

# THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF AMERICA (abridged)

## ACT ONE

*(The set consists of two elements. Against the black upstage drop there is a long illustrated timeline depicting people and events from 1492-2000. It is broken up in the middle by a large American flag, which hangs vertically UC. It is not the American flag with fifty stars currently in use, but the original flag with thirteen stars in a circle.)*

*(The audience hears the following recorded announcement.)*

TOD: *(On tape)* Ladies and gentlemen, The Complete History of America (abridged) will begin shortly. The animals used in tonight's performance were tortured under the strict supervision of the American Humane Association. The actors in tonight's performance are proud to wear Nike®, the Official Footwear of The Complete History of America. Nike®. Just do it. And management wishes to remind you that this theater is equipped to provide assistance to the hearing-impaired. If you or a member of your party is hearing...paired...eeze...tact...nush...for more...nkyou. And now, for your edification and entertainment, The Complete History of America (abridged).

*(The boys enter from the back of the auditorium, singing. They are dressed smartly in slacks and dress shirts and, perhaps, coats and ties. BEN beats on a toy drum, JON crashes cymbals. They march to the stage, singing in harmony but two counts off the beat.)*

ALL: Oh say can you see by  
The dawn's early light what  
So proudly we hailed at  
The twilight's last gleaming whose  
Broad stripes and bright stars through  
The perilous fight o'er  
The ramparts we watched were  
So gallantly streaming and

The rockets' red glare the  
Bombs bursting in air gave  
Proof through the night that  
Our flag was still there, oh

Say does that star-spangled banner  
 Yet wave o'er the  
 Land of the free and the home  
 Of the brave.

JON: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, I'm Jon Putnam.

TOD: I'm Tod Zimmerman.

BEN: I'm Ben Tebbe, and welcome to tonight's performance of...

ALL: ...The Complete History of America (abridged).

JON: Tonight we explore the history of a great nation. But before we do, I'm sure many of you are wondering, "Why? Why the complete history of America?" Well, I'm sure there are as many answers to that question as there are members of tonight's cast. Tod, why don't you start?

TOD: Thank you, Jon, and in the tradition of my white Anglo-Saxon Puritan imperialist westward-expansionist capitalist intellectual forebears—I will be brief. I believe it was Benjamin Franklin who said, "History is written by the winners." Well, tonight it's our turn. Ben?

BEN: What?

TOD: Well, would you like to explain why we're doing this show?

BEN: Oh...well, all right. Before we started doing this show I didn't know too much about American history, so I started to read up on it—you know, like in books 'n stuff? And I took a ton of notes. I must have written like three pages of notes, front and back. And I found a quote about what history is that I thought was totally cool. It said, "History is the deconstruction of necessary illusions and the study of emotionally potent oversimplifications." And that still holds true today, because I see this show as about remembering. Remembering the past. Because it's like that old saying: "Those of us who forget the past are doomed to, you know, forget like other things, like your car keys, or even your own phone number." So I see this show as like a Post-It note on the refrigerator of America. A Post-It note that says, "Hey, America! Don't forget to set your tivo!" 'Cause it's only through remembering our past that we

can learn from our mistakes, or at least blame them on somebody else, and then move on, into a better future. An enlightened capitalism, perhaps. Free of all forms of racism, sexism, ageism, weightism, hair-colorism, making-funism, and Godism. And you may say that I'm a moron, and I say to you, yes. But I'm a moron with a dream, and that, my friends, is the most dangerous kind of moron.

JON: Thank you, Ben. That was powerful. Let me see if I can crystallize for you why exactly it is we're doing the Complete History of America (abridged). In fact, I think it's very simple. Some time ago we received a letter from a ten-year old girl named Amy that lives in Warwickshire, England. Amy writes (*He takes out the letter and reads.*) "Dear guys, I was in Columbus a few years ago to shop at the fabulous City Center and I saw your production of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*

*ALL: (abridged).*

JON: And I think it would be fun for you three Americans to condense all of English history, because you three are so hysterical and handsome and intelligent and wise. Love and kisses, your fan forever, Amy." Well, Amy, this is the kind of letter that pisses us off! Did it occur to you that maybe we have no interest whatsoever in English history? Why can't Americans do American history?

TOD: Where do all you English get off with this cultural superiority complex?

BEN: Yeah, don't be a rude thoughtless little pig, Amy! We've got a culture, too, y'know, and a history.

JON: Yeah, and it may not be as long as the British but it's like my mother always said, "It's not the length of your history, it's what you've done with it."

TOD: And when we looked into it, we realized that many Americans are at best uninformed or at worst embarrassed about our own history.

JON: Well, damn it, we've got nothing to be embarrassed about! We brought the world its first democracy and man on the moon and Mark Twain and...

BEN: And Spiderman.

JON: Yeah! And Spiderman! And Starbucks, and Viagra, and Text Messaging

TOD: And Arnold Schwarzenegger!

JON: So don't go telling us we don't have a culture and a history, little smarty-pants Amy!

TOD: So hang on, Amy, we've got a lot to accomplish in the next ninety minutes.

BEN: Let's do it!

*(They come together for a body check.)*

ALL: Go...US!

*(Blackout. Lights up on JON. BEN blows trumpet.)*

JON: We begin at the beginning: 1492 Spain! (BEN blows trumpet) The first chapter of the history of America is about to be written by that legendary Italian explorer....

*(BEN attempts to blow trumpet, JON prevents him.)*

JON & BEN: ...Amerigo Vespucci!

*(BEN exits.)*

JON: We join him now in his humble map shop on the Spanish dockyards.

*(JON exits as TOD enters, in the garb of a 15<sup>th</sup>-century Italian. Remember what we said about playing it straight? In this scene we used bad Italian accents and flamboyant stereotypical hand-gestures...but we did it very seriously.)*

TOD/VESPUCCI: Ring-a! Ring-a! *(Answering his hand)*  
Hello, Maps-R-Us, Amerigo Vespucci here... What? Have we got maps?! We're the map freakin mavens! What are you looking for? ...A sea route to India? What are you, nuts? I got your sea route to India right here, buddy...

*(He takes a swig from the boda bag.)*

BEN/SOPHIA: *(Offstage)* Amerigo!

*(TOD sprays his wine [actually water] out onto the audience. BEN bursts into the room dressed as SOPHIA VESPUCCI.)*

**TOD/VESPUCCI: The rain in Spain falls mainly on you!**

BEN/SOPHIA: Amerigo Vespucci!

TOD/VESPUCCI: Shaddup, woman! I'm on the telephone!  
*(Into phone)* Look, buddy, I'm gonna make you an offer you can't... **he hung up!** *(He hangs up.)* Great! You just lost me a customer. I hope you're happy, Sophia!

BEN/SOPHIA: You know what would make me happy?  
 If—just once—when I sent you out for food you didn't come back with fish! *(She slaps him with a large stuffed fish.)*

TOD/VESPUCCI: But Sophia, this is God's food!

BEN/SOPHIA: Don't give me that line about holy mackerel. I'm sick of it.

*(If your theater is situated so that you can see the audience clearly from the stage, and if latecomers can be seen entering by a majority of the crowd, then now's the time to break through the fourth wall. Arrange it so latecomers aren't seated until after TOD spits on the audience. BEN and TOD—carry on as best you can with the scene until the inevitable distraction in the audience becomes too much. Then TOD can yell, "Sophia, who are these people you're bringing into my living room?". BEN can then respond: "That's another thing, Amerigo—every time we get into an argument, you have friends over!" TOD: "Oh, no, these are not my friends! My friends would have been on time!" If all goes well, you should get thunderous applause. Then you can ask them where they were [and really get an answer—it'll pay off later]. You should introduce yourselves, which can bring JON on, angrily demanding, "Where are they?" The bit can end quite nicely by telling them what they missed. BEN says, "Well you missed it when I said 'You may say that I'm a moron'. That was pretty funny." JON then says, "And I said, 'It's not the length of your history, it's what you've done with it.'" Finally, TOD should march right up to the latecomers with his bottle of Chianti, say, "Well, the only thing I did was—" and spit-spray a fine mist of*

*water all over them. [Spit in the air so it cascades gently down, not right at them like some diseased llama.] Then get back onstage, say “Where the hell were we?” and resume the scene. Sure, the people you’re picking on won’t like it, but the rest of the audience will love it.)*

TOD/VESPUCCI: But I get a good deal on mackerel.

BEN/SOPHIA: We wouldn’t need a good deal on mackerel if you sold a few more maps!

TOD/VESPUCCI: Pasta fazule spaghetti Buttofuoco! Are you saying I’m a failure as a map maker?

BEN/SOPHIA: You know, my father, God rest his soul, the saint that he was, told me not to marry you. He said, “Marry a nice boy, like that Christopher Columbus. He’s going places!”

TOD/VESPUCCI: Well, maybe if I had a wife who gave me a little support every now and then.

BEN/SOPHIA: Oh, no! It’s not my fault. Let’s face it, Amerigo, nobody buys your maps because they’re crap!

TOD/VESPUCCI: What do you mean, crap?

BEN/SOPHIA: What part of crap don’t you understand?

TOD/VESPUCCI: I knew you’d say something like that. Oh my God. Here—take a look at this.

*(TOD claps his hands. JON tosses an inflatable globe from the wings, which TOD catches.)*

TOD/VESPUCCI: How do you like that, huh? I made it myself.

BEN/SOPHIA: Well, it might be fun at a Jimmy Buffet concert, but you don’t know what you’re doing. *(BEN tosses inflatable globe into audience.)*

BEN & TOD: Wastin’ away in Margueritaville, searching for my lost shaker and salt...

BEN/SOPHIA: Lemme have that back. *(He gestures to audience for the inflatable globe.)* Every time you see a land mass, you name it the same thing.

TOD/VESPUCCI: Aw, Ma!

BEN/SOPHIA: Don't 'Aw, Ma' me! Alright, let's take a look, Now, what's this? North America? Down here you've got South Amerigo? But what about this...Union of Soviet Socialist Vespucci? No, no, no. Besides, Amerigo, everybody knows that the world is flat.

TOD/VESPUCCI: Ha! I'm way ahead of you. Take a look at this.

*(JON tosses out a flat globe like a Frisbee while TOD rolls the globe back to him.)*

TOD/VESPUCCI: See? I made it shaped like a pizza pie!

BEN/SOPHIA: Sacro bambino!! You are worthless, Amerigo! Worthless!!

TOD/VESPUCCI: I am not worthless! I am trying to make a name for myself. I'm gonna be a contender.

*(JON enters, wearing his accordion. He hands TOD a ship's wheel for steering and places a conquistador helmet on TOD's head.)*

TOD/VESPUCCI: Goodbye, Sophia, I'm off to discover a larger world. You will never see me again. *(Handing her the Chianti bottle)* When you drink that wine and eat this fish, remember me.

BEN/SOPHIA: *(Wailing)* Amerigo!!!

*(JON vamps on a minor chord as the lights blackout. A spotlight comes up on each of the boys as he begins to sing.)*

JON: Amerigo!!

TOD: Amerigo!!

BEN: Amerigo!!

ALL: Hey!

JON: Amerigo Vespucci was his name

BEN: Vespucci!

JON: Charting land masses was his game

BEN: Poochy-woochy!

TOD: Not Scrabble or Parcheesi

ALL: No! Charting land masses was his game!

TOD/VESPUCCI: I set sail to chart the seas in 1499

ALL: In a vessel full of dreams  
Pastrami and cheap wine

JON: The mate was a mighty sailor man

TOD: The skipper brave and sure

BEN: Amerigo set sail that day  
For more than a three-hour tour

ALL: Much more than a three-hour tour

*(JON hits three sustained chords while TOD and BEN hum underneath his following speech.)*

JON: In 1502, after two long, treacherous voyages, Amerigo concluded that what everyone *thought* was India was *actually* a new world. He named it Mundus Novus—Latin for Giant Member. Eventually it bore his name: AMERICA. History was made.

*(The tune changes to “America the Beautiful.”)*

ALL: Amerigo! Amerigo!

TOD/VESPUCCI: God shed his grace on me!

BEN & JON: Your name will live forever now

ALL: From sea to shining sea!



Amerigo...Amerigo!

TOD: Yo, Sophia, I did it!

*(Blackout. TOD reenters while BEN rolls out a large flip chart. The top page, facing the audience, says: "AMERICAN.")*

TOD: And so, the new world was called "America." And we, the people of that land, were called "Americans." But what does it mean to be an American? Jon?

*(BEN and TOD find seats in the audience.)*

JON: Thank you, Tod. And thank you, Ben. Let's take a moment to look at this word, "American," shall we? Ben?

BEN: What?

JON: *(JON gesture for BEN to go sit in house)* It's just eight simple letters. It's just eight simple letters. But over the years this word has come to stand for Liberty, Equality, Prosperity, and the sort of gosh-darned persnickiness that has made the US what it is today. Let's take a closer look, shall we?

BEN & TOD: Yeah!

JON: The first letter couldn't be simpler: just little ol' "A." But "A" is the first letter of the alphabet, isn't it? The first, the beginning, the progenitor of democracy, perhaps?

BEN & TOD: Oooh, aahh!

JON: "A" also means one, implying oneness, or unity, so you've got to admit, that "A" is one loaded little letter. Now the second three letters spell out "MER," which is the French word for...anyone?

*(Someone in the audience yells, "The sea!" Sometimes BEN or TOD will yell out "The sea!" if the audience won't.)*

JON: That's right: the sea. In this case, obviously referring to the sea of humanity to which America brings Unity. And don't forget that it was across the sea that the French sent us the Statue of Liberty, the symbol of freedom in the midst of a SEA of oppression. In gratitude, we later sent them Jerry Lewis.

Now the last four letters speak for themselves, don't they?  
They spell out very plainly—say it with me now:

ALL: "I CAN!"

JON: Now you've got to admit, that's one plucky word! Not many people know this, but if you rearrange these eight letters just a little bit, they spell out: ...

*(JON reveals a new sign saying "I CAN REAM," and signs are revealed for each of the following phrases and anagrams.)*

JON: ... "I CAN REAM." Now, if you rearrange the letters in the name of our very first president, *(Reveals sign)* GEORGE WASHINGTON, you get *(Reveals sign)* GAGGIN' ON WET HORSE, which was actually the title of a popular song at the time of the Revolution. And, if you rearrange the letters in the name of Richard Nixon's Vice President *(Reveals sign)*, SPIRO AGNEW, you get—*(Reveals sign)* say it with me now—

ALL: "GROW A PENIS."

JON: Ladies and gentlemen, that's what it means to be an "American." I thank you.

*(During the applause TOD and BEN come back onstage.)*

BEN: Now we know what little Amy is thinking at this point. She's thinking, "WTF?! What about Christopher Columbus?! Your city is named after him, he has a statue in front of city hall, the Santa Maria is in the Scioto River, and you hardly mentioned him!" Nyah nyah nyah!

