY

(Seeming vastly more concerned now than she was about the diagnosis)

Goodness, the garden! My wormwood bushes require daily attention. What will happen to them?

SNARK

You could ask Dr. Hellenworth to lend a hand. He'd be delighted to have your blessing.

EDENBERRY (*Dismissive*)

Dominic? Oh, he can't even figure out how to wash a teapot.

SNARK

I'd still recommend a second opinion before you juggle your schedule around, Mrs. Hellenworth. An MRI can mean different things for different people.

Scene 23*The Players:*

EDENBERRY

INTRUDER (GAIL)

JENNIFER

Scene: Friday, midday. The Hellenworth kitchen.

At Rise: SNARK stands outside window, shading glass with his hand so that he can peer into kitchen. Exits. The INTRUDER clad in black Enters from hall. Tip-toes in and glances around cautiously. Quietly opens a cupboard, removes a drinking glass, reaches for water faucet. Enter EDENBERRY from back door, just home from hospital. INTRUDER does not hear her enter, due to running water. EDENBERRY reacts silently to INTRUDER. Sneaks up behind INTRUDER and grabs her arm that is outstretched toward faucet.

INTRUDER

Ah! Let me go!

EDENBERRY

Who are you?

INTRUDER

Let me go!

EDENBERRY

What are you doing in our home?

INTRUDER

You're hurting me!

EDENBERRY

Then explain yourself.

INTRUDER

Let go of my arm! You're twisting my arm!

(EDENBERRY looks at INTRUDER's arm; gasps in astonishment.)

EDENBERRY

Great sakes alive!

(Looks from INTRUDER's arm to her face. Loosens her grip. Disbelieving)

Gail?

INTRUDER

What?

EDENBERRY

Gail, you're not a ghost?! (*Stares in astonishment.*) You're not! You're alive!

INTRUDER

I'm not Gail.

EDENBERRY

You most certainly are! I'd recognize those forearms anywhere! (*Pause.*)

GAIL (*Resigned*)

Okay, Mom.

EDENBERRY

My goodness! Gail, my baby! What are you doing here?!

GAIL

I was thirsty.

EDENBERRY

But you died of Neurofibromatosis Type Two fourteen years ago when you were only a child of twelve!

GAIL

That was a cover. I ran away from home.

EDENBERRY

Oh! Did you have Neurofibromatosis Type Two at all?

GAIL

No, Mom.

EDENBERRY

Because, you know, Neurofibromatosis Type Two is manageable in some cases.

GAIL

That's great.

EDENBERRY

Oh, but we had the most beautiful funeral in your honor. Did you come? Did you see the dried gardenia petal arrangements? They cost your father a small fortune!

GAIL

No, I missed it.

EDENBERRY

That's a pity! What are you doing here?

GAIL

What are *you* doing here? You're supposed to be at market.

EDENBERRY

I had a doctor's appointment!

GAIL

I come back to shower upstairs. I don't get hot water in my building.

EDENBERRY

Well! Wait until your father finds out I'm not crazy! Sweetie, why don't you sit down with me for tea? We can catch up on lost time.

GAIL

I don't know if I should. I'm not the same person I used to be.

EDENBERRY

Certainly, you're not! You're alive now!

GAIL

I was alive before.

EDENBERRY

Well, yes, I suppose you were. (*Gazes at her happily.*)

JENNIFER

(*Enter SR through back door, lugging a toilet-shaped object covered with a plastic tarp, pipe wrench in pocket. Begins lugging it SL toward hallway – which is no small task as she delivers this line.*)

Happy birthday, Mom! Surprise! It's a self-cleaning one! Since you're always complaining so much about a dirty toilet, now you never have to think about it again! And we don't have to hear about it anymore (*laughs*). I tried to modify your old one, I wanted to surprise you. But that didn't pan out, so I got you a brand-new one! It's top-of-the-line, it's from Hardware Heaven.

EDENBERRY

Jennifer, look! It's your estranged sister Gail, back from the dead!

JENNIFER (*Stops*)

What?

GAIL

Hi Jen.

EDENBERRY

It's Gail, Jennifer! She didn't die from Neurofibromatosis Type Two after all!

