

Little Hiding Red

b. b. brown

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Registered WGAE

Act I

(Lights up on a rather worn, mid-Twentieth Century American living room. This is the home of a none-too-prosperous family trying to keep the house clean, the plumbing in working order, and their hearts and spirits undaunted.)

(Set off to its own at upper stage right is a small workspace consisting of a table and chair strewn with piles of paper. Also, there are several stuffed toys near the table. This is RED'S corner.)

(When the curtain rises, we see a teenaged girl, named DAUGHTER, cautiously scan the papers on the table in RED'S corner.)

DAUGHTER

Gee, what's he scribbling on now?

(reads slowly and precisely)

"As Schiller noted, the elementary principle of the aesthetic character"--I wonder if that's like an immoral character--"is the synthesis of the separate and paradoxical impulses of sensuousness and abstraction through the medium of the object of Beauty."

(Unseen by her as she reads, RED enters the room with teddy bear in hand.)

DAUGHTER

Uh oh, he misspelled paradoxical.

RED

Goo!

(DAUGHTER starts. RED advances on her with his teddy bear.)

DAUGHTER

Oh! I was just, you know, looking around.

RED
(unpleasantly)
Goo goo.

DAUGHTER
Just thought I could help. You
misspelled paradoxical.

RED
Goo goo ga ga!

(Turning on her heels, DAUGHTER scampers from the room)

DAUGHTER
Ma!

(RED goes to his corner and arranges his papers)

RED
Damn crazy family.

(As he sits and writes, we hear someone approaching from OFF-STAGE. PA and UNCLE enter.)

UNCLE
Things have gotten a lot tougher in the
last few years, Pa. Used to, I could go
into any business and people would
listen with respect. At least, they
would listen. All they do now is roll
their eyes and look at their watches.

PA
Sales is hard work, Brother.

UNCLE
Don't I know it. Hiya, Red.

RED
(writing furiously)
Goo ga.

UNCLE
Working on another masterpiece?

RED
Goo goo.

UNCLE
That's a good boy.

RED
Goo.

(PA and UNCLE sit down)

PA
Don't let'em get ya down--the family's
behind ya all the way.

UNCLE
You know what I've been thinking?

PA
What?

UNCLE
That maybe I oughta switch lines.

PA
Give up sales?

UNCLE
No, change product lines.

PA
That bad?

UNCLE

I tell you, you can't give away nuclear products anymore.

PA

Is that right? Well, you know I'm sold. If we didn't have a yard full already, I'd let you haul in another load of filings.

UNCLE

Used to, all I'd have to do is trot out a few figures on the daily miracles in science and mention the likely resale profits on a pound of nuclear filings-- as well as the proven healthful benefits of mixing it with black soil for your garden--and by damn I couldn't keep the stuff in stock.

(RED makes "The Face" to show his displeasure at their noise, i.e., crosses his eyes like a Japanese statue, puffs out his cheeks, and gives the loudest raspberry that a very bad boy can manage. UNCLE and PA lower their voices a bit.)

PA

The neighborhood's stuffed full, alright.

UNCLE

You know, Pa, it's times like these that get me to thinking about Hemingway down there in the Gulf of Mexico, (*getting excited and forgetting RED*) fightin' and catchin' the big ones off his boat, *The Pilar*. Can't you just see it?

(1) "WHEN I SUCCEED"

UNCLE.

BOAT'S RIDING WAVES DOWN AND UP
THE DECK BOARDS ARE SLICK
YOU BRACE YOUR FEET
AND THEN.YOU WAIT

WHEN I SUCCEED, I'LL DO IT ALL
SEE THE WORLD, SWIM THE SEVEN SEAS
WAIT NO MORE AND EAT WHEN I PLEASE
WHEN SUCCESS IS MINE

A BIG MARLIN STRIKES
AND AWAY HE RUNS
THE LINE FEEDS OUT
WHIZZING A HUNDRED MILES AN HOUR

WHEN I SUCCEED, I'LL DO IT ALL
SEE THE WORLD, SWIM THE SEVEN SEAS
WAIT NO MORE AND EAT WHEN I PLEASE
WHEN I'M A SUCCESS

AND YOU'RE JUST WAITIN'
WATCHIN' AND WAITIN'
HE'S GOTTA TIRE!
THEN.YOU WORK HIM IN

WHEN I SUCCEED, I'LL DO IT ALL
SEE THE WORLD, SWIM THE SEVEN SEAS
WAIT NO MORE AND EAT WHEN I PLEASE
WHEN I SUCCEED!