JON: Well, his name really wasn't Christopher Columbus, it was Cristobal Colon, er, Colón. And he bumped into the New World by mistake. And he wasn't even the first one here because the Vikings, the Chinese, the Irish and the Klingons were probably here before him, and there was a native population of over ninety million people here before he arrived.

TOD: Yeah, but in fairness to Columbus, though, he *was* the first man to slaughter and enslave the native population in the name of Christianity, and he became very wealthy in the process. So in that sense, he *was* the first *true* American.

*(If someone applauds this sentiment, TOD can misinterpret the reaction and say, “Hey, some genocide fans here tonight!”)*

BEN: Tod, I’m sorry, but that is so Eu-roc-en-tric.

TOD: It’s so what?

BEN: Eu-roc-en-tric.

TOD: You mean Eurocentric?

BEN: Maybe...the story of the First People begins long before the European invasion of the native settlements in North America.

TOD: That’s true, but it doesn’t fit on our timeline.

*(JON gets an idea and dashes into the wings.)*

BEN: Well, then, the timeline is bogus.

TOD: It’s not bogus, it’s just incomplete...

*(JON reenters, holding a rolled-up timeline extension. It depicts world events, real and fictional, between 10,000 BC and 1492.)*

JON: Hey, guys! Take a look at this.

TOD: What’s that?

JON: It’s a supplementary timeline which I prepared earlier.

*(BEN shakes his head in disgust and exits.)*

TOD: Good thinking!

JON: It covers all historic events prior to 1492.

TOD: Okay, I’ll buy that. Create more of a “Big Picture” sorta thing.

*(JON starts unfurling the timeline and heads into the audience.)*

TOD: All right, we're going back in time, ladies and gentlemen. Back to when the first people came to North America. Where are you now, Jon?

JON: Tod, I'm at the Crucifixion of Christ, and I can tell you it's not a pretty sight. And I didn't see Mel Gibson...Jew?

TOD: Well, don't stop there. Keep going.

*(JON is by now unfurling the timeline up the aisle.)*

JON: Okay, Ancient Romans, Ancient Greeks—

TOD: Toga, toga—

JON: Yeah, we're having an ancient kegger. Ancient Egyptians, Ancient Mayans – ah, there's Mel Gibson – invention of the written word, birth of John McCain...Tod, it's getting kinda cold back here.

TOD: That's 'cause you're near the Ice Age, man. Get back up here and enjoy some of this global warming. That's far enough anyway. Ladies and gentlemen, we're about twelve thousand years back now, and scientists speculate that the first people came to North America across the Bering Straits between twelve and fifty thousand years ago.

*(BEN reenters with a feather in his hair and sets a bowl of water, a maraca, and a tom-tom on the stage. Then he sits on the stage DC and stares straight at the audience.)*

BEN: My people are not so interested in what scientists have to say. We have our own stories of how the world began.

TOD: Ladies and gentlemen, we are indeed fortunate, because Ben is part Crow Indian. His great-grandmother was a full-blooded Crow...

JON: ... and had a wing-span of eight feet.

BEN: That is so typical of the white man.

TOD: She was a full-blooded Crow *Indian*, and lived in the Pueblo Indian village of San Juan in the Rio Grande Valley. As his great-grandmother told him, Ben will now tell us the history of the First People, orally.

*(TOD and JON sit on the stage, on either side of BEN, JON with the tom-tom, TOD with the bowl of water. BEN attempts to begin his speech three times, but each time he is inadvertently interrupted by JON, who is focused on pounding the tom-tom.)*

BEN: Cut it out!

*(JON now taps lightly on the tom-tom.)*

BEN: Yonder in the north there is singing on the lake. Cloud maidens dance on the shore. There we take our being. At the beginning of all beginnings all was water. To the North...was water.

*(In turn, TOD dips his hand into the bowl of water and flicks it to the four points of the compass, with the last flick directed at the audience.)*

BEN: To the South...was water. To the East...was water. And to the west ...you guessed it...more water. And so, the water was everywhere, and everything was totally wet.

*(TOD tosses the rest of the water out of the bowl and onto the audience. He then sits down and begins to shake the maraca in rhythm.)*

BEN: How the water came to be, nobody knows...

*(JON and TOD stop playing.)*

TOD: Okay, Ben, we get the water. Just get on with it!

BEN: Hey, the water's important. It's arch-ee-typal.

TOD: Arch-ee-typal? Archetypal.

BEN: Whatever, just back off. This is my story. Okay. *(Trying to remember his place in the story)* Okay...okay...water north, water south, everything wet. Okay, okay, okay! Now, living above the water there was a coyote, a duck, and...umm...another duck, and they walk into a bar!

*(JON does a rim shot on his drum.)*

BEN: No, I'm just kidding. Anyway, the coyote says to the ducks, "Dive down under the water and see what you can find." So the ducks dive down and come up with mud and roots. And the coyote spread the mud all around. He made the hills, mountains, valleys, hollows. And he planted the roots and up grew grasses, plants, trees. Then Coyote took a handful of mud and blew into it and made male animals and female animals. He made female ducks, which made the two ducks happy, I can tell you. And there was a great quacking and gnashing of feathers. And finally, Coyote made the first man and the first woman out of mud. And there was a great copulation...

TOD: Ben!

BEN: ...and it was good!

*(JON and TOD stop playing.)*

TOD: Now at this point, doesn't the tribal elder usually perform a dance, Throwing Bull?

BEN: Right you are, Smells Like Teen Spirit. At this point, the tribal elder performs the dance of *Hiu! Hiu! He! He! He! I!*

TOD: What's that, Moron Says What?

BEN: What? That's a very holy dance. It's the dance of the Antelope's Intestine. As the Elder of this group would you do the honors, Squats To Pee?

JON: I'd be delighted, **Tiny Totem Pole.**

*(JON retrieves a balloon from stage left. BEN takes his place at the tom-toms. JON performs some sacred gestures with the balloon.)*

BEN: Okay, the Elder has his Intestine in hand and the dance is ready to begin. First, the Elder performs a dance of blessing. He asks blessing on the corn—

JON: We call it maize.

BEN—that it might be bountiful. He asks blessing on the rain, that it will be plentiful. He asks blessing on the hunters, that they may be brave and virile...

(JON inflates the balloon. It's upright and phallic.)

JON: (To audience) Eat your heart out.

BEN: Now the Elder performs the Nine Ceremonial Twists of the Antelope's Intestine. The first three twists represent the stars, moon, and sky—the constant companions of the antelope; the second three twists represent the father, mother, and child—the family of the antelope; and the final three twists represent earth, wind, and fire—the favorite band of the antelope. And finally the Elder brings forth the image of the antelope!

JON: (Holding up a balloon dog) Arf! Arf!

BEN: Give it up for the tribal elder!

(JON presents the balloon animal to a person in the front row. JON and BEN exit.)

TOD: Of course, after 1492 everything changed. In fact, in our research we discovered that the sixteenth century lasted a hundred years. And in that hundred years, America was crawling with famous explorers, mostly Spanish, whose ships could be recognized by the large fuzzy dice hanging from their masts.

(JON reenters.)

JON: That's right, Tod. But did you know that it was actually an Englishman, Sebastian Cabot, who first set foot on the continent of North America? He later became very famous as Mr. French on TV's *Family Affair* with Brian Keith.

TOD: And although it was the Portuguese Magellan who first circumnavigated the globe, Englishman Sir Francis Drake was the second man to do it when he discovered what is now San Francisco in his ship "The Golden Hind."

BOTH: Coincidence? You decide!

(BEN enters.)

BEN: Hey, Tod, can I do that poem I wrote?

TOD: Is it the one about Nantucket?

BEN: No, I'm still working on that.

TOD: Yeah, sure.

*(TOD and JON shrug and exit.)*

BEN: I wrote a poem about the first English settlement in North America. This is my poem.

'Twas 1607, in the fine month of May,  
That three proud ships landed at Chesapeake Bay  
And a new life began for God's people that day.

For Jamestown was born, so the story was told,  
To spread our Lord's word and for mining of gold.

The livin' was harsh for those brave men and women.  
They toiled and they sweated and rarely went swimmin'.  
They wheezed and they grunted and soiled their linen.  
Their cupboards were bare, but their cesspools were brimmin'  
with cess.  
Oh, yes.

The new world was tamed by men who were brave  
And men who were strong and six million slaves  
And indentured servants and the Iroquois nation  
Who gave up their land without compensation  
'Cause the Indians landed underneath Plymouth rock  
John Smith was a rapist, Pocahontas died of smallpox  
And that's a fact, Jack! Hunh!

Give it away, give it away, give it away, now!  
Give it away, give it away, give it away, now!

**Whickey whickey whickey whickey**

So the Pilgrims perfected the art of good livin',  
They carved up the land and invented Thanksgivin'  
And lickety split, just as quick as you please,  
Wham bam ma'am there were thirteen colonies

There was Georgia and Maryland and shut my mouth  
Two kinds of Carolina, both North and South.  
There was a bunch of colonies that called themselves New  
Like York, Jersey, Hampshire, and Delhi, too.



Virginia, Connecticut, Delaware, Rhode Island,  
 And this is the bomb  
 Massachusetts is the home of my man John.

That's J-O-H  
 Why so glum?  
 N-N-Y  
 Why he almost won.  
 K-E-R-R-Y.

And finally Penn, which is the Quaker State,  
 So back off buddy 'cause those Quakers were great.  
 They thought that killing was wrong and intolerance rude,  
 But try telling that to the Puritans dude. Peace! Word!

*(BEN exits. Lights up on JON/PASTOR.)*

JON: Hello, and welcome to the World Harvest Church of Salem and this week's meeting of the National Witch hunter's Association. I'm your pastor, the Reverend Mather. A couple of quick announcements before we get going here. Tuesday is arts and crafts night here at the church. We'll be making nooses and thumb screws. And Thursday is youth night. We'll play "Hangman" and "Pin the Blame on the Warlock," so bring your little demons along and we'll scare the hell out of them. You know, last night the Lord came to me in a vision and He said, "Reverend Mather, Bob, you and your followers need to kill one hundred witches this week or I'm going to call you home." Well, I don't want to go home—you know what my wife is like—so I urge you to hunt the good hunt. And don't forget that this witch-hunt will begin an American tradition that will carry on well into the twentieth-first century. Now, to avoid tragic cases of mistaken identity like we had last Halloween, here's how you spot a real witch. They melt when you throw water on them, they're surrounded by flying monkeys, and they're the junior Senator from the state of New York.

*(JON exits as TOD bursts in with bell. He is a town crier.)*

TOD: *(Reading the scroll)* Hear ye, hear ye! This just in! We interrupt this witch-hunt to bring you the French and Indian War! French and British at war again, this time in North America! In sports, the Patriots trounce the Redskins.

*(TOD runs off, BEN runs on with bell.)*

BEN: Oh, yea! Oh, yea! British and colonists defeat French and Indians. King George celebrates victory by imposing taxes on tea, stamps, sugar, and anything else he can think of! Colonists are up in arms!

*(BEN runs off. TOD and JON run on.)*

TOD: Hey, didja hear that?

JON: What?

TOD: King George has raised taxes, and the people are up in arms.

JON: Really!

*(TOD exits. To BEN, who has run on.)*

JON: Did you hear?

BEN: What?

JON: King George has raised taxes, and the people are arming themselves!

BEN: No way!

JON: Way! *(Exits)*

BEN: Wow!

*(To TOD, who has run on)*

BEN: Hey! The King has doubled our taxes, and we're putting together a people's army. We're off to throw tea in the harbor!

TOD: Uh, oh! Trouble's brewing!

*(TOD and BEN run off, while JON bursts in shaking small bell.)*

JON: Oh, yea! Oh, yea! Big tea party in Boston! Dump tea in the harbor to protest taxes! Earl Grey and Darjeeling slated to attend!

*(TOD and BEN run on. All three speak together.)*

TOD: Peas and carrots, peas and carrots...

BEN: Harumph, harumph, harumph...

JON: Rutabaga, rutabaga, rutabaga...

*(BEN and JON exit.)*

TOD: Hear ye! Hear ye! British soldier kills Crispus Attucks—an African-American—in the Boston Massacre. Four others dead. The colonists are in revolt.

*(TOD exits as BEN and JON enter.)*

JON: Hey! Did you hear?

BEN: What?

JON: The colonists are revolting.

BEN: I know. Did you ever eat with one of 'em?

JON: Very interesting.

*(BEN and JON exit. TOD runs on.)*

TOD: Oh, yea! Oh, yea! British attack at Lexington and Concord. Revolution underway. Paul Revere and the Raiders number one on the charts with "The British Are Coming."

*(TOD exits. BEN gallops on, riding a hobby horse.)*

BEN: Listen, my children, and you shall hear  
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere

He said with a grin  
While wiping his chin  
If my ear was a—

*(TOD and JON dash on in time to say:)*

ALL: BANG!

TOD: I hear a shot!

BEN: *(In a French accent)* I hear a shot, monsieur!

JON: *(In a Mexican accent)* I hear a shot, señor!

BEN: *(In a Chinese accent)* I hear a shot, grasshopper!

TOD: *(In a Russian accent)* I hear a shot, comrade!

JON: I ear-hay an ot-shay, orky-Pay!

ALL: It was the Shot Heard 'Round The World.

JON: But the shot that started the American Revolution remains shrouded in mystery to this day. Nobody knows who pulled the trigger or why, but at the end of the day seventy-three people lay dead. Let's recreate for you now what happened on that fateful day at Lexington and Concord. Ben?

*(BEN moves the flip chart and reveals a large diagram, complete with buildings, arrows, and marching soldiers.)*

BEN: Thanks, Jon. Now, according to the Official Benedict Arnold Commission Report, a single bullet was fired from the Fourth Floor window of the Lexington and Concord Scroll Depository.

*(BEN pulls an oversized bullet out of his coat pocket and moves it across the diagram in the way he describes.)*

BEN: We have a mock-up of the bullet here. The bullet followed this trajectory, killing seventeen soldiers who were marching in formation, then it pulled a U-turn, then turned right up Main Street. Tod?

*(BEN hands the bullet to TOD.)*

TOD: Thanks, Ben. Now, at this point the bullet, which we have marked with an 'X', *(He turns the bullet to reveal that it is marked on one side with a red 'X'.)* killed four colonists before stopping here at the Old Bag o' Nails Pub for lunch, where it killed an additional six people, smashed through a table, knocking it back and to the left—back and to the left—and took off in a white Ford Bronco. The bullet has never been recovered.

ALL: Coincidence? You decide!

(BEN and JON exit.)