(Pause. JENNIFER stares at GAIL.)

GAIL

I'm just here to wash up. *(Pause.)*

JENNIFER

So. Out from the morgue like nothing happened.

GAIL

Actually, I didn't have to spend time in that morgue. I paid a high school friend of mine who had a medical internship, he found the body of some homeless girl no one could identify. She didn't even look like me. *(Pause.)* Korean, I think. *(Pause.)* I'm sorry if I ever hurt you, Jen.

JENNIFER

Okay, so Mom, do you want to check out the toilet first or should I just install it?

EDENBERRY

Jennifer, Darling, I was just inviting Gail to stay for tea. Will you care to join us?

JENNIFER

Oh wow, Mom, you know, I really need to get back to campus. I just have time to drop this thing and go.

GAIL

You're still angry about Mister Winkles, aren't you, Jen?

JENNIFER

What? What does that have to do with anything? It's been like thirteen years.

GAIL

Fourteen.

JENNIFER

Mom, what do you want me to do with the toilet?

EDENBERRY *(Sigh)*

Oh, you two. Always with the bickering.

JENNIFER

Always? We haven't bickered in thirteen years.

GAIL

Fourteen.

EDENBERRY

Don't you two have anything meaningful to say to each other? *(Pause.)*

JENNIFER *(Quietly)*

Where would you like the toilet, Mom? *(Pause.)*

EDENBERRY *(Disappointed; disinterestedly)*

I thought you were going to bring mine back yesterday.

JENNIFER

Yeah, I'm sorry, we lost it. You know how it goes. But this one's brand new! Happy birthday!

EDENBERRY

Thank you. It's tomorrow.

JENNIFER

I know! It'll be in the bathroom.

(Continues hauling toilet; stops again just short of Exit. Turns to GAIL.)

Dad gave Mister Winkles to *me*, you know. You could have left him behind.

(Exit SL. GAIL starts absently brushing dirt from her clothing.)

EDENBERRY

Jennifer's young, Gail. She hasn't learned the power of forgiveness. *(GAIL shrugs.)* How about that tea?

GAIL *(Sits)*

Okay.

EDENBERRY

(Pours two cups; sets them on table; sits. Noticing dirt on GAIL's clothing)

How did you get so dirty, Honey? Look at that dirt!

(Enter NICK behind them.)

GAIL

I'm not the cleanest person in the world, as you always liked to point out. *(Sips tea.)*

EDENBERRY

(Noticing a stem sticking out of GAIL's pocket)

Gail, is that from the garden?

GAIL

What? No.

NICK

Gail? *(Pause.)*

GAIL

Hi, Dad.

NICK

You came back.

EDENBERRY

You knew she was alive?!

NICK

I ... wondered.

GAIL

Yeah, later I realized that no neurosurgeon would swallow that Neurofibromatosis Type Two story. I should have picked Car Accident or something

(Eyes widen as taste of the tea sinks in.)

Woah, Mom, you've got talent!

EDENBERRY

Thank you, Darling.

Scene 24

The Players:

SNARK

JENNIFER

SNUGGLES

Scene: Friday afternoon. The campus stage of the university that JENNIFER and SNUGGLES attend.

At Rise: JENNIFER and SNUGGLES sit on stage floor eating lunch. SNARK stands wherever he feels like standing. JENNIFER holds a teddy bear from the hospital gift shop.

JENNIFER

So Detective, I kinda need to get back to writing today; my entire dissertation's due next week.

SNARK

Well, hold your horses, Ladies 'n Gentlemen; we may be on the brink of clearing up this mystery.

JENNIFER

Have you figured out who the dead guy is?

SNARK

His name is Clark.

JENNIFER

Wow, that was quick work!

SNARK

I should call him *something*. "Dead Guy" seems callous.

JENNIFER

Why Clark?

SNARK

What's wrong with Clark?

JENNIFER

Um. Nothing.

SNARK

My brother's name's Clark.

JENNIFER

Oh! Sorry.

SNARK

Now back to the issue at hand –

SNUGGLES (*Whispering to JENNIFER*)

Clark Snark?

SNARK

– let's review. Ms. Hellenworth, you didn't kill Clark.