PA

Yep, to have a boat you could go out on
every onct in a while sure would be
nice.

UNCLE

Of course, I wouldn't expect to use a fine craft like that for nothing but pleasure fishing. Why, that wouldn't be practical.

PA

What else could you do?

UNCLE

Hold private business meetings. Important people always need a place to get away and think--they don't get to think while they're working. And the deals I could make on my own boat! Why, pretty soon, I'd have my own fleet of boats and. . . and. . .

(His imagination runs out)

Who knows what else?

PA

Yep, it'd be nice.

UNCLE

Fighting those big ones all the way to the boat.

(RED suddenly growls and pounds the table in frustration, then tears up some paper and throws it in the air. As the pieces float to the floor, he stares with great intensity at his toes.)

(The men look at him for a moment, then continue talking as if nothing has happened)

PA

What're you gonna sell now?

UNCLE

Gourmet baby food. It's hot, I tell you.

PA

Well, a lot of people got babies right enough. Course, family like us can't use it: only baby we got is Red over there, and he won't touch the stuff.

(MA enters with DAUGHTER)

MA

Hi, Red! Everything okay?

RED

Goo.

DAUGHTER

Look at the mess he made, Ma. You're messy, Red.

RED

Goo goo.

MA

He's just entertainin' himself. You used to throw food.

(Ma sits)

Well, what's the deep discussion? I gotta watch you two when you go to puttin' your heads together.

PA

Uncle thinks he might have to try selling something else.

MA

That sounds like a right good idea. What do you gentlemen want for supper?

DAUGHTER

Pork chops! Come on, Ma, let's have pork chops.

PA

Beans are fine with me.

DAUGHTER

Aw, Pa, that's all you ever say.

PA

Well, I had to eat enough of 'em to get by, that now I'd just as soon have 'em as not. Times used to be rough enough that I was glad to see some beans.

DAUGHTER

That was back when everybody was depressed, and anyway you always say that, and anyway I get tired of beans beans beans.

UNCLE

Young lady, you don't know what's good for you. Children these days don't appreciate what it takes to put food on the table, and clothes on their backs, as well as a warm bed to sleep in at night.

MA

Oh, Uncle, they don't have to live like we did, so how're they gonna know? Now, what about supper?

PA

Course ya'll can have pork chops with your beans, if you like, but my chewing ain't so good. I have to kinda screw it over to one side of my mouth, then slip it over to the other side, and then screw it back over again. I'd just as soon eat the beans. Now, if you got some pie for dessert. . .

DAUGHTER

Beans and pie! Pie and beans! Don't you ever want anything else, Pa?

MA

It don't matter anyway because we ain't got no pork chops, and we ain't got no pie. Son just ain't got his check this week yet, so I ain't had a chance to get to the grocery store to buy any pork chops.

(They sit quietly)

UNCLE

My mouth was just waterin' for those pork chops.

PA

How about the beans?

DAUGHTER

Yuck! Yuck! Yuck!

(RED, who has been surreptitiously observing the family from his nook, suddenly sits bolt upright in his chair, as if shocked by electricity or by the sight of something important. He writes furiously.

(On the opposite side of the room, SON enters with a flat object in hand which he waves about in the air.)

SON

Hey, look what I found!

MA

What is it, Son?

SON

(mispronouncing laboriously)

"Doctor of Fee. . . low. . . sophie."

RED

(looking up in alarm)

What! Er, goo!

(DAUGHTER glances at the paper)

DAUGHTER

(scornfully)

"Philosophy". It's a university degree.

SON

Philosophy. "U. . . knee. . . ver. . .
city of Lee. . . ipp. . . zig."

DAUGHTER

"Leipzig".

SON

Leipzig. "Presented to. . . Rudolph. . .
Edward. . . Steenbeck".

DAUGHTER

(without looking)

"Steinbeck".

RED

Steenbeck! Steenbeck Steenbeck
Steenbeck!

(They look at him. RED goes back to writing.)

UNCLE

By damn that baby's like a parrot--picks
up whatever he hears.

MA

Where'd you find that?

SON

Oh, it was left in that bag Pa found
under the front porch.

(grins)

Pa must've been too interested in those
bottles he found in the bag to notice
it.

(Pa reacts with irritation. Ma turns to him.)

MA

Bottles?

(Pa looks his chair over minutely)

PA

I need to fix this thing some day--it
keeps rocking this way and that way.

(UNCLE intercedes for PA)

UNCLE

Did I tell you about the visitor we're
having this evening?

MA

Visitor? The place is a mess!