TOD: And a full-fledged revolution was under way. The colonists wanted to stop the British government from imposing unfair and exorbitant taxes so that the American government could impose unfair and exorbitant taxes. The commander-in-chief of the colonial army was George Washington, who commanded a tiny contingent of fighters known as the Minute Men: volunteer soldiers ready to do battle with a minute's notice. The Minute Men: brave patriots fighting for American liberty. The Minute Men: better lovers than you might think. It was the whole British Empire versus George Washington and his small army.

*(Blackout and music. Lights up on BEN and JON kneeling as two Minute Men. They wear trench coats, which conceal the fact that they are each holding two sticks with shoes at the ends. They appear to be four feet tall.)*

JON & BEN: *(Singing)*  
 We represent the Lexington League  
 The Lexington League  
 The Lexington League  
 And in the name of the Lexington League...  
 We wish to welcome you to Valley Forge!

*(They curtsy. TOD enters in powdered wig, aviator glasses, and corncob pipe, becoming George Washington—but also looking a bit like General Douglas MacArthur.)*

TOD/WASHINGTON: Gentlemen, gentlemen! I want to thank you for volunteering your services to this great cause, but I'm afraid I have some bad news. The road ahead is fraught with hardship, and you are simply not what I had in mind.

BEN/MINUTE MAN #1: Waddaya mean?

TOD/WASHINGTON: I mean, I need regular, full-sized soldiers.

JON/MINUTE MAN #2: Look, I hate to burst your bubble, mahogany-mouth, but we're exactly what you asked for.

TOD/WASHINGTON: Are not.

BEN & JON: Are too.

TOD/WASHINGTON: Are not.

BEN & JON: Are too.

TOD/WASHINGTON: You need to get real!

BEN & JON: You need to get real!

TOD/WASHINGTON: And that's an order.

BEN & JON: And that's an order.

TOD/WASHINGTON: I'm a stupid little soldier, and I'm acting like a child.

*(JON and BEN smile at each other.)*

BEN & JON: *(Gleefully)* We know you are, but what are we?!

TOD/WASHINGTON: Doh!

BEN/MINUTE MAN #1: Low five.

*(BEN and JON slap hands.)*

BEN/MINUTE MAN #1: Look, Cherry-tree Chopper, let's cut to the chase here. Do you recognize this piece of paper?

*(BEN hands TOD a piece of parchment, which he has pulled out of the inside of his tricorne hat.)*

TOD/WASHINGTON: Uh-huh.

BEN/MINUTE MAN #1: Is that your signature?

TOD/WASHINGTON: Yes.

BEN/MINUTE MAN #1: Would you mind reading it to the studio audience?

TOD/WASHINGTON: All right. *(Reading)* "Uncle Sam needs you. Wanted: Mine-yoot Men to form colonial—" *(Beat)* I could've sworn I said "minute men."

BEN/MINUTE MAN #1: *(To the audience)* Even in its early days, America had a problem with literacy.

JON/MINUTE MAN #2: *(Grabbing the paper and reading)*  
 “Expel the Evil Empire from North America and meet chicks. High frostbite tolerance a plus. No tea drinkers, please. **Be an army of one...half.** Apply in person—Valley Forge.”

TOD/WASHINGTON: Well, I’ll be damned.

BEN/MINUTE MAN #1: This is a clear case of Vertical Discrimination.

BEN & JON: *(Various)* We’ll sue! We’ll sue! You can talk to my attorney. I’ll see you in court! We mean business!

TOD/WASHINGTON: Oh, all right, all right, you have the job.

JON & BEN: Yay! *(In unison, they wave their right fists in a circle five times)* Whoop, whoop, whoop, whoop, whoop!

TOD/WASHINGTON: Now, gentlemen, here’s the situation:

*(JON and BEN lean in to listen, each lifting one stick-leg off the ground.)*

TOD/WASHINGTON: Thousands of well-trained British soldiers using the most advanced weapons versus a ragtag band of under trained colonists.

*(JON and BEN lean back to upright.)*

BEN/MINUTE MAN #1: Are we that ragtag band?

TOD/WASHINGTON: Uh-huh.

BEN/MINUTE MAN #1: That don’t sound so good.

JON/MINUTE MAN #2: Why don’t we just surrender now and save time and energy?

TOD/WASHINGTON: Look, I’m *tired*...

*(TOD stomps his foot for emphasis. The two MINUTE MEN lift their false feet briefly off the floor as if they are bounced into the air. TOD doesn't pause, though; he goes right on.)*

TOD/WASHINGTON: ...of all this sniping and insinuating that our war effort is anything less than *positively*...

*(TOD stomps again. MINUTE MEN bounce again.)*

TOD/WASHINGTON: ...impacting on the British defensive entrenchment situation. It is very *difficult*....

*(TOD lifts his foot off the ground as if to stomp, but instead stands on one foot. As TOD lifts his one foot, the MINUTE MEN both lift both of their feet off the ground and hold them there.)*

TOD/WASHINGTON: ...to enumerate quantitatively at this junctive in time just how offensive our capabilities are. But I'll tell you one thing:

*(TOD sets his foot down. The MINUTE MEN set their feet down.)*

TOD/WASHINGTON: ...contraceptive to your popular belief, we're taking precautions at every penetration and by the grace of god, our upcoming thrust will break through the last membrane of British defense and into Virginia!

JON/MINUTE MAN #2: Will this make you the father of our country?

TOD/WASHINGTON: Well, I have cut through some cherry trees in my time, to be sure. *(If the audience groans or boos at this, he should stare them down and say "I can not tell a lie!")* Now gentlemen, all we need now is a flag to rally 'round. Any ideas?

JON: Well, not many people know this, but when we aren't Mine-yoot men we enjoy working with fabric, colors, and design...

TOD/WASHINGTON: What the hell?!



*(During the previous two lines, JON and BEN have stepped up and out of their midget attire, revealing fancy dresses or aprons underneath.)*

JON/BETSY: Hi, I'm Betsy Ross and this here's my sister Diana.

BEN/DIANA: We'd like to share with you our designs for the new American flag.

TOD/WASHINGTON: Carry on.

JON/BETSY: *(Putting a bonnet on his head. He indicates the American flag that is part of the set.)* Now, I'm sure all of you know that this is the flag we finally settled on. But along the way, a number of flags were rejected for various reasons, and we'd like to share some of those with you.

*(BEN/MARION reveals the flags one by one on the flip chart. The first is the British Union Jack.)*

JON/BETSY: Rejected for obvious reasons. I'm sure many of you are also familiar with the "Don't Tread On Me."

*(BEN reveals "Don't Tread On Me.")*

JON/BETSY: The first design I came up with I really liked, it was a good thing, but it turned out to be a little ahead of its time.

*(Something vaguely patriotic, but abstract and Picasso-esque)*

JON/BETSY: Then I struck upon an idea which I loved, that captured the heart, the very essence of what America is all about, but the founding fathers rejected it as too commercial. Here it is.

*(This one reads "I \$.")*

TOD/WASHINGTON: Enough shilly-shally, ladies! Let's get out there and kick some British butt! Come on now!

*(The boys march in rhythm.)*

TOD: Left! Left!

*(All three hop on their left leg three times as they say:)*

ALL: Left left left!

TOD: So the rebel troops brought the Brits to their knees

JON & BEN: By hiding themselves behind rocks, behind trees

TOD: The British army lined up to attack

JON & BEN: Marched neatly in rows and got shot in the back

TOD: Finally in Yorktown in Fall, '81

JON & BEN: The British surrendered—the Yankees had won!

TOD: Sound off!

JON & BEN: M-E!

TOD: Sound off!

JON & BEN: R-I-C!

TOD: Sound off!

JON & BEN: A-N!

TOD: Wazzat spell?

JON & BEN: 'MURRICAN!!!!

*(JON exits. TOD and BEN get pipes from the flats on either side of the stage.)*

TOD/JEFFERSON: Madison! Madison!

BEN/MADISON: Jefferson! Jefferson!

TOD/JEFFERSON: Madison, how about this as the beginning of our new Bill of Rights? “Got a problem? Throw money at it.”

BEN/MADISON: No, no, too liberal. How about this? “Screw the poor. Let’s party!”

TOD/JEFFERSON: No, too conservative, I think. Here's what it should be: "Whether you're a brother or whether you're a mother, you're staying alive, staying alive."

BEN/MADISON: No, that's too seventies.

TOD/JEFFERSON: I suppose you're right...

*(JON/FRANKLIN enters wearing bald cap with long hair at the edges and glasses.)*

JON/FRANKLIN: No, no, gentlemen, focus, please. *(If the audience laughs at his absurd wig, he can say, "Yeah, I know. I look like Yoda.")* How about this: "All men are created equal."

*(Beat. Then they laugh themselves silly and take a large toke off their pipes.)*

BEN/MADISON: This is great tobacco, Jefferson. Grow this yourself?

TOD/JEFFERSON: *(High-pitched voice)* Yesss—Monticello Gold. Do you suppose Dolley Madison has any more of those cakes?

BEN/MADISON: I can't believe the Bill of Rights is due tomorrow.

JON/FRANKLIN: Now, as the world's first democracy, I think we should guarantee Freedom of Religion, Freedom of the Press, and Freedom of Speech.

BEN/MADISON: If you guarantee all those rights, people are going to be saying all kinds of crazy stuff and pissing each other off.

JON/FRANKLIN: Well, then, let's give everyone the right to carry a gun to shoot each other, and the right to a fair and speedy trial by a jury of their peers after they do. Are we in agreement?

BEN/MADISON: Totally.

TOD/JEFFERSON: Totally.

JON/FRANKLIN: Cool. Now, I would also propose that we draw up a Bill of Wrongs as a companion piece to the Bill of Rights. As I see it, Article One could forbid plumbers from wearing their trousers in such a manner that their crack shows. Article Two could forbid Keanu Reeves from performing Shakespeare. Article Three would forbid spam email, trust me, those male enhancement products do not work. Are we in agreement?

BEN/MADISON: Totally.

TOD/JEFFERSON: Totally.

JON/FRANKLIN: Cool.

BEN: Now, before we go on, I want to say something about the Bill of Rights.

JON/FRANKLIN: What's that, Madison?

BEN: No, not as Madison, as me, Ben. I've been doing some thinking about this Bill of Rights thing and I find it problematic.

TOD: What do you mean?

BEN: I mean, they say we have free speech in this country, right?

TOD: Right.

BEN: So can I say anything I want?

TOD: Yeah.

BEN: No! Did you know the Supreme Court says I can't say ANYTHING I want?

TOD: Like what?

BEN: Classic example: You can't yell "fire" in a crowded theater, right?

TOD: Right.

BEN: Well, what if there is a fire in a crowded theater?

TOD: Ben, that's not the point.

BEN: What is the point?

TOD: The point is that the First Amendment guarantees all Americans the full freedom of expression.

BEN: Freedom of expression?! What is that, a joke?

TOD: No...

*(BEN works himself into a frenzy.)*

BEN: Could I go on television and advocate the overthrow of the government?! No! In an R-rated movie, could I show a pair of lips kissing a nipple? No! You can show that same nipple being lopped off with a chainsaw, but you can't kiss it!

TOD: That's gross!

BEN: It's not gross! It's what I'm talking about! Oh! Okay, perfect—what'd you say, freedom of expression? *(Indicating the American flag upstage)* Suppose I wanted to light this flag on fire right now. Could I?

JON & TOD: No!

TOD: Because it would be a fire in a crowded theater!

*(Beat. BEN considers this.)*

BEN: That's not the point.

TOD: What is the point?

BEN: The point is, the system is suppressing my right to say what I want, when I want...

TOD: You're saying exactly what you want right now and nobody's stopping you.

BEN: Yeah...well...that's because I'm a man, when I'd rather be a woman. W-O-M-A-N. **I'll say it again, woman.** You can bend but never break me, man, 'cause it only serves to make me more determined to achieve my final goal. I am strong. I

am invisible. You'll hear me roar. All I'm askin' for is a little re-, re-, re-, respect, just a little bit. 'Cause these boots are made for walkin', Tod, and that's just what they'll do. 'Cause one of these days...

*(BEN exits, crying. Beat)*

JON: Ben! Ben! Come back! You hurt his feelings.

TOD: No, I didn't.

JON: Yes, you did.

TOD: Well...I don't care.

JON: Tod, you should apologize.

TOD: Forget it! I'm not going to apologize. He was overacting.

JON: What do you mean he was overacting?

TOD: He was overacting more than David Caruso on CSI: Miami!

JON: David Caruso doesn't overact. And neither was Ben!

*(BEN pokes his head onstage.)*

BEN: No, he's right, Jon. I was overacting.

JON: Great! Get ready for the next scene—I'll introduce it.

*(TOD exits.)*

JON: Let's see, we've covered about fifty thousand years of American history in thirty minutes. Are there any questions? No? Okay, well, think about it, save them up, and in the second act we'll give you the chance to ask us any serious question about American history. But right now let's get back to the new country, which more than doubled in size in 1803 when President Thomas Jefferson—by this time sober—purchased the Louisiana Territory from France for about fifteen million dollars, or roughly three cents an acre. He then sent Lewis and Clark west to explore this vast and uncharted area. Ladies and gentlemen, we are indeed fortunate tonight to have that fabulous team back with us. Just returned from their hugely

successful tour of the western circuit—all the way from Bismarck, Boise, Clatskanie, Walla Walla, and Cucamonga—here they are! You know them, you love them, please bang your hands together for...Lewis and Clark!

*(JON leads the applause and exits. BEN/LEWIS and TOD/CLARK enter doing a vaudeville two-step. They wear loud coats and carry canes. TOD wears a coonskin cap. BEN wears a skunk skin cap with an arrow through it. They sing.)*

TOD & BEN: Hello, everybody, boy we're glad to be here

TOD/CLARK: Just me

BEN/LEWIS: Myself

TOD & BEN: And we!

*(They turn upstage.)*

TOD & BEN: We're glad to be back

*(They turn downstage.)*

TOD & BEN: We're glad to be front  
We're glad to tell you facts about this wonderful country!  
Hello, everybody, boy we're glad to be here  
We're gonna turn your dark skies blue

BEN/LEWIS: I'm wacky, I'm antic

TOD/CLARK: I'm dashing and romantic

TOD & BEN: And we're glad to be with—

TOD/CLARK: *(Stops singing)* You know, Lewis, it's great to be here in Columbus. Isn't this a beautiful audience?

*(JON has reentered UR with a table full of sound-making devices: cymbals, slide whistle, and bike horn. He uses them as indicated throughout.)*

BEN/LEWIS: Yeah. 'Specially that guy there. Ivan-lavin!

*(BEN points at a man in the audience. TOD hits BEN with a cane. SFX: cymbal crash)*

TOD/CLARK: Get back here. Settle down. Ladies and gentlemen, we just rode in from Oregon—

BEN/LEWIS: And boy, are our butts tired!