JENNIFER

No!

SNARK

And Snuggles, you didn't kill Clark.

SNUGGLES

Naw.

JENNIFER (*In a baby voice, to teddy bear*)

You didn't either, did you, Mister Winkles?

SNARK

I saw a teddy bear like that a couple days ago.

JENNIFER

Really? Where?

SNARK

In the hospital where Snuggles was born.

SNUGGLES

Yeah? I bought Jen that today at the hospital gift shop.

JENNIFER

Wasn't that sweet of him?

SNUGGLES

She just seemed to need a teddy bear today.

SNARK

How sweet. Speaking of the hospital, Ms. Hellenworth, are you aware that your mother has just this morning been diagnosed with Neurofibromatosis Type Two, a rare genetic neurological disorder?

JENNIFER (*Snorts contemptuously*)

I've heard that one before.

SNARK

Yes, I know about your sister, but this time it's true. (*Pause.*)

JENNIFER

Mom is sick?

SNARK

N Two, as it's referred to in medical lingo, can cause problems with both hearing and vision. Which explains how your father was able to grow marijuana in your mother's garden without your mother noticing.

JENNIFER (*Stares at SNARK*)

What? Are you talking about?

SNARK

He's been making a pretty penny off it from his patients, if their charts are any indication. In the interest of pain management. Which is kind of him, in principle. Which is why I won't turn him in.

JENNIFER

That would explain the entertainment center last Christmas.

SNARK

And his numerous Rolex's. Your father has a veritable fetish going on there. What he isn't so keen on is washing dishes.

JENNIFER

Why would he wash dishes?

SNARK

Typically, after using a dish, it is customary to wash it. Particularly if it is coated with greasy residue from the preparation of marijuana-tainted oil.

JENNIFER

Dad cooks with it?!

SNARK

I imagine one does not offer a joint to a lung cancer patient. Sweets go down easier. As I said, your father can be a thoughtful man.

JENNIFER

You caught him baking?

SNARK

No, I caught your mother stoned.

JENNIFER (*Relieved*)

Hah! My god, I was actually believing this. Have you ever met my mother, for like, thirty consecutive seconds?

SNARK

She didn't do it intentionally. As I said, your father's a slob in the kitchen. He uses her teapot to prepare his drinkable substances. He doesn't wash it. Haven't you noticed your mother's uncharacteristic giggly-ness whenever you see her between the hours of eleven am and two?

JENNIFER

No.

SNARK

In fairness, I didn't either, until she offered me wormwood tea one afternoon. An hour later I was in your father's OR, giggling like a moron. I was stoned out of my mind for the rest of the day.

JENNIFER

Mom doesn't know?

SNARK

I don't think so. It takes an hour for marijuana's effect to kick in if ingested through the digestive system, which is just about the time she heads out to garden each day. She thinks her wormwood trimming is magically alleviating her N Two symptoms. Marijuana is a versatile substance. She's been unknowingly self-medicating.

JENNIFER

So Mom really is sick?

SNARK

She is.

JENNIFER

And she knows?

SNARK

She does. Actually, it seems as though she knew it subconsciously before receiving the diagnosis. Quite the intuition your mother's got. So I s'pose it's possible she knows on some level about your father and the garden, too; I did not probe her on that one.

JENNIFER

But all she has to do is keep drinking weed tea and she'll be fine?

SNARK

Unfortunately, no. Marijuana is a temporary solution. She'll have to have her head sawed open to remove tumors that are crushing her brain. *(Pause.)*

JENNIFER *(Dumbfounded)*

Ah.

SNARK

You said it, Kitten. But it might alleviate her vision loss, tinnitus, and incontinence.

JENNIFER

Incontinence?

SNARK

She hasn't mentioned it? I wouldn't think so, kind of embarrassing to admit to your daughter. Also explains your heartless removal of her downstairs toilet.

JENNIFER

Oh no! I didn't know it was *that* much of an issue for her. I was trying to modify it as a surprise for her birthday. She hates a dirty toilet, she complains all the time. I was going to have it back to her by Thursday.

SNARK

Why Thursday?

JENNIFER *(Shrugs)*

Just how long I'd figured it would take, along with my dissertation writing.