SON

Who's comin'?

UNCLE

Only a very prominent businessman and
member of the City Council.

DAUGHTER

Homer Q. Crudlow.

UNCLE

How'd you know?

DAUGHTER

Heard you talking on the hall phone.

UNCLE

Oh. Well, he called and--

SON

You were listening on the extension
again.

DAUGHTER

I was not.

UNCLE

Well, Mr. Crudlow--

SON

I bet you were.

DAUGHTER

Was not.

SON

Were too.

(RED looks up in consternation at the noise)

UNCLE

I say, Mr. Crudlow is--

MA

Stop interrupting Uncle, Daughter.

DAUGHTER

But Son said I was doin' somethin' I
wasn't.

SON

I bet you were.

DAUGHTER

Oh, shutup.

UNCLE

The Honorable Mr. Crudlow--

PA

Stop annoying Daughter, Son.

(RED becomes redder from irritation)

UNCLE

Mr. Crudlow--

SON

Aw, Pa, she's just being smart.

DAUGHTER

Doesn't take much to be smarter than
you.

SON

I bet you--

RED

GOO!

(They look at RED. He stares at them, then goes back to writing.)

UNCLE

Thank you.

(A knock at the door is heard)

UNCLE

There's the gentleman now.

MA

(rushing about)

Oh my God: a gentleman visitor and the house is a mess! Don't you dare let him in until I've had a chance to straighten up.

(UNCLE exits)

DAUGHTER

Hold'em till I get my book and I'll read'em some words!

SON

Ha! You and your dumb words.

(DAUGHTER and SON exit)

PA

(yelling)

Show'em the fruit trees in the garden.
The live ones!

(MA picks up the paper around RED. He lifts one foot off the floor at a time without looking up or ceasing to write. MA and PA talk as she moves.)

MA

If I just had time to run the vacuum and dust a little!

PA

Stop fussin', Ma, you keep it neat as a tack. I wonder why a big wheel like Homer Crudlow would want to call on us?

MA

We'll see what he wants when he tells us, I guess.

PA

I guess. Never seen a politician shy about sticking his paw out.

(RED massages his tired eyes, yawns, and stretches. He stands and exits with teddy bear in hand.)

PA

(yelling)

Be sure and flush that toilet, boy!

(normal tone)

We ain't got no exhaust fans. You know, Ma, I got a feeling that baby understands mor'n he lets on for.

MA

Oh, he's right smart.

PA

That from *my* side of the family.

(DAUGHTER enters walking backwards, carrying notebook papers, and talking OFF-STAGE)

DAUGHTER

I can read you more words later!

(UNCLE, very excited and proud but trying to hide it,
enters with CRUDLOW)

CRUDLOW

I'd love it, child, but not at the
moment.

UNCLE

Go away, go away.

CRUDLOW

You must be Ma.

MA

Mister Crudlow.

(They shake hands)

CRUDLOW

Homer to you. And you must be Pa.

PA

Nobody else. What do you want, Mister
Crudlow?

CRUDLOW

Call me Homer, all my friends do.

PA

We just met.

CRUDLOW

My, what a wonderful family!

(RED enters humming. He stops on seeing CRUDLOW.)

MA

Oh, this is Red.

(CRUDLOW is surprised at RED's apparel, but game. He extends his hand.)

CRUDLOW

Pleased to meet you, Red.

(The family laughs. RED watches CRUDLOW closely.)

MA

Oh, he won't shake hands, Homer. He's our baby.

UNCLE

Found him on the front porch one day.

(CRUDLOW, slowly smiling, looks the family over carefully)

CRUDLOW

Is that right? Well, I must say, he's an awfully impressive. . . .baby.

RED

Goo goo.

MA

Oh, he's healthy and active, not sulky at all.

CRUDLOW

And wherever can you find shoes to fit those feet?

RED

(with emphasis)

Goo-goo-ga-ga.

PA

Comes from *her* side of the family.

CRUDLOW

Hmph!

(reaches out)

And what an interesting beard.

RED

(rapidly and loudly)

GOO GOO GA GA GOO GOO GA GA GOO GOO GA
GA.

MA

There! There! You poor thing, there's
nothing to cry about.

CRUDLOW

What a set of lungs!

PA

My family.

MA

We'd better go out into the kitchen
until Red settles down.

(As MA herds everyone OFF-STAGE)

MA

He'll scribble a little and soon be as
fresh as clean milk.

(All but RED exit)

(RED, slapping the palm of one hand with his teddy
bear, paces the floor back and forth)

(2) "WITH A GOO AND A GA" (I TRY TO
HELP)

RED.