*(SFX: three horn honks, as BEN grabs his own behind and hops three times.)*

TOD/CLARK: We were sent out to explore the vast, uncharted American wilderness.

BEN/LEWIS: We traveled across deep mountains and high valleys, all the way to the ocean.

TOD/CLARK: Be specific.

BEN/LEWIS: Okay. The Specific Ocean.

*(TOD hits him again with the cane. SFX: cymbals)*

TOD/CLARK: C'mon, these people want details. We spent the winter of 1805 in North Dakota...

BEN/LEWIS: Hey, Clark, what's the capital of North Dakota?

TOD/CLARK: I don't know, Lewis. What is the capitol of North Dakota?

BEN/LEWIS: About forty-three cents!

*(BEN grabs the cane from TOD and hits himself. SFX: cymbals. The audience inevitably responds poorly to this terrible joke.)*

TOD/CLARK: Hmm, tough room.

BEN/LEWIS: Come on, give the chance a kid!

TOD/CLARK: Anyway, we determined that the whole Louisiana Territory is ripe for plunder and penetration. The trick is knowing how to negotiate with the Indians.

BEN/LEWIS: INDIANS?!

*(BEN hops into TOD's arms.)*



TOD/CLARK: No no, settle down. There are no Indians here.

*(TOD sets BEN down.)*

TOD/CLARK: But in North Dakota we were fortunate enough to meet Sacajawea, our Indian guide and interpreter. She went all the way with us...

BEN/LEWIS: Well, she didn't go all the way with all of us...ladies!

*(SFX: slide whistle as BEN makes a crude pelvic-thrust gesture.)*

TOD/CLARK: Stop it. That's disgusting. She was married to that French-Canadian trapper.

BEN/LEWIS: I know, I know— *(As Jimmy Durante)*  
Everybody's a Canadian! **Ha-cha-cha-cha-cha!**

*(SFX: two horn honks. The audience groans or makes no noise at all.)*

BEN/LEWIS: Well, they love that joke in Quebec.

TOD/CLARK: But not in Ohio apparently. Sacajawea traveled with us all the way to the West Coast and back.

BEN/LEWIS: She saved our lives more than once, our faithful Indian squaw.

***(TOD hits BEN with cane. SFX: cymbal crash)***

BEN/LEWIS: Hey! What's the matter?

TOD/CLARK: I don't like that word.

BEN/LEWIS: What word? Squaw?

*(TOD hits him again. SFX: cymbal crash)*

BEN/LEWIS: What's wrong with sq—that word?

TOD/CLARK: It's demeaning and offensive. Don't you watch Oprah?

BEN/LEWIS: Only on Mondays. What's it mean?

TOD/CLARK: It's a Native American word, which Anglo culture has appropriated and applied generically to all Indian women. It refers to a woman's...nether regions.

BEN/LEWIS: I didn't know the Indians were Dutch.

TOD/CLARK: No, not the Netherlands, the nether regions.

BEN/LEWIS: So I shouldn't put my finger in a dyke?

*(JON strikes thumb piano. Audience groans. Even JON and TOD shake their heads in disgust.)*

BEN/LEWIS: *(To audience)* Just wanted to make sure you're all paying attention out there.

TOD/CLARK: I think you owe these good people an apology.

BEN/LEWIS: I think we owe them their money back. All right, all right, I'm sorry. I promise—I will never use that word again.

TOD/CLARK: What word?

BEN/LEWIS: Squaw.

*(TOD hits him again. SFX: cymbal crash)*

TOD/CLARK: I'm sorry about that. But we were also on a scientific expedition. We took extensive notes of the flora and fauna and sighted many wild animals. We saw rattlesnakes....

BEN/LEWIS: They go, "Ssssss!"

TOD/CLARK: We saw grizzly bears...

BEN/LEWIS: They go, "Grrrr!"

TOD/CLARK: We saw wild geese....

BEN/LEWIS: They go, "Squawk!"

*(TOD hits BEN again. SFX: cymbal crash)*

TOD/CLARK: What's the matter you?

BEN/LEWIS: What's the matter with you?

TOD/CLARK: What's a matter you? Can't you learn anything?  
Didn't you ever go to college, stupid?

BEN/LEWIS: Yeah, but I came out the same way.

*(SFX: drum. Audience generally reacts negatively.)*

TOD/CLARK: Come on, people, these are the best jokes of 1805! They don't get any better than this. Anyway, we were out on the trail for twenty-eight months, relying only on the Providence of God and our native wit.

BEN/LEWIS: Oh! Clark, Clark! Wait! *(Leaps DC)* Man goes into a doctor's office. Says, "Doc, you gotta help me. I'm a teepee, I'm a wigwam. I'm a teepee, I'm a wigwam." Doc says, "Sit down, you're two tents."

*(SFX: two horn honks.)*

TOD/CLARK: What was that?

BEN/LEWIS: Native wit.

*(SFX: three cymbal crashes. TOD and BEN turn to JON.)*

TOD/CLARK: What was that?

JON: Heavy cymbalism.

*(SFX: horn honk.)*

BEN/TOD: Goodnight, everybody! *(They sing.)* Goodbye, everybody, boy we're glad to be gone...

*(BEN and TOD exit.)*

JON: Ladies and gentlemen, Lewis and Clark! Well, the explorations of Lewis and Clark bring us to the year 1814, known of course for the War of 1812, remembered chiefly for the British burning of the White House, and for the birth of our nation's National Anthem. Francis Scott Key witnessed the

siege of Baltimore from a neutral ship's cell, where he penned the immortal words to "The Star-Spangled Banner."

*(TOD enters for a semi-audible conference.)*

TOD: Wait, Jon—I have some problems with "The Star-Spangled Banner."

JON: Well, you should explain. *(Exits)*

TOD: Okay. You're right. Look, don't get me wrong. "The Star-Spangled Banner" was a perfectly fine song in its day, but it's completely out of touch with modern sensibilities. It's militaristic, it's patriarchal and sexist, and it's impossible to sing. Take a look at the musical range.

*(He turns a new page on the flip chart. "The Star-Spangled Banner" is graphed out with no regard for musical accuracy.)*

TOD: I mean, it's all over the place. It goes from a low B-minus all the way up here to an H above high C. And still, Francis Scott Key expects fat guys at ballgames to sing a song written in the key of Q.

*(BEN and JON [with accordion] reenter.)*

ALL: We need a new national anthem!

JON: And I think it should be "God Bless America" or possibly "Born in the USA."

TOD: Those are both good.

BEN: Yeah, or "Freebird."

TOD: Well, not "Freebird." "Freebird" was written by a Canadian, so it's not really appropriate...

BEN: A Canadian? "Freebird" was written by Lynyrd Skynyrd. They're from Alabama. *(Realizing)* No, you're thinking of "Snowbird" by Anne Murray.

TOD: How does that go?

BEN: You know...Spread your tiny wings and fly away...

JON: And take the snow back with you where it came from on that day

TOD: The one I love forever is untrue

ALL: And if I could you know that I would fly away with you, yeah if I could you know that I would fly away with you.

*(They all stare into space and sigh at the thought of the song's beauty.)*

TOD: Anyway...as we're all agreed that we should have a different national anthem, I've written my own modest example. Could I get a G?

*(JON hits an extremely sour note on the accordion.)*

TOD: Thank you. Now this is a song which some of you may recognize. Maestro?

*(JON plays and BEN flips the chart while TOD sings to the tune of "America the Beautiful.")*

TOD: Oh, beautiful for spacious skies  
And nonexploited waves of botanical companions  
For mounted majesties of color and free-roaming nonhuman beings  
Beside the differently harvested plain  
Oh non-Eurocentric bio-region  
Non-theologically specific supreme being—if she exists—  
Shed ambigenic grace on thee  
And made you more  
Of a nonspeciesistic multicultural eco-warrior  
From chronologically gifted anthropomorphized river  
To cosmetically enhanced sea

*(BEN turns pages on the flip chart, displaying the most egregiously multi-syllabic phrases from the song as TOD sings them. The final three signs say "Tod loves big words," "It took him three weeks to write this," and, at the end, "Applause." TOD bows and ad-libs "Play ball!" as he and BEN exit. Then JON plays "Dixie" on the accordion.)*

JON: The Civil War. North versus South. Industrial versus agrarian. Rosie versus the Donald. Just as Vietnam was the first war broadcast nightly into American homes, the Civil War is

the first of which we have actual photographic images. Tonight we are proud to relive the triumph and tragedy of the American Civil War in a slide show entitled, "THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR: THE SLIDE SHOW." *(Exits)*

BEN: *(Reentering)* Come with us now back in time to America of the mid-eighteen hundreds. What was the fuel that stoked the fire that made the steam that drove the engine that was the machine of nineteenth-century American conquest and domination? It was the blood and sweat of Africa. Millions of brothers and sisters lost their lives at the hands of slave traders, and that's no joke. But by 1861 the pressure was building, and the engine was about to blow. They called it the Civil War, but there weren't nothing civil about it. Now, we're going to need some help from the audience on this one. I'm hoping someone has brought a slide projector...

*(TOD and JON have reentered in time to hear BEN asking for a projector.)*

TOD: *(To BEN)* You were supposed to bring the projector!

JON: *(To BEN)* Like somebody's going to bring a projector to the theater.

BEN: Please raise your hand...

TOD: What sort of moron...oh, you?

*(In the meantime, someone in the front row raises his or her hand.)*

BEN: Really? You brought one? Can I borrow it? I'll give it right back.

*(BEN goes to collect the projector. TOD and JON stare, amazed.)*

BEN: Hey, I got one!

TOD: So all those years of carrying around a slide projector finally paid off, huh?

BEN: Hey, leave him alone. You really saved my ass. I owe you.

*(Obviously, the projector has been set in the audience before the show, and the House Manager has warned the lucky person to raise his or her hand at the appropriate moment.)*

*(During the next speech JON sets a table down center for the projector. BEN sets the projector on the table and begins to fiddle with it. JON moves the flip chart to just left of upstage center and flips it to a clean, white page that will act as a screen. BEN motions for JON to move it center so that it is lined up with the projector, which is DC. JON misunderstands and takes one deliberate step toward center. BEN gestures again. JON takes another deliberate step. BEN points at JON, then the chart, then repeats that several times so it looks like he's indicating that JON should spin in a circle, which JON does. Frustrated, BEN moves the chart to center himself. When he turns to return to the slide projector, JON returns the flip chart to where it originally was—left of center. This finishes by the time TOD says "Mason-Dixon line.")*

TOD: Now while Jon and Ben set up, let me give you a bit of historical background. The importation of slaves into America was declared illegal in 1807, but the domestic slave trade continued to grow. Now, the national debate on slavery was growing, too, and the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which allowed slavery in Missouri but nowhere else north of its southern border created an actual line dividing north and south. This was part of the Mason-Dixon Line and set the scene for the war which killed more men named Zeke than any war in history. So Emily, if you'll roll the tape, we are proud to present the sounds and images of that enormous and devastating conflict, the Civil—

*(BEN accidentally drags the projector onto the floor by pulling the cord while looking for an outlet. It smashes. Slides fly all over the stage. The three boys desperately attempt to gather the slides and fix the projector. Over the loudspeaker Civil War music plays, and a WOMAN and MAN begin their dramatic recorded narration.)*

*(The boys gesture to the sound booth to try to get the sound turned off. When this fails, they decide in a panic to enact the slides themselves.)*

JON/VOICEOVER: The time between the inaugurations of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln was only seventy-

two short years. And yet, in those seventy-two years, America had grown into two separate nations.

*(Beep. Blackout.)*

BEN/VOICEOVER: The South: agrarian, rich in tradition. The North: progressive and industrial.

*(Beep. Lights up.)*

TOD/VOICEOVER: For years, these two nations had struggled with one another.

*(Beep. Blackout. By now, they've cleared the stage of props and exited.)*

JON/VOICEOVER: At the heart of the fighting was the issue of slavery. And when abolitionist Abraham Lincoln became President in 1861, the South seceded from the Union. The Civil War had begun.

*(Beep. Lights up on the boys dressed as Civil War soldiers striking an emotional pose.)*

TOD/VOICEOVER: This photograph, by Civil War photographer Matthew Brady, captures the emotion of the Confederate soldiers at the Battle of Bull Run.

*(Beep. Blackout)*

BEN/VOICEOVER: The war was the bloodiest in the history of the nation.

*(Beep. Lights up: Same pose as before except now JON is plunging a knife through BEN's head.)*

JON/VOICEOVER: Take a moment now to focus the projector...

*(The boys shuffle downstage, holding the pose as best they can.)*

JON/VOICEOVER: ...good.

*(They stop. Blackout)*



BEN/VOICEOVER: There was intense and deadly hand-to-hand combat.

*(Beep. Lights up on TOD kicking JON in the groin. Blackout)*

TOD/VOICEOVER: Occasionally, soldiers had their legs blown off.

*(Beep. Lights up on BEN standing on one leg holding a dismembered leg. Blackout)*

BEN/VOICEOVER: But in the end, the North overwhelmed the South through sheer numbers.

*(Beep. Lights up on JON as a Union soldier with a sign saying "17" and TOD as a Confederate with a sign saying "3." Blackout.)*

JON/VOICEOVER: And so, Robert E. Lee finally surrendered at Appomattox, Virginia, on April 8, 1865. And they all lived happily ever after. Except for Abraham Lincoln who was shot in the head by John Wilkes Booth and died the next morning.

*(A really long beep, like an EKG machine flat line.)*

*(Lights up. "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" begins to play as BEN enters SL as an usher in pillbox and epaulets. He walks in rhythm all the way across the stage and off into the wings. He brings on a chair and sets it DR. He dances balletically to the music. TOD as John Wilkes Booth hops on from the SL wing and twirls his moustache. BEN turns quickly to see him, but TOD leaps back into the wings. They do this hide-and-seek twice more. Finally BEN shrugs and turns over a sign on the flip chart: FORD'S THEATRE—APRIL 14, 1865.)*

*(JON enters in an Abraham Lincoln Bunraku puppet suit: a two-foot long neck connecting to an inflated head with a smiley face, Abe Lincoln beard, and top hat, and five-foot arms with big hands at the ends. The left hand holds a ticket. Lincoln waves at the audience, hands BEN his ticket. BEN takes the ticket and directs Lincoln to his seat DR. Lincoln sits, clapping in time to the music.)*

*(TOD/JOHN WILKES BOOTH enters. He is normal-sized, but carries a huge cut-out of a pistol. He shoots at Lincoln. BEN*

*appears again and carries an oversized bullet on a stick across the stage. It is a large replica of the bullet used to illustrate the “shot heard round the world” earlier in the act. On a musical cue the bullet strikes Lincoln in the head. Lincoln’s face changes: X’s for eyes, and a squiggly line for a mouth. JON/LINCOLN collapses in his chair. BEN turns the bullet around, revealing a large red ‘X’. The three boys step downstage into three pools of light and speak conspiratorially.)*

TOD: John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln in a theater and ran to a warehouse. Lee Harvey Oswald shot Kennedy from a warehouse and ran to a theater.