SNARK

A toilet birthday gift. That's another new one for me. Well, don't feel too guilty about the toilet yet, you don't know the half of it.

SNUGGLES *(Nervously)*

Uh, Detective, let's get back to the dead body?

SNARK *(Ignoring SNUGGLES)*

As you know, Ms. Hellenworth, your mother is not one for grime.

JENNIFER

Exactly! She's probably never cleaned the bathroom in her life.

SNARK

So what safer marijuana drop-off point than the back of a toilet tank, eh, Snuggles?

(JENNIFER looks at SNUGGLES; SNUGGLES looks at his feet.)

JENNIFER

Why are you asking him?

SNARK

Until you hatched your toilet modification scheme, your boyfriend here's been one of your father's most reliable buyers.

JENNIFER

Snugg? Really?

SNARK

The toilet's their exchange depot. Your dad tapes a dime bag to the back of the bowl, and when you and Snuggles drop by to visit, Snuggles excuses himself for a moment. To replace the dime bag with a wad of tens. Only place in the house where the exchange would be Mrs-Hellenworth-proof.

JENNIFER (*To SNUGGLES*)

That's what's been bothering you all week? (*SNUGGLES shrugs.*) Why didn't you tell me?

SNUGGLES

I didn't know how you'd feel about your dad being my new supplier.

JENNIFER

Hon, I wouldn't care! That stuff's amazing. Why didn't you just start using the upstairs toilet?

SNUGGLES

I didn't get a chance to communicate with him. I've been looking for him all week.

JENNIFER

How'd you find each other in the first place?

SNUGGLES

In the hospital cafeteria. He spilled ketchup one day.

SNARK

Hospitals are such effective breeding grounds for strong long-term relationships, aren't they?

SNARK (*To JENNIFER*)

And *you'll* be rekindling an old relationship too, now that it turns out that your mother's upstairs bathroom ghost is real.

JENNIFER

You mean Gail?

SNARK

Yep. Gail wasn't too careful about making sure your mother was out before dropping by for a shower. But she was pretty adept at avoiding crossing paths where it mattered most.

JENNIFER

Where's that?

SNARK

In the garden.

JENNIFER

Gail?

SNARK

Well, someone had been stealing marijuana from the garden, and it didn't seem to be raccoons or Snuggles. Your mother never lets anyone outside the family near it. So your dead older sister was a pretty obvious suspect.

JENNIFER

But she was dead.

SNARK

Well, she seems fit as a fiddle now.

JENNIFER

Gail's always been a troublemaker.

SNARK

Your sister may be a bad apple, Ms. Hellenworth. But I doubt she killed Clark. And so far as I can figure it, neither did your mother or your father. Not that there was ever any reason to suspect them in the first place.

JENNIFER

Then why have you been digging into my family history this whole time?

SNARK

Your family's a terrific story, Sweetheart. Drama, human interest. It's got it all.

JENNIFER

I never thought about it that way.

SNARK

You might try it. Now to Clark. Did somebody murder Clark? There are infinite possibilities there, so the question becomes, which possibilities are most probable?

(Thinks.)

The dead body was found on a Wednesday, correct?

JENNIFER

Tuesday.

SNARK (*Consults notepad*)

I arrived on the scene at 12:00am on Wednesday.

JENNIFER

Oh, we were working on Tuesday night, but we worked through midnight. (*To SNUGGLES*) It was stupid to try starting work before the lights came back on, wasn't it?

SNARK

Why were the lights off?

SNUGGLES

Saves money. They come on at midnight automatically for the cleaning crew.

SNARK

Right, *no one person* turned the lights back on.

SNUGGLES

Right.

SNARK

And they came up precisely as the clock turned to midnight.

(Thinks hard.)

So. It seems now that our Tuesday, or Wednesday, per se, is not the time period in question.

SNUGGLES

It's not?

SNARK

It is that infinitesimal time *in between* the two days that we are concerned with. We are not dealing with probability; we have entered the realm of ... uncertainty.

JENNIFER

We have?

SNARK (*Nods*)

In the time it took for the day to change from Tuesday to Wednesday, the dead guy appeared.

JENNIFER

How long a time was that?