A POLITICIAN! WHO'S FOOLING WHO!
THIS MAN'S A LEECH!
WHAT CAN BE DONE?
WHAT CAN I DO?

WITH A GOO AND A GA
AND THINGS THEY DON'T NOTICE
I TRY TO HELP
WHEN THEY DON'T LOOK

WHY DO THE GOOD ATTRACT PARASITES?
THEY ARE EXPOSED
THEY ARE LOVING
STAMP THOSE DAMN BUGS!

WITH A GOO AND A GA
THERE'S SOMETHING TO BE DONE
I'LL TRY TO HELP
AND DO IT QUICK!

THIS WORM, THIS SLUG, WILL SLIME HIS WAY
BACK
A DEAL TO MAKE
HARD CASH TO TAKE
GOOD HEARTS TO MOCK!

I CAME, THEY TOOK ME IN
GAVE FOOD, LET ME BE ME
I WAS SEARCHING
THIS HOME I FOUND

NOW THIS SCUM COMES!
THIS TRASH APPEARS!

FILTH IN A SUIT!
FEEDING ON WHAT HE CAN'T UNDERSTAND!

I WILL GIVE HELP
AND SMASH THAT PEST
WITH A GOO AND A GA
I'LL WHACK HIM WITH TEDDY!

(He smacks his hand with the teddy bear)

RED
Goo!

(RED sits and writes furiously at his desk, muttering indistinctly to himself)

(DAUGHTER appears. She wanders over to RED.)

DAUGHTER
Whatcha writin'?

(Frowning, RED takes a different sheet of paper, makes haphazard marks on it, and gives it to her)

DAUGHTER
Oh, is this for *me*? Oh, thank you, it's so wonderful.

(RED jerks his thumb for her to get out)

DAUGHTER
(moving to exit)
I have to go now. Mr. Crudlow may want me to read him more words when he's through talking with Pa.

(DAUGHTER exits. RED, unable to recapture his train of thought, bangs his head and growls with frustration.)

UNCLE, PA, and CRUDLOW enter. RED instantly becomes watchful.)

CRUDLOW

Now, there's no problem, friend. The Chamber of Commerce and I will make sure that our fair city goes ever and upward in the resplendent world of modern finance.

PA

What's that mean?

UNCLE

We're gonna make money, Pa, money. Why the world is just bustin' into this neck of the woods!

(dazzled)

Think of the possibilities.

CRUDLOW

You hit the nail on the head. They want in, they're willin' to pay, so why not jump on the bandwagon now and get your share?

UNCLE

Pa, it's the opportunity of a lifetime! I've waited so long for this. And what you could do for the family!

PA

But how're we gonna make any money by signing over the house and land?

CRUDLOW

That's figured out down to the last
iota, to the last cross of the 't', to
the last dot. There's nothing that's
been overlooked it's sketched out,
written down, schematicized, itemized,
and validated by the right people in
City Hall all the way down to you. And
now's your moment. A chance to take
destiny in your hand and put her in your
pocket. Sign, Pa, sign.

UNCLE

Think about the children. And Ma.

(Pa's hand wavers uncertainly toward the paper)

RED

(loudly)

MA! MA! MA! MA! MA!

UNCLE

By damn just like a parrot.

RED

MA! MA!

(MA enters)

MA

Good Grief! What's wrong now?

(RED looks severely at the three men. MA looks at them
grouped together over the paper.)

MA

What's this?

UNCLE

Well, it's business, Ma. You wouldn't understand the intricacies of the matter.

CRUDLOW

(quickly)

I wouldn't say that, cause Ma is a very intelligent woman, a most perceptive woman. It's just that, since Pa is the head of the household, and Uncle has such broad business experience, they were handling what is really a very simple matter.

UNCLE

It's the chance of a lifetime, Ma.

MA

Really? Well, plop down and tell me about it.

UNCLE

Let me explain it has to do with high finance. We'll be right back, Homer.

(UNCLE and MA exit. CRUDLOW studies RED.)

PA

Ma's pretty smart, but she's not too worldly.

CRUDLOW

Oh, she's a fine woman! A fine woman!

PA

I better go see if she has any
questions.

CRUDLOW

Fine, fine.

(PA exits. CRUDLOW goes to RED.)

CRUDLOW

Just what are you doin'?

RED

Ga.

CRUDLOW

Ga, huh? Well, I may not know much, but
I know a scam when I see it.

RED

Ga goo?

CRUDLOW

You know, it might befit a fellow to
leave other folks alone.