BEN: Lincoln had a secretary named Kennedy. Kennedy had a secretary named Lincoln.

JON: Lincoln was elected in 1860, and Kennedy was elected in 1960. Coincidence? Then how come Nostradamus predicted it?

TOD: And consider this dismaying observation: Ronald Wilson Reagan—how many letters in each name?

BEN: Six-six-six.

JON: And if you rearrange the letters in Ronald Wilson Reagan, you get Insane Anglo Warlord.

BEN: Did you know that they faked the moon landing on a Hollywood sound stage?

TOD: Did you know that there’s a top secret Air Force hangar in Nevada housing an alien spacecraft?

JON: Did you know that William Shatner wears a hairpiece?

BEN: We could be killed for divulging that information.

TOD: Three weeks before he was shot, Lincoln was in Monroe, Maryland. Three weeks before he was shot, Kennedy was in Marilyn Monroe.

BEN: Do you know the person on your left has to take a leak?

JON: And so do I.

TOD: And so do I. Go out to the lobby.

JON: Talk amongst yourselves.

BEN: Do not make eye contact.

TOD: We'll meet you back here in fifteen minutes.

JON: This conversation never happened.

ALL: Shhhhh!

*(They each put a finger to their lips as the lights fade.)*

END ACT ONE

## ACT TWO

*(In the darkness, battle sounds and music: "Over There." Lights up. The stage is empty other than 3 overturned chairs DC.)*

*(BEN crosses the stage wearing his epaulets from Ford's Theatre and carrying a sign: IMM. In the middle of the stage he looks down at the sign and turns it right side up to read: WWI. As he passes the chairs, BEN flips the sign over to read: THE TRENCHES. He exits.)*

*(JON/SGT and TOD/COLLEGE BOY run on and jump into a trench somewhere in France. They carry water rifles and stare grimly out over the audience. The audience often reacts vocally to the sight of the water guns. TOD waits to speak until the audience is quiet—sometimes this takes quite a while.)*

TOD: It's pretty quiet out there.

JON: Yeah. Too quiet. They've hardly laughed since the Civil War.

TOD: I wish Ben would get back.

*(If you successfully got an answer from the latecomers back in the Amerigo Vespucci scene, you can use it here. After TOD's line above, JON can respond with, "I wouldn't expect him anytime soon. He's..." stuck in traffic, out parking the car, having dessert, waiting for the babysitter, lost on the freeway, or whatever lame excuse your latecomer came up with.)*

TOD: How long's he been gone?

JON: Since 1430.

TOD: 1430? That's almost five hundred years. Dammit! I should've gone. Ben's just a kid. He doesn't understand the complex, almost postmodern irony of a World War fought over jingoistic and chivalrous nineteenth-century ideals but using twentieth-century weapons of carnage and destruction.

JON: You're right—you should've gone. *(He grabs TOD by the shirt.)* Look, college boy, the only complexity you need to understand is that we're just prawns in an international

cocktail. We're expendable. We got a job to do and we do it.  
Case closed.

TOD: You think they're still out there, Sarge?

JON: They're out there, Shakespeare. Every last one of them.  
Well, except for that one elderly couple who were offended by  
the Spiro Agnew/Grow a Penis joke.

TOD: Look, Sarge—it's Ben!

JON: Cover him!

*(BEN runs through theater as JON and TOD squirt the  
audience. BEN squirts too but has only a small water pistol.  
BEN dives into trench.)*

JON: What's your report, soldier?

BEN: Report? Damn!

*(BEN has forgotten the report. He runs out into the audience  
again. JON and TOD cover him as before. BEN comes right  
back in.)*

JON: Now, what's your report, soldier?

BEN: Amazing colors on the horizon, sir. Very  
Impressionistic.

JON: You've been too close to the mustard gas again.

BEN: Yes, sir. Any movements here?

TOD: Just my own.

JON: Shut up. I think the Krauts are still in position.

BEN: Let's check it out.

*(BEN hands out viewing instruments from his pack:  
JON—binoculars, TOD—periscope, and BEN—a  
ViewMaster.)*

JON: My God.

TOD: We're outnumbered a hundred to one.

BEN: By animals! There's Bambi and Thumper and Flower, and they're in 3-D!

JON: Gimme that! Use these.

*(JON grabs BEN's ViewMaster and hands him the binoculars. BEN looks through them backwards.)*

BEN: What are we worried about? They're midgets!

*(JON grabs the binoculars and turns them around. BEN looks through them again.)*

BEN: Oh, my God, they're huge!!

JON: Gentlemen—the brown stuff has hit the blender.

TOD: *(Panicking)* I gotta get outa here! I'm too young to die! I got a girl back home....

JON: Calm down, soldier.

TOD: Okay.

JON: *(To BEN)* Now, let's get down to business. What did HQ say?

BEN: Oh, right. HQ said, "Your sector surrounded. Unable to send reinforcements. Have a nice day."

TOD: That's code, right? That's gotta be code for something, right?

JON: Yeah, it's code for "Tonight we dine in Hell."

TOD: What are we going to do, Sarge? You got all the answers. What are we going to do?

JON: *(Slowly)* I don't know. I just don't know. I really haven't got a clue. I possess a total lack of both ideas and imagination. My ignorance on this point verges on the criminal. I don't know, I just.... *(Suddenly optimistic)* Wait a minute! ... *(Dejected again)* No. I just don't know.

BEN: I know! We could sneak away in disguise.

JON: Are you kidding? They'll shoot us down like clay pigeons.

BEN: No, not "in the skies," in "disguise"!

JON: Oh, I see.

TOD: There's no way that can work! We might as well just eat our guns and order new helmets!

JON: Calm down, soldier! (*Slaps him*)

TOD: But don't you see?! We're trapped! We're just cannon fodder for the military-industrial complex!

JON: Knock it off!

(*JON slaps him again.*)

TOD: We're doomed! We're gonna die!! I'm never gonna see my girl again....

(*JON kisses him on the lips.*)

TOD: Thanks. I needed that.

BEN: I'm telling you, Sarge, this disguise will work! (*He starts to pull clothes out of his backpack.*)

JON: I hope those are German uniforms.

BEN: Better than that—we'll dress up as the Andrews Sisters!

(*He pulls out three matching blond wigs attached to Navy caps, and stuffed bras.*)

JON: But the Andrews Sisters won't be popular until World War Two.

BEN: (*Pointing to the audience*) But the German's don't know that! Come on! Put these on!

TOD: This ain't happenin', man, this ain't happenin', man...

JON: (*Adjusting his boobs professionally*) Don't worry, Tod, it'll be great. Just like when we were kids.

(BEN and TOD look at JON.)

JON: Didn't you ever dress up like your sister?

(BEN and TOD shake their heads.)

JON: Strap on those boobs, soldier! That's an order!

BEN & TOD: Yes, sir!

JON: Adjust wigs!

BEN & TOD: Yes, sir!

JON: How do I look?

BEN & TOD: Strangely attractive, sir!

JON: All right, men, we're going over the top. Don't stop singing 'til we're marching down Broadway! Professor! Give us the note!

(TOD blows a note on the pitch pipe. They sing in beautiful three-part harmony.)

ALL: He was a sweet construction worker out of 'Frisco Bay  
And he would quite divinely dance the night away  
He was a sight in tight blue jeans  
And he would fight for what's right  
That's why he joined the Marines

TOD: But then he said he's gay

JON: So he was blown away

BEN: By the nervous homophobic boys of Company A!

ALL: The nervous homophobic boys of Company A!

JON: Lock and load! Let's go!!!

(They leap out of the foxhole. The moment they leap the lights flash and the sounds of war—horrible machine guns, explosions, whistling bombs—reverberate through the theater. The boys freeze the instant they are 'shot.')



*(The lights fade. The sound segues into a radio broadcast.)*

TOD: *(VO)* That was division 13 of Baker Company singing a song that won't be a hit for another thirty years. We now return you to the plush Starlight Room high atop the Palace Hotel for the scintillating sounds of Harry Dame and His Band of Acclaim. But first, the news. Dateline: 1919. The Treaty of Versailles is signed in Versailles. The Great War is over. Eighteenth Amendment ratified, creating Prohibition. And the Golden Age of Radio unites the country coast to coast transcontinentally from sea to shining sea!

*(Lights up on the boys at an old-fashioned microphone. They all have scripts and they toss the pages on the floor as they finish reading them. BEN has a guitar, a music stand with a bike horn, a slide whistle, and a train whistle.)*

TOD: On in three, two, ...

*(He counts "one" silently then points to BEN, who plays three notes on his guitar.)*

BEN: "You're listening to WXYZ (BEN honks bike horn), abridged radio of the twenties, thirties, and forties."

JON/ANNOUNCER: "Good evening, Mr. and Mrs. America and welcome once again to another thrilling adventure of America's Favorite Cowboy, *Dodge Rambler-Boy Buckaroo*. Brought to you by WXYZ (BEN honks the bike horn) and the makers of Thunder Bread—"

*(TOD makes the sound of thunder.)*

JON/ANNOUNCER: "—yes, Thunder Bread, individually sliced for your convenience with eight essential vitamins that'll make your body big where you need it. Thunder Bread."

*(More thunder)*

JON/ANNOUNCER: "It'll make your body big where you need it."

*(BEN plays a loping western tune on guitar.)*

JON/ANNOUNCER: "And now, journey with us back to those rugged days of yore, when men were men and so were the

women, when frontier justice held sway, and America's Hero, Dodge Rambler, Boy Buckaroo, ruled the west with his best *(Drop page.)* girl Molly and his faithful horse Gordon. Tonight, the makers of Thunder Bread..." *(Thunder)* "...and WXYZ—"

*(TOD gives two quick squeezes to a bike horn hidden in the front of BEN'S trousers.)*

BEN: What are you doing?

TOD: Nothing. I'm just squeezing the horn you have.

BEN: No—*here's* my horn.

*(BEN picks a bike horn off of the music stand.)*

ALL: EEUUWW!!

JON/ANNOUNCER: "We present Episode 34: 'Dry Days in Dusty Gulch'."

*(BEN crows like a rooster.)*

JON/ANNOUNCER: "A new day dawns in Dusty Gulch, as Dodge helps Molly plan the new schoolhouse."

BEN/MOLLY: "It sure is good of you to help with the plans for the schoolhouse, Dodge."

TOD/DODGE: "Shucks, Molly, t'ain't nothin' any other red-blooded American hero wouldn't do."

BEN/MOLLY: "It's just that you're so busy I'm amazed you have time for little ol' me."

TOD/DODGE: "I always have time for you, Molly."

JON/ANNOUNCER: "Just then, there came a knock at the door."

*(BEN knocks three times on his guitar. Drop page.)*

TOD/DODGE: "Come in."

*(BEN makes horse noises.)*

TOD/DODGE: “Why, it’s Gordon, my faithful and trusty steed. What’s troubling you, Gordon?”

*(BEN makes more horse noises.)*

TOD/DODGE: “What?! Timmy’s trapped on a cliff and needs insulin?!”

*(BEN makes a negative-sounding horse noise.)*

TOD/DODGE: “Oh! Bad guys have come to Dusty Gulch?”

*(An affirmative horse noise)*

TOD/DODGE: “Molly, you better stay here.”

BEN/MOLLY: “Oh, Dodge, I’m coming with you.”

TOD/DODGE: “No, Molly. I don’t want you mixed up in this.”

BEN/MOLLY: *(In DODGE’S voice)* “But I’m so mixed up already.”

TOD/DODGE: “Wait, that’s my voice!”

BEN/MOLLY: “See, I told you I was mixed up.”

TOD/DODGE: “Then let’s go, Gordon, to vanquish those ne’er-do-wells!”

*(BEN pounds his chest to simulate hoofbeats.)*

JON/ANNOUNCER: “What’s the trouble down at the Lucky Shot Saloon, and why exactly is Ben slapping his chest? The answer to these and other questions—” *(To BEN)* knock it off or I’ll kill you—

*(BEN stops slapping his chest.)*

JON/ANNOUNCER: “—will come right after this message from the makers of Lucky Stroke Cigarettes. Four out of five doctors recommend Lucky Stroke Cigarettes (BEN *strikes triangle*) to boost their practices. Lucky Stroke (BEN *strikes triangle*). You’re a Lucky Guy to have a Lucky Stroke. And now back to *Dodge Rambler, Boy Buckaroo.*”

*(Drop page. BEN plays a chord on the guitar and then slaps his chest to make the sound of hoofbeats.)*

JON/ANNOUNCER: “Dodge and Gordon race down to the Lucky Shot Saloon and burst through the door. They burst in the door. Yes, right through the door...”

*(BEN blows a train whistle. JON and TOD look at BEN in confusion.)*

JON/ANNOUNCER: On the Transcontinental Railroad, apparently.

TOD/DODGE: “What seems to be the prob—?”

JON/JEDGAR: *(Using his finger as a pistol)* “Put ‘em up, Rambler. We got you covered.”

TOD/DODGE: “Who are you?”

BEN/HERBERT: “Shut up, cowboy, or I’ll plug ya full of lead.”

JON/JEDGAR: “Well, if it ain’t the famous Dodge Rambler, Boy Buckaroo. I ‘spect you’ve heard of us. We’re the Hoover Boys—I’m Jedgar, this here’s my brother Herbert.”

TOD/DODGE: “So you’re the infamous Jedgar Hoover. Nice dress.”

JON/JEDGAR: “Thanks.”

TOD/DODGE: “Dusty Gulch doesn’t require your services. Begone.”

JON/JEDGAR: “Now hold on, Rambler. We’re here to help Dusty Gulch comply with the new federal law.”

TOD/DODGE: “What new federal law?”

JON/JEDGAR: “The new Constitutional amendment prohibiting alcohol.”

*(TOD/DODGE laughs long and hard.)*

TOD/DODGE: “No, seriously, what new federal law?”

JON/JEDGAR: “I’m serious, Rambler. *(Drop page.)*  
Herbert—hold up that newspaper.”

*(BEN loudly shakes one page of his script to make the sound of a newspaper rustling.)*

JON/JEDGAR: “It says so right here: ‘The Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution prohibits the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors.’”

TOD/DODGE: “Knock it off, Herbert, or I’ll run you in.”

BEN/HERBERT: “Oh, yeah? On what charge?”

TOD/DODGE: “Rustling.”

*(If the audience groans at this, JON says, “Sounds like the herd’s gettin’ restless.”)*

*(BEN stops rustling.)*

JON/ANNOUNCER: “And so the gentle folk of Dusty Gulch are forced into hiding as the hideous Hoover Boys sweep through town, sucking up all that is decent and good.”