SNARK

Pretty quick. Just long enough for the lights to come up.

SNUGGLES

They came up right away. They don't take any time.

SNARK

Nothing takes no time. The time frame in question is short but not nonexistent. And during that murky time – when it is not quite Tuesday anymore and not quite yet fully Wednesday – there exists uncertainty. What happens then?

JENNIFER

“In between Tuesday and Wednesday” isn't a time.

SNARK

Isn't it?

(Pause; JENNIFER and SNUGGLES look puzzled.)

Uncertainty will always lurk in the crevices. Sure, we're all familiar with Tuesdays and Wednesdays and the Fourth of July, but definitions have limits. Nothing to be done about it. We do our best to schedule our lives anyway. Things pop up and we deal with them. And life goes on. For some of us.

JENNIFER

So where did Clark come from?

SNARK

A pertinent question, but not necessarily answerable. Remember that Clark appeared at about the same time as the toilet disappeared. Two exceedingly unlikely events occurred at approximately the same time. As you suggested earlier, perhaps they're linked. I'll wager that the porcelain toilet spontaneously transformed into the fleshy decaying Clark. The Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle dictates that given a short enough time, energy for such a mass transformation can be spontaneously created out of nothing. Conservation of energy is temporarily violated.

JENNIFER

A toilet can spontaneously turn into a corpse if it does it quickly enough?

SNARK

Sure, could happen any time. Probably won't but could. Furthermore, remember that the toilet did not necessarily become a dead guy until you were able to observe it. And one's observation of an entity in part defines that entity.

JENNIFER

So –maybe the toilet turned into a dead guy because we looked at it funny?

SNARK

Possibly. But again, impossible to say for certain.

SNUGGLES

It's hard to believe all this happened between Tuesday and Wednesday.

SNARK

Indeed. *(Pause.)*

SNUGGLES

So ... Case closed?

SNARK

Looks that way, Kiddo. *(Pause.)*

JENNIFER

I'm sorry about the toilet, Snugg.

SNUGGLES

Aw, it's okay, it's over.

JENNIFER

Detective, after my mom gets her head cut open, she'll be all right, right?

SNARK

No idea, Cupcake.

JENNIFER

What?

SNARK

I'm no expert. As far as I've heard, NFII is no picnic, and recovery from brain surgery is no picnic. Interesting, she didn't seem too distraught by the news. Perhaps it hadn't sunk in.

JENNIFER

But she won't – ?

SNARK

Again, no idea. If she doesn't, you two would do well to make sure that she continues to have a functioning toilet on the ground floor whenever she happens to need it.

(Pause. The full weight of this information hangs on JENNIFER.)

On a related note, I've gotta ask, I'm curious, it's my nature. Care to explain this teddy bear obsession that seems to run in both the Hellenworth and Masterson families?

JENNIFER

(Looking blankly at her teddy bear)

What?

SNARK

Not just you, Ms. Hellenworth. Your sister Gail, your father, the hospital staff, Snuggles' mother, apparently they even show up in your mother's dreams. I'm quite taken with it. What's the appeal?

JENNIFER

Oh. That question, uh – *(at a loss)*.

SNARK *(Finishes for her)*

Doesn't really have an answer?

JENNIFER

No.

SNARK

Understood. Not every question has an answer, Sweetheart. It'll soon serve you well that you already know that.

JENNIFER *(Dazed)*

Thank you for this information, Detective. *(To SNUGGLES)* Forget what I said about writing today; let's go see Mom.

SNUGGLES

Isn't it due Monday?

JENNIFER

Let's go see Mom.

SNARK

That's the spirit, Champ. Occasionally one learns quickly how little most things matter. Bring her a teddy bear; she could use one. *(Dons hat.)* I'll be going. *(To JENNIFER, indicating SNUGGLES)* Be good to this one; he's a keeper. Relay my cheeriest birthday wishes to your mother tomorrow. Enjoy the rest of your lives, Kiddos. And get out this weekend; get some air. The forecast is delightful so far. *(Turns to AUDIENCE and tips hat)* Good day. *(JENNIFER follows SNARK's gaze and stares out at AUDIENCE in blank shock.)*

CURTAIN