RED

Goo ga?

(3) "CLEVER" (YES, I AM)

(hypnotic rhythm)

Crudlow.

I'M CLEVER
YES, I AM
THE RIGHT PEOPLE I DO KNOW
YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION.

THERE'S NO KNOWING WHAT
YOU'LL LEARN
THERE'S NO GUESSING WHAT
YOU'LL EARN

OH, CLEVER
I AM SO
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GAIN
YOU SHOULD PRACTICE SILENCE

YOU HAVE A GAME HERE
I SEE
BUT THERE'S ROOM FOR TWO
YOU KNOW

CLEVERNESS
SUCH A CHARM
THE MASTER SNAKE EATS WELL
AND THESE FOOLS DESERVE IT

NOW WE UNDERSTAND
WE'LL SHARE
BUT IF CROSSED, I'M BAD
'CAUSE I'M

MORE CLEVER
THAN YOU, TOO
AND YOU WOULD BEST BE WARNED
WANT TO PROFIT? BE QUIET

RED

(ferociously)

Back off, you pompous fraud!

CRUDLOW

(stepping back in surprise)

What?

RED

(rapid-fire)

You think you're so damn smart you
pusillanimous toad, but you haven't the
brains to pour piss out of a boot!
Threaten me, will you, you vulture. I'll
stamp your flea-bitten hide till there's
nothing left but blood and shoelaces.

CRUDLOW

Who do you think--

RED

(whacking him with the teddy bear)

Think! For years I've worked and
strained and studied the greatest ideas
thought by man. I earned a degree and
then another, and then I couldn't feed
myself! But vermin like you grow fat
stealing from good people like these.

CRUDLOW

I'll have you--

RED

(whacks him again)

Running a scam, am I? At least I pay
them back by doing things they don't
notice or wouldn't think of doing
themselves, but that's not good enough
for you, is it?

(RED corners CRUDLOW against a piece of furniture)

RED

You dirty-minded slug, you don't give a
damn how much damage is done as long as
you get yours. At least I'm not trying
to steal a house from innocents.

(whacks him once more)

I may not be anybody's ideal baby, but
at least I'm not a sycophantic,
hypocritical, parasitic ball of slime.
Goo!

(MA, UNCLE, and PA reenter, PA coming last and looking
more tired than ever. UNCLE is dejected. RED looks at
them, turns and whacks CRUDLOW with the teddy bear one
last time, and then sits back down at his table.)

MA

Oh, Homer, you shouldn't try to play
with any of Red's toys. He's very touchy
about that.

(MA opens the front door for CRUDLOW)

MA

Thank you for coming by, Homer. It was
so nice to meet you.

(CRUDLOW looks around, confused and angry)

CRUDLOW

Wait a minute. . .

RED

(ominously)

Goo goo.

CRUDLOW

That "baby" is a man!

MA

Aren't they all?

(CRUDLOW exits. Ma shuts the door and blithely turns back into the room. A phone rings OFF-STAGE. DAUGHTER rushes out.)

DAUGHTER

I got it! I got it!

MA

Well! What do we eat for supper?

RED

(as he writes)

Moo goo gai pan.

PA

Is that more of that Chinese food? Stuff gives me the runs.

MA

I'll fix you some beans.

(DAUGHTER reenters.)

DAUGHTER

They're asking for Professor Rudolph
Steenbeck. They call themselves Colossal
Publishers Ink.

MA

Who might that--

RED

What! Goo!

(RED stands and walks OFF-STAGE to the phone)

DAUGHTER

Why would Red wanta buy Publisher's Ink?
I got plenty of pens if he needs to
borrow one.

UNCLE

I think they meant "Incorporated",
honey.

DAUGHTER

Oh.

(RED reenters)

RED

That was my publisher.

(The family looks at one another)

RED

My book hit the bestseller list
overnight: we're going to be rich.

MA

Well, I'll declare.

RED

(hugging his teddy bear)

Goo.

(LIGHTS DOWN)

Act II

(MA and PA have the country ideal, a generous porch on which to sit in the mornings, or the afternoons, or the evenings, where finds that the world has its moments of intimacy amidst vast skies. At the moment, RED sits on the porch, reading quietly, stopping occasionally to consider a point, and then reading on. DAUGHTER enters and sits beside him cautiously. He looks up.)

DAUGHTER

Can I sit down?

RED

Goo.

(RED glances at his book, nods to himself, then puts in his marker and sets the book aside)

DAUGHTER

You like to read. I can tell because you're always reading.

RED