*(BEN and TOD both make a huge sucking sound.)*

TOD: Hmm, that was good.

BEN: And decent.

JON/ANNOUNCER: “Meanwhile, Dodge Rambler, Boy Buckaroo, and his faithful horse Gordon bunk down under the Dusty Gulch sky as night falls.”

*(Slowly, one by one, TOD chirps like a cricket, BEN hoots like an owl, JON howls like a coyote, BEN hoots and screeches like a monkey. TOD and JON look at BEN disapprovingly.)*

TOD/DODGE: “Well, Gordon, another day gone and this Prohibition law isn’t working. If only we could find out who’s behind it!”

*(BEN makes sound of horse snorting.)*

TOD/DODGE: “Who?”

(BEN *makes a horse snort that sounds like “Al Capone.”*)

TOD/DODGE: “Al Capone! Are you sure?!”

(*Drop page. BEN again makes the sound of a horse snort.*)

TOD/DODGE: “Errot era eenum woe?” (*He stares at the page in confusion. It’s upside down. He turns right-side up and reads it again.*) “How many are there?”

(BEN *stomps his foot three times.*)

TOD/DODGE: “Hm, four—you’re the best hero an American horse ever had. Let’s ride! We’ve got a Prohibition to prohibit.”

(BEN *strikes a chord on the guitar and then slaps his chest to simulate the sound of horses galloping.*)

JON/ANNOUNCER: “Undaunted, Dodge dashes desperately down to Dusty Gulch to detect the deadly and drunken desperadoes and detain them indefinitely in the dark and dirty dock of destiny, and other ‘D’ words.”

(BEN *makes the sound of a horse whinny, then honks the bike horn.*)

TOD/DODGE: “So—Al Capone. We meet at last.”

BEN/CAPONE: “How’d you know I was here, Rambler? Yeah, see.”

TOD/DODGE: “I got it from the horse’s mouth. Come on, Capone, I’m taking you in.”

JON/JEDGAR: “Not so fast, Rambler.” (*Points his pistol/finger at TOD*)

ALL: “Gasp!”

TOD/DODGE: “Jedgar!”

JON/JEDGAR: “Herbert!”

BEN/MOLLY: “Dodge!”

TOD/DODGE: “Molly!”

JON/JEDGAR: “Capone!”

TOD/DODGE: “Gordon!”

BEN/CAPONE: “Wilbur!”

*(Drop page.)*

JON/JEDGAR: “Drop your guns, Rambler, or the girl gets it.”

TOD/DODGE: “You’ll never get away with it, Jedgar!”

BEN/CAPONE: “Oh, I think we will, see.”

JON/JEDGAR: “Say goodbye to your lady, Rambler.”

TOD/DODGE: “No, wait! Do what you want with the girl, but let me go!”

JON/JEDGAR: “All right.”

BEN/MOLLY: “Dodge, no!”

JON/ANNOUNCER: “Suddenly, over the hills in a cloud of dust and the sound of a thundering wheelchair (BEN *spins eggbeater to make sound of wheelchair*), appears Franklin Delano Roosevelt!”

TOD/FDR: “My fellow Americans, the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. Of course, as fears go, that’s a pretty big one. Still, we must not let ourselves get down. To illustrate this, I’d like to read a letter from little Amy in Warwickshire. She writes: “Dear FDR, Germany’s acting up again. I’m scared. Can you lend or lease us some battleships? Your fan, Amy.” Well, Amy, this is the kind of letter that pisses Americans off! Our country’s in a Depression, but we will beat it! I’m going to create the WPA, the CCC’s, the TVA...”

*(With a slide whistle, BEN makes the sound of a radio tuning. At the same time, JON mimes turning the tuning knob on a radio.)*

JON/ANNOUNCER: Twelve years later...

*(BEN uses the slide whistle again, and JON mimes changing stations again.)*

TOD/FDR: ...the FBI, the FDIC, and the IUD. We hereby declare war on the Axis powers. Oh, Lucy, come rub my aching...

*(BEN uses slide whistle while JON mimes changing the station.)*

JON/ANNOUNCER: "...back to the exciting conclusion of Rock Fury, Super GI."

*(Page drop. BEN stomps shoes on music table.)*

TOD/ADOLPH: "Oh, my darling Eva, look! Ze allies are marching into Berlin. Zey are falling right into my trap. Now I will press zis button, firing the secret Uberveapon zat vill vipe out ze whole Allied force. Ha-ha-ha-ha!"

*(Marching stops.)*

BEN/EVA: "Oh, Adolph, I love it ven you're in a syphilitic rage!" *(He makes a long WHOOSH sound, the sound of a man flying.)*

TOD/ADOLPH: "Ach, my little shnitzel-gruber, *(Whoosh)* tickle tickle tickle—vait. Vut is zat noise? *(Whoosh.)* Oh, no! It's a bird, it's a plane..."

*(BEN makes a short "spurt" noise. TOD wipes an imaginary bird dripping out of his eye.)*

TOD/ADOLPH: "Oh, it's a bird."

JON/ROCK: "No! It's Rock Fury, Super GI! Your jig-dancing days are over, little man."

TOD/ADOLPH: "But vy? Vy?!"

JON/ROCK: "Vy? I'll tell you vy. In its greed and lust for power, Germany has tried to take over an entire continent."

BEN/EVA: "But isn't zat vut ze US did in Norze America?"

JON/ROCK: "Wash your mouth with soap, little lady! Why, the US stopped land-grabbing over forty years ago. And there's a big difference between your land-grabbing and ours."

TOD/ADOLPH: "Vut's zat?"



JON/ROCK: “We succeeded. Besides, we didn’t try to wipe out an entire race of people!”

BEN/EVA: “Vut about ze Indians?”

JON/ROCK: “Well, we don’t lock people away in concentration camps.”

BEN/EVA: “Vut about ze Japanese-Americans on ze Vest Coast?”

JON/ROCK: “You know, it’s lucky for you, ma’am, I don’t hit women.”

*(BEN claps his hands once to simulate the sound of a slap.)*

BEN/EVA: “Ow.”

JON/ROCK: “Much. *(Drop page.)* Now let’s go. If I had to hazard a guess, I’d say that you two will be spending more than twelve years in Leavenworth.”

TOD/ADOLPH: “Or eleven years in Twelvevorth.”

BEN/EVA: “Or five and ten at Voolvorth’s.”

JON/ROCK: “Well, thank goodness we won this war; otherwise, the German and Japanese economies would dominate the world.”

*(The boys can’t believe this is right. They all check to make sure that their scripts are correct.)*

TOD/HAWKEYE: “Help, help!”

JON/ROCK: “Wait—my super hearing is picking up Alan Alda calling for help in Korea. Rock Fury, Super GI, is off once again to battle for truth, justice, and American markets.”

*(All three boys make a “WHOOSH!” sound to indicate ROCK FURY flying away. BEN then makes a news ticker sound underneath:)*

*(Drop page.)*

TOD: This just in—Atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Over two hundred thousand dead. That report in just a moment, but first it’s time to play *Queen for a Day!*”

BEN & JON: *(Lamely)* Yay.

TOD: The game show which celebrates the achievements of American women, and where an ordinary housewife, a lowly homemaker, a societally conditioned domestic slave, can become *Queen for a Day!*

BEN & JON: *(Lamely)* Yay.

TOD: Just by proving her knowledge of feminist history. Or should I say herstory? Jon?

JON: Thank you, Tod. But before we play our game we need a female volunteer, a lovely little gal from our studio audience to come up here on stage and clean up this terrible mess that we've made. Any volunteers?

BEN: Now, before you raise your hand, we're looking for someone who's used to being bossed around and told what to do like all the time.

*(JON and TOD look at BEN.)*

BEN: That's me, isn't it?

*(TOD exits while BEN begins to clear the stage.)*

JON: Okay, let's play *Queen for a Day*. **Emily, can I get some house light?** Today's first question—if you think you know the answer, raise your hand. *(He raises his hand as he says this to demonstrate, and to discourage the audience from yelling out the answers)* Who was the most famous female American anarchist/organizer of the early twentieth century, founder of *Mother Earth Magazine*, and lover of Sasha Berkman?

***(TOD goes out into the audience.)***

TOD: Look at all the hands shooting into the air. *(Unless your audiences are smarter than ours, almost nobody will have raised a hand at this point.)* Everyone wants a piece of this question. Here's a lovely lady. *(He approaches an actual woman audience member.)* Tell me, dear, what's your name and where are you from?

*(She tells him. He repeats her name and hometown.)*

TOD: Tell me, dear, do you know the answer to Jon's question?

*(She will rarely know the answer, so TOD helps her.)*

TOD: That's okay. Nobody goes away empty-handed. I'll give you a hint. Just say, "Emma Goldman."

FIRST VOLUNTEER: Emma Goldman.

TOD: Emma Goldman, Jon?

JON: *(Reading the answer from the page of his radio script)*  
No, I'm sorry, the answer is Whoopi Goldberg.

TOD: I'm sorry, very close. But just for playing our game we'd like to present you with this: Number One in our series of Great American Women Trading Cards. Collect all three!

JON: Boo.

TOD: That is exactly the right response.

JON: Oh, we're awfully progressive here in the 1950's, aren't we, Tod?

TOD: We sure are, Jon. Blame it on Mamie, I say. Here is a woman, Susan B. Anthony, who led and inspired the Woman Suffrage Movement for 50 years and who's work led to the eventual adoption of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, giving women the right to vote. Her contributions were recognized when her face was printed on American currency, the rarely circulated one dollar coin! I hear you can trade it in for a real dollar!

*(TOD presents the card to the audience member.)*

TOD: Thank you very much for playing our game. A big hand for the little lady right here!

*(JON leads the audience in applause. TOD dashes up and around to the back of the theater.)*

JON: Okay, let's go to question two. Remember, get it right, become Queen for a Day. This one's a little easier. Name the brave seamstress from Montgomery, Alabama, who refused to move to the back of the bus and jump-started the American civil rights movement.

TOD: Brave seamstress, civil rights movement. Well, here's a lovely lady. Tell me, dear, what's your name, where are you from?

*(She tells TOD her name and town.)*

TOD: Tell me, dear, do you know the answer to Jon's question?

SECOND VOLUNTEER: Rosa Parks?

*(You'd be amazed, but some people actually don't know this. Or they panic and can't remember. Whichever, they deserve to be chastised. TOD can say, "Really?" and then announce, "The [name of city] school system, ladies and gentlemen!" Then he can take pity and tell her, "You know you should know this, don't you? I'll give you a hint. Just say, Rosa Parks'.")*

TOD: Rosa Parks, Jon?

JON: *(Again reading the answer)* No, I'm sorry. The answer I have here is Whoopi Goldberg.

TOD: Oh, too bad. I think you're confused because Whoopi played her in the movie. But just for playing, here's Number Two in our series of Great American Women Trading Cards, Helen Keller. Here is a woman who was called America's good will ambassador to the world for her humanitarian efforts for the handicapped and won acceptance of Braille as the standard alphabet for the blind. Unfortunately she never got the chance to see her true impact on American history... *(He presents card to the volunteer.)*

JON: Let's hear it for Helen Keller! *(Again, JON leads applause. TOD moves down to the front of the audience.)* Well, no winner yet, but we still have question Number Three. Tod, if they get this right, what will they win?

TOD: Well, Jon, the person who answers this question correctly will win Number Three in our series of Great American Women Trading Cards. This woman was the first actor to earn more than her male co-stars in the entertainment industry and she inspired Woodward and Burnstein in their Watergate investigation, the star of *Deep Throat*, Miss Linda Lovelace! Jon?

*(JON looks quizzically at TOD, who shrugs.)*

JON: Okay. Here's the final question: This African American comedienne not only hosted the Academy Awards, she was nominated for one for her performance in *The Color Purple*,

and she was the long time center square on *Hollywood Squares*.

TOD: Oh, center square on Hollywood Squares, everybody's thinking, 'I should know this I should know this.' Let's see, here's a lovely lady. Tell me, sir, what's your name?

*(This time TOD has selected a man as the volunteer. The guy says his name.)*

TOD: And where are you from?

*(The guy says the name of his town.)*

TOD: I'm sorry?

*(He repeats the name of his town.)*

TOD: No, I heard you. I'm just sorry.

*(TOD and JON laugh hysterically, out of all proportion to the quality of the joke. BEN reenters and joins in.)*

TOD: Ah, the old ones are the best ones, aren't they...*(The guy's actual name)*? As we've been proving all night. Tell me, do you know the answer to Jon's question?

THIRD VOLUNTEER: Whoopi Goldberg?

TOD: Whoopi Goldberg, Jon?

JON: No, I'm sorry the answer is Paul Lind.

*(TOD hands him the card and leads the applause. About half the time, the guy actually doesn't say, "Whoopi Goldberg." TOD can prompt him by saying, "Would you like to make a guess based on the previous two questions?" With any luck, this time the guy answers, "Whoopi Goldberg", and you can move on. But if the guy still doesn't know, TOD will ask the audience what the answer is, and they will invariably respond, "Whoopi Goldberg!" If it's gone this far, TOD tears the cards into pieces and tosses them into the air for the audience to share.)*

TOD: Hey, thanks for playing *Queen for a Day*!

BEN: Hey, did you hear what this guy said? Come on, man, this isn't like TV. We can hear you, too, you know.

JON: I didn't hear what he said.

BEN: He said we left out fifty years of history.

JON: What fifty years?

TOD: Oh, I know—you're talking about the fifty years between the Civil War and World War I, right?

JON: Well, did it ever occur to you that we left it out on purpose because it wasn't a very funny time in American history?

BEN: No, he said we left it out because we don't know anything about it. And I'm almost positive I heard him say that you sucked in The SantaLand Diaries.

*(TOD and BEN restrain JON from beating the crap out of the guy.)*

JON: Oh, man, that's it! I don't have to put up with that!

TOD: Yeah, but we should answer the guy's question.

JON: You want to answer his question after he's been rude?

TOD: He's American. He can't help being rude.

JON: Okay, we'll answer the question, but it's going to be short, okay, because it wasn't a very funny time in American history. Here it is. There was labor unrest....

ALL: Not funny.

JON: There was land-grabbing on an unprecedented scale....

ALL: Not funny.

JON: There were seven-year olds working themselves to death in sweatshops.

ALL: ...well, that's pretty funny, actually...

TOD: That covers everything up to the end of World War II, doesn't it?

BEN: Shall we move on?

JON: Yes.

(TOD and BEN exit.)

JON: We now move on to the final chapter of the History of America, in which myriad events collide and deflect, each seeming significant yet disjointed. And how better to capture the spirit of postwar America than with—

TOD: (*Entering*) —a medley of Broadway show tunes! Oh, the farmer and the cowman should be friends! The farmer and the cowman should be friends! We got trouble right here in River City with a capital T that rhymes with P that stands for pool!

BEN: That stands for pool!

JON: Tod, we are not doing Broadway show tunes!

TOD: I thought we agreed. The Broadway musical is America's greatest contribution to world theater!

JON: No, the world knows postwar America through the hard-boiled detective. It's the film noir ending.

TOD: No, not the film noir ending.

BEN: Tod, you are such a dick! We voted...

TOD: I changed my mind.

BEN: You can't change your mind on a vote! Okay, we'll vote again. This time we'll use the audience.

(TOD disagrees, JON agrees.)

BEN: Let's do this by applause. Everyone in favor of Tod's stupid Broadway ending, applaud.

(BEN leads the applause.)

BEN: Everyone in favor of Jon's thoughtful film noir ending?

*(Inevitably, TOD wins the audience vote.)*

BEN: Well, it looks like Tod wins the popular vote.

TOD: Thank you. *(Starts to go)*

JON: No, no. That guy's chad is hanging, I can see it from here.

BEN: Does that mean we win in the Electrical College?

*(JON and BEN slap hands and celebrate.)*

TOD: NO!!! All right, all right! I'll do the film noir ending, but only if I get to play all the good parts: Conspirator Guy, Lt. Flush, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan.

JON: Fine.

BEN: What do you mean, "fine"? What do I get to play?

JON: All the women.

BEN: Yeah! Cool.

*(BEN and TOD exit.)*

BEN: Okay, postwar America, film noir ending. Play it, Emily.

*(Film noir-style music plays: a slow jazz number. JON dons an overcoat and fedora.)*

JON/SPADE: The name's Diamond, Spade Diamond. My friends call me Spade Diamond. I'm a private eye, a shamus, a dick for hire. The phone in my office had been gathering dust for weeks when a beautiful redhead walked in.

*(Theme music from I LOVE LUCY plays. BEN walks in dressed like LUCILLE BALL.)*

BEN/LUCY: Hello, Spade.

JON/SPADE: Lucy Ricardo, what are you doing here?



BEN/LUCY: I know I shouldn't have come, Spade, but I need your help.

JON/SPADE: Sure, now you need my help. But five years ago you ripped my heart out like a blue chip stamp to stick it into another man's coupon book.

BEN/LUCY: Well, Diamond, if you won't help me maybe your brother Neil will.

JON/SPADE: Sweet Caroline, Lucy, he's been dead for three years.

BEN/LUCY: Eewwww. Look, Spade. I know it's none of my business and you might just tell me to shut up, but what happened to your brother?

JON/SPADE: Shut up, Lucy. It's none of your business that my brother Neil was a second-rate Hollywood actor who got labeled a communist, blacklisted and committed suicide.

BEN/LUCY: I'm sorry I asked.

JON/SPADE: *(To audience)* Just then my hand rang.

BEN: Brrring!

*(JON uses his hand like a phone. TOD appears in a pool of light across the stage. He wears thick, Coke-bottle glasses.)*

JON/SPADE: Hello?

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: If you know what's good for you, you'll drop this case before you start it. Unless you want to find out the truth about your brother.

JON/SPADE: My brother? *(To audience)* I decided to trace the call. I had to keep him talking. *(To TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY)* Hello, I'm tracing this call and need to keep you talking. Who is this?

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: Just call me the Conspirator Guy. He-he-he-he.

*(Music plays.)*

JON/SPADE: The Conspirator Guy? Whaddaya know about my brother?

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: Sorry. Wrong number. *(He drops a card on the stage and exits.)*

JON/SPADE: He'd stayed on the line just long enough. I traced the call to a pool of light on the far side of the stage. *(He crosses the stage and picks up the card.)* "Conspirator Guy. For more information dial 555-1212." *(Turns card over)* "Hanoi Hilton at midnight." Sorry, Lucy, gotta go.

BEN/LUCY: Wait, Spade. You can't leave me like this! Ricky's being investigated by the HUAC!

JON: The House Un-American Activities Committee?

BEN: We think it's because he's Cuban and there's this Cold War on. Waahh!!

JON/SPADE: Look, Lucy, McCarthy and his witch-hunting cronies mean business. They're only gonna let Ricky go if you give 'em a scapegoat.

BEN/LUCY: A scapegoat?

JON/SPADE: That's what I just said. Somebody to blame instead of Ricky. *(Shaking her)* Who's it gonna be, Lucy? Think! Think!

BEN/LUCY: I know! Fred and Ethel!

JON/MCCARTHY: Fred and Ethel who?

BEN/LUCY: Our landlords, Fred and Ethel Rosenberg.

JON/SPADE: It's so crazy...

BOTH: It just might work.

TOD/RICKY: *(Off)* Lucy! Lucy! You got some 'splainin' to do!

BEN/LUCY: I'd better go, Spade.

*(BEN plants a big "Bugs Bunny Kiss" on JON and runs off.)*

JON/SPADE: I felt strange stirrings. I knew Lucy would take care of herself. It was one of two things she did very well. Now I had to get to Hanoi.

*(JON mimes steering a car. TOD enters.)*

TOD/FLUSH: Hold it, Diamond.

*(Music plays.)*

TOD/FLUSH: Stop milking that cow!

*(JON/SPADE is momentarily confused, then realizes that his “car steering” looks like “cow milking.”)*

JON/SPADE: *(To audience)* It was Lt. Flush, SFPD. He’d been trying to nail me for years. *(To TOD)* Whaddaya want, Flush? I’m a busy man.

TOD/FLUSH: You still haven’t explained your connection to those maternity ward bombings.

JON/SPADE: Maternity ward bombings? You got the wrong guy. You can’t connect me to the Baby Boom.

TOD/FLUSH: You can only hope, Diamond.

JON/SPADE: Yeah. Why don’t you go chase a real criminal like Tony the Tiger?

TOD/FLUSH: I’m not after serial killers, Diamond, I’m after you!

JON/SPADE: Well, when you find something that’ll stick in court, besides your BVD’s, give me a call.

*(JON drives away downstage. TOD walks backward upstage and off, face JON and calling after him the whole time. The illusion is that JON is driving away and leaving TOD behind.)*

TOD/FLUSH: *(Calling)* I’ll get you, Diamond...! *(Exit)*

JON/SPADE: I had to get to the Hanoi Hilton. I took a left turn up Market Street, past the Golden Gate Bridge—

*(BEN crosses upstage with a painted cardboard cutout of the Golden Gate Bridge)*

JON/SPADE: —the Statue of Liberty—

*(TOD crosses upstage dressed as the Statue of Liberty)*

JON/SPADE: —and the Texas School Book Depository—

*(BEN crosses upstage with the famed “bullet marked with an ‘X’” on a stick)*

JON/SPADE: ...that bullet sure gets around. I knew the Hanoi Hilton. It was the seediest of the seedy in a town known for seeds, seediness, and horticulture of all types. And like Dorothy Parker said, you can lead a whore to culture but you can’t make her think.

*(Music plays. Audience boos.)*

JON/SPADE: *(To audience)* Get over it. *(To TOD)* Conspirator Guy?

*(TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY has entered as the audience booed. He sets two chairs down and sits on one of them.)*

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: Hello, Spade.

JON/SPADE: Thanks for the invite. What can you tell me about the Cold War and how it relates to the Domino Theory, Vietnam, and my brother?

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: It’s all an elaborate game with one side trying to keep the other in check. The Domino Theory says that if Vietnam goes communist, the rest of Asia will fall to the Reds one by one, like dominoes.

JON/SPADE: You mean they’ll deliver in thirty minutes or less?

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: Not any more. They had that lawsuit, remember...?

*(Gong. BEN appears on in a kimono.)*

BEN/JO: Hello, tall, dark, and gruesome. May I buy you a drink?

*(Sound effect.)*

JON/SPADE: I wouldn't say no.

BEN/JO: I'll be right back. *(Exits.)*

JON/SPADE: *(To audience.)* She was the most beautiful dame I'd every seen. I wanted to make love to her in the worst way—standing up in a hammock.

*(As the audience laughs, TOD seems puzzled.)*

JON/SPADE: What are you doing?

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: I'm just trying to picture that.

JON/SPADE: Knock it off! Who is she?

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: Jo Chi Minh. Daughter of the leader of North Vietnam. *(Gong.)* She'll have some answers, but be careful, Spade, she's trouble.

JON/SPADE: Dry up and blow away.

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: Okay. It's your bar mitzvah.

*(TOD exits, as BEN enters.)*

JON/SPADE: So, Jo—whaddaya know?

BEN/JO: Not much. Here's your drink

JON/SPADE: Thanks. So what's with this war, sweetheart?

BEN/JO: Why do you want to know?

JON/SPADE: Just trying to clear up some family business.

BEN/JO: Family business, eh? Speaking of family business, that reminds me of a little story when I was small child in rice paddies of Vietnam, I'd be walking....

*(JON talks over BEN.)*

JON/SPADE: *(To audience)* The longer she talked, the more I realized that Ben had no idea how to do a Vietnamese accent.

BEN/JO: No, I don't really.

JON/SPADE: So where were we?

BEN/JO: The roar. *(His bad accented pronunciation of 'war')*

JON/SPADE: Right. The roar. Look, I need some answers and I need 'em now: Why is the US so interested in a little country in Southeast Asia? It doesn't make sense.

BEN/JO: Ah, but it does. Who stands to benefit from the war? Figure that out, Mr. Diamond, and you're home free. Look! Another monk is setting himself on fire!

*(JON looks away in the direction BEN is pointing. BEN pours something into JON's drink.)*

JON/SPADE: A monk on fire? I don't see a monk on fire.

BEN/JO: Oh, he must have gone out. They don't make monks like they used to. Well, cheers.

JON/SPADE: Here's looking at you, kid.

BEN/JO: Up yours, too.

*(Gong. JON drinks and suddenly grabs his throat. He passes out. Colored lights flash. Hard rock music from the sixties blares over the speakers. We hear JFK say, "Ask not what your country can do for you" then the BANG of a gunshot. Then Martin Luther King: "I have a dream!" BANG! Malcolm X: "By any means necessary." BANG! RFK: "To follow in the footsteps of my brother." BANG! Anne Murray: "Spread your tiny wings and fly away." BANG! BANG! BANG! In the middle of these voiceovers, JON has slowly and unsteadily gotten to his feet.)*

JON/SPADE: Whatever she slipped me, it was strong. I was high all right, and I'm not talking vertically. I saw two figures approaching me. At first glance, they looked like Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin.

*(BEN and TOD walk toward him in slow motion, as if they were walking on the moon. TOD wears a military cap. BEN wears an oversized Uncle Sam hat.)*

TOD/ARMSTRONG: This is one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.

JON/SPADE: But as they got closer they looked more like Ken Kesey and Timothy Leary.

BEN: Tune in, turn on, drop out!

JON/SPADE: Where am I?

TOD: It's China Town, Jake.

JON: China Town?

TOD: You're having an hallucination.

JON/SPADE: Who are you?

BEN/SAM: I'm Uncle Sam.  
I say uh, I say uh  
Uncle Sam-I-am.  
Do you like my war in Vietnam?

JON/SPADE: I do not like your Vietnam.  
I do not like it, Sam-I-Am.

BEN/SAM: Are you fond of Lyndon Johnson?  
Did you like the Gulf of Tonkin,  
Operation Rolling Thunder,  
Flaming Dart, or the My Lai blunder?

TOD/TOUGH: The kids at home align with Mars,  
Burning draft cards, burning bras.  
Do you like the riots in the inner cities?  
Did you think Kent State was pretty?

JON/SPADE: I did not like the riots in the inner cities.  
I did not think Kent State was pretty.  
I do not like this drugged-out dream.  
I do not like your rhyming scheme.  
I do not like your Vietnam.  
I do not like it, Sam-I-Am.

BEN/SAM: Are you fond of Agent Orange?  
Do you...? Damn!

JON/SPADE: I had him trapped. There is no rhyme for orange.

TOD/TOUGH: Not so fast, Kitty cat. We got a couple of questions for you. Where was Lucy Ricardo on the day JFK was assassinated?

JON/SPADE: *(To audience.)* So, Kennedy was dead and they were trying to blame it on Lucy. I had to think quick. *(To TOD.)* She was with me.

BEN/SAM: Now pay attention son, she couldn't have been with you, Diamond, 'cause we were following you that day.

JON/SPADE: She was with me, but she was disguised.

TOD/TOUGH: So, Lucy was in disguise with Diamond.

*(Audience groans. All three actors do a slow take to the audience.)*

JON/SPADE: *(To audience)* You're right. I should've seen that one coming. *(To TOD)* Look, act like a couple of good boys and take a long walk off a short dwarf.

TOD/TOUGH: *(Menacingly)* That's good, Diamond. But I'm afraid we're gonna have to rough you up.

*(Clownlike, TOD rapidly punches JON's face like a punching bag. JON reacts appropriately, and then passes out on the floor. Blackout and music. Lights up.)*

JON/SPADE: When I came to, I was in the Watergate Hotel.

*(TOD enters, hunching his shoulders and speaking into his wristwatch.)*

TOD/NIXON: Tricky Dick to Checkers. Tricky Dick to Checkers. Come in, please. I am not a crook. Repeat. I am not a crook. And let me make on thing perfectly clear. *(Shakes his jowls)*



JON/SPADE: It was former Vice-President Nixon, one of the biggest commie-hunters of his time.

TOD/NIXON: That's President Nixon now, son. And commie-hunting is passé. In fact, I'm using détente to open up relations with the Soviet Union and Red China. *(Speaking into his watch)* Watergate to White House, Watergate to White House, can you hear me now?.

JON/SPADE: You mean the Cold War is over?

TOD/NIXON: No, sir. The Reds are still our mortal enemies, but we'd like them to be our pals as well. There's a lot of untapped potential there. Untapped. Get it? Heh-heh.

*(JON doesn't get it.)*

TOD/NIXON: Must be a Democrat. Rrrring! *(He answers his watch.)* Hello? It's for you.

JON/SPADE: *(He speaks into TOD's watch.)* Hello?

*(JON listens to the watch as TOD garbles something inaudible, in the CONSPIRATOR GUY voice, into his sleeve. JON speaks again into the watch.)*

JON/SPADE: I'll be there. So long. *(To TOD)* I gotta go. Hey, do that Nixon salute for me before you go?

TOD/NIXON: Aw, what the heck.

JON/SPADE: Happy tapping.

TOD/NIXON: Sock it to me?

*(TOD exits. Blackout, then lights up on JON.)*

JON/SPADE: I was told to meet a contact at the corner gas station. On the way there I heard that Nixon had resigned the Presidency but landed on his feet, whereas just the opposite had happened to Gerald Ford. *(Musical bridge.)* When I got to the gas station there was a line a half-mile long, and I had to wait over an hour to get gas. I looked for my contact.

*(BEN enters dressed as an ARAB, holding a newspaper with two hands.)*

BEN/ARAB: Pssst!

*(BEN gestures with his head for JON to approach him. A third hand reaches over the top of the newspaper and hands JON a note. [This magic trick is available at most magic shops] BEN exits.)*

JON/SPADE: Thanks. *(He turns away, then stops when he realizes the ARAB had three hands. He looks back, then shrugs. Continues cross downstage)* “Dear Spade: Have been called to Iran...”

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: ...called to Iran to release some hostages. If you want more information, go to the White House, ask for Ronald Reagan.

JON/SPADE: Ronald Reagan?

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: Yes, Ronald Reagan.

JON/SPADE: Well, the only Ronald Reagan I know is a second rate Hollywood actor who starred in *Bedtime for Bonzo*...but that's absurd. The American people couldn't be that gullible.

*(Blackout and musical bridge. Lights up on TOD sitting as a ventriloquist's dummy on BEN's lap. In fact, TOD is kneeling on the ground on the US side of BEN's legs. TOD has a ventriloquist dummy's body attached in front. The effect is seeing TOD's normal-sized face with a small body.)*

JON/SPADE: Ronald Reagan?

BEN/NANCY: Yes? I mean

TOD/REAGAN: Yes?

JON/SPADE: The name's Diamond. Spade Diamond. I'd like to ask you a few questions.

TOD/REAGAN: Okay. As I said to John Hinckley, fire away. Heh-heh!

JON/SPADE: Do you believe in the Domino Theory?

*(BEN mouths the words as TOD speaks.)*

TOD/REAGAN: Oh, yes. Mommy and I love to play dominoes while we drink hot cocoa and watch *The Walton's*.

JON/SPADE: No, the Domino Theory of international communism.

TOD/REAGAN: Well, I...ah...

BEN/NANCY: We're doing everything we can, dear.

TOD/REAGAN: We're doing everything we can, dear. See? Her lips don't even move.

JON/SPADE: Were you behind the October Surprise?

TOD/REAGAN: I don't recall.

JON/SPADE: As President of the Screen Actor's Guild did you blacklist my brother?

TOD/REAGAN: I don't recall.

JON/SPADE: Did you order Oliver North to trade arms for hostages?

TOD/REAGAN: You bet your ass, buddy...

BEN/NANCY: Brring!

*(The phone rings. TOD collapses onto BEN's lap. BEN answers her hand.)*

BEN/NANCY: Hello, White House-Kremlin Hotline, Nancy speaking. Mikhail, how are you? Yes, Ron's here. I'll animate him for you.

*(TOD pops up briefly and then is set back down.)*

BEN/NANCY: What? *(Looks at JON.)* Yes, he's standing right here. Okay, I'll tell him. Uh-huh. Oh, and Gorby—we begin bombing in five minutes. Yes, the old ones are the best ones aren't they? **Stolinchmaya!**

TOD/REAGAN: *(Suddenly sitting up)* Who called, Mommy?  
Who called?

BEN/NANCY: Well, that was Gorby and he had a message for Spade from the Conspirator Guy. If you want to solve the mystery of the Domino Theory and find out the truth about your brother, meet him at the Berlin Wall at 7:30—Checkpoint Charlie.

JON/SPADE: Sounds like it could be dangerous.

BEN/NANCY: Just say no, Spade.

JON/SPADE: Thanks for the help.

*(JON exits.)*

TOD/REAGAN: Well, there he goes again.

*(Blackout and music. Lights up on JON.)*

JON/SPADE: I had to get to the Berlin Wall. It seemed appropriate that I was going to crack this case at the Iron Curtain, the dividing place between East and West. Now I had to find a way to get to Berlin.

TOD/FLUSH: *(Entering)* I got you now, Diamond! You're dead meat. Your butt is mine. Your ass is grass. Your keister's cooked. Your heinie's history!

JON/SPADE: Calm down, Flush. I don't have time for a long list of rump references.

TOD/FLUSH: You'll be singing a different tune soon, sister, in Sing Sing. I can prove you're the sick and twisted pervert responsible for...disco.

JON/SPADE: You can't connect me to disco.

TOD/FLUSH: Oh, yeah? What's your favorite kind of music?

JON/SPADE: Disco.

TOD/FLUSH: Gotcha punk!

JON/SPADE: Doh! I've got to get to Berlin, and you're not gonna stop me!

*(JON starts running. After a few steps he runs in place. TOD takes off after him.)*

JON/SPADE: He was catching up with me. I hopped onto my Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

*(JON hops on an imaginary motorcycle and drives DS. TOD/FLUSH hops up on his motorcycle, siren blaring. They jockey for position.)*

TOD/FLUSH: Pull over, Diamond!

JON/SPADE: No way!

TOD/FLUSH: Pull it over!

*(JON accelerates away, leaving TOD behind. TOD catches up, pulling alongside. JON jumps behind TOD, as if riding on the back of the same bike. JON puts his index finger, like a gun, to TOD's temple.)*

JON/SPADE: Get me to Berlin, and quick!

TOD/FLUSH: Berlin? On a motorcycle? Are you crazy?

JON/SPADE: Get goin!

*(They drive around the stage and end up facing the SR wings.)*

JON: *(Pointing SR)* Look out! Look out!

TOD/FLUSH: What?

JON/SPADE: CHICAGO!

*(JON pulls TOD's fedora off, and his own, and tosses off stage left.)*

JON: *(Pointing SR)* Look out! Look out!

TOD/FLUSH: What?

JON/SPADE: A FRUIT STAND!

*(TOD and JON scream. BEN runs on from SR and throws a large box of plastic fruit at them, then exits SR. TOD and JON drive to face stage left.)*

JON/SPADE: *(Pointing SL)* Look out! Look out!

TOD/FLUSH: What?

JON/SPADE: A NURSERY SCHOOL!

*(TOD and JON scream. Eight or ten baby dolls fly at them from the SL wings. TOD and JON drive in a circle, ending up center stage, facing SR.)*

JON/SPADE: *(Pointing SR)* Look out! Look out!

TOD/FLUSH: What?

JON/SPADE: THE ATLANTIC OCEAN!!

*(TOD and JON scream. BEN runs on from SR and throws a bucket of water on TOD, then exits SR.)*

JON/SPADE: *(Pointing SR)* Look out! Look out!

TOD/FLUSH: What?

JON/SPADE: THE ENGLISH CHANNEL!!

*(TOD and JON scream. BEN runs on again from SR and douses TOD with another bucket of water. BEN exits SR.)*

JON/SPADE: Look out! Look out!

TOD/FLUSH: What?

JON/SPADE: BAVARIA!

*(They start to scream, then stop.)*

TOD/FLUSH: What's wrong with Bavaria?

JON/SPADE: BAVARIAN CREAM PIE!

*(TOD and JON scream. BEN enters SR, creams TOD with a pie and exits SR.)*

JON/SPADE: *(Pointing SR)* Look out! Look out!

TOD/FLUSH: What?

JON/SPADE: THE MOSCOW STATE CIRCUS!

*(TOD and JON scream. BEN enters SR in a clown costume. He acts like he's going to throw the contents of the bucket on TOD and JON, but then goes to the DS edge of the stage and throws a bucket of confetti into the audience. He exits SR.)*

JON/SPADE: Wait a minute! The Moscow State Circus?  
We've gone too far. Back this thing up!

*(They make five beeping sounds as they back up, then dismount.)*

BOTH: Berlin!

*(BEN/UNCLE SAM enters SR.)*

BEN/UNCLE SAM: That's right son! But the Wall is down,  
the Cold War is over.

JON & TOD: Uncle Sam!

BEN/UNCLE SAM: You know too much, Spade. I'd like to  
introduce you to a little friend of mine.

*(BEN reveals the infamous magic bullet with the 'X' on it, which he had hidden behind his back.)*

JON/SPADE: No, Sam! No!

BEN/UNCLE SAM: Banzai!

*(BEN runs toward JON to hit him with the bullet.)*

TOD/FLUSH: Get behind me, Spade! I'll protect you—!

*(TOD jumps in front of JON and takes the bullet. TOD collapses, BEN exits, with JON shooting at him with his index finger.)*

JON/SPADE: Bang! Bang! Bang! *(Kneeling)* Hang in there, Flush! Don't die on me, pal! You'll be okay!

*(TOD raises his head, wearing the CONSPIRATOR GUY's thick glasses.)*

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: Hello, Spade!

JON/SPADE: Conspirator Guy?

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: That's right. I'm a split personality. Just like Jekyll and Hyde. Beavis and Butthead. **Mary Kate and Ashley**. But before I die, I want to tell you—your brother wasn't a communist. I set him up just like I set up Ricky Ricardo.

JON/SPADE: I knew it! My brother was innocent!

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: And you want to know who caused the Cold War? Who benefited?

JON/SPADE: Yes!

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: The Generals!

JON/SPADE: The military?

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: No, no. General Motors. General Dynamics. General Electric. General Mills. They caused the Cold War! And—I shot JFK, not Lee Harvey Oswald!

JON/SPADE: Really?!

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: Yeah. I shot Bobby Kennedy, too. And Martin Luther King. And Malcolm X.

JON/SPADE: Wow.

*(TOD works himself into a frenzy as he drags himself downstage.)*

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: And I poisoned Marilyn, and walked on the moon, and burglarized the Watergate Hotel...

JON/SPADE: Okay!



TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: ...and I shot JR, and invented the AIDS virus, and I whacked Nancy Kerrigan on the knee...I'd whack her again if I had half a chance...

JON/SPADE: Shut up!

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: ...and I made Oprah skinny and then fat again, and I shrank the bloody glove, I rigged the vote for Sanjaye and I told President Clinton, "Go ahead! She's an intern! Who cares?" *(These last two or three confessions can change, depending on what's in the news. Recently, they've included "I was Sonny Bono's ski instructor", "And I fondled Kathleen Willey", and "And I was in that car on Sunset Boulevard with Hugh Grant".)*

JON/SPADE: BANG! *(Shoots TOD with index finger)*

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: *(With his last gasp)* ...Anna Nicole! *(He dies.)*

JON/SPADE: I had to put him out of my misery. So there it was. The Cold War was over, and I had no more answers than when I started. Communism was dead...well, except for a billion people in China, and a few hundred million in Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea, Angola, Mozambique, North Yemen, and Vermont. George Bush Senior was taking the credit, but no one believed him, and quicker than you could say "Whitewater", Bill Clinton spent eight years bringing new meaning to the term "Head of State". Fortunately, George W. Bush was proving to be the finest president ever elected by the United States Supreme Court. I needed a drink.

*(BEN/LUCY enters.)*

BEN/LUCY: Hello, Spade!

*(The film noir jazz music fades in.)*

JON/SPADE: Lucy, what are you doing here?

BEN/LUCY: Ricky and I are divorced now. Howzabout you and me getting together with Jack Daniels and Johnnie Walker and making a night of it?

JON/SPADE: Sounds like some enchanted evening.

TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY: (*Popping up*) "...you may see a stranger..."

(JON and BEN shoot TOD/CONSPIRATOR GUY together. He flops back down.)

BEN/LUCY: I have a confession to make, Spade.

JON/SPADE: What's that, Lucy?

BEN/LUCY: My name's not Lucy. (*Removing his wig*) It's Louie. And I'm a man in woman's clothing, just like Janet Reno.

JON/SPADE: Nobody's perfect. You know, Lucy, this could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

(*Lights and music fade as they exit holding each other's butts.*)

(*Lights up as the guys run back on and take a bow.*)

JON: Thank you. Thank you. Shut up, ladies and gentlemen! That was the Complete History of America. We hope you enjoyed the show. (*To TOD and BEN*) Is there anything we need to add here historically?

TOD: Nope, we did it all.

BEN: Well, we left out a few people. Like Jimmy Hoffa.

TOD: He's not that important.

BEN: Well, not as an individual, but he was symbolic of the labor movement.

TOD: Nah, that's too complex. You can't think of Jimmy Hoffa in the abstract. You need to think of him in the concrete.

BEN: Yeah, I guess you're right. In that case, I just wanna say that we might have sounded kind of cynical tonight about America, and that wasn't our intention. There are a lot of things we love about America, and I'd like to mention a few of them now: Sean Connery, the Beatles, and Canada.

JON: Great! Now, we've covered about fifty thousand years of American history tonight—war, pestilence, [redacted] assassination—demonstrating that the more times change, the more they remain the same.

TOD: No, Jon, times *have* changed –

JON: Right.

TOD: (*Spoken*) And we've often rewound the clock, since the Puritans got a shock when they landed on Plymouth Rock.

JON: (*Vaguely suspicious*) Wait –

TOD: (*Spoken*) In olden days a glimpse of stocking was looked on as something shocking. But now, heaven knows, anything goes.

BEN: (*Not catching on*) Anything goes.

JON: Stop!

TOD: Good authors who once knew better words now only write four-letter words.

BEN: Yeah, anything goes.

JON: STOP! (*to BEN*) Don't you see what he's doing? (*to TOD*) We are NOT singing a stupid medley of Broadway show tunes. Do you really think that's an appropriate way to end this show?

TOD: No, I guess you're right.

JON: Thank you!

TOD: But what about THE GREAT AMERICAN BROADWAY MUSICAL?

(*Beat.*)

BEN: Abridged?

TOD: Yeah, abridged!

(*Beat.*)

TOD: Come on along and listen to

BEN: The lullaby of Broadway

TOD: The hip hooray and ballyhoo

BEN: The lullaby of Broadway

JON: Alright, but only if we can do it in less than 60 seconds, cuz these people want to go home. Emily, can we get sixty seconds? Ol' man

BEN & TOD: 525 thousand

JON: Whatever Lola wants

BEN & TOD: Sit Down, John

JON: It sucks to be me

TOD: Memory

BEN: That's British

JON: We're in the

BEN: Hey big

TOD: Rich man

ALL: Brush up your

BEN: Yodel

TOD: Diddle deedle didle

JON: Ha ha ha ha ha ha

ALL: Comedy Tonight

JON: I could have danced all

BEN: The hills

TOD: No, you can't.

BEN: Yes, I can. Are alive

TOD: Springtime

BEN: The wicked...

TOD: To dream

JON: About you, baby.

BEN: I'm gonna wash that man right outta my

ALL: Hair! Long, beautiful

JON: Hair's a place for us

ALL: It's the circle of . . .

JON: Life is a

BEN: A girl who cain't say ...

TOD: No business like

JON: Getting to know you

BEN: Side by

JON: Side by

TOD: Side by

ALL: One

JON: Tomorrow

TOD: Tonight

BEN: Tradition

ALL: Oklahoma

JON: Camelot

TOD: Kids

BEN: Maria

ALL: Company

I like to be in America

And all that jazz

Shippoopy

*(Blackout.)*

THE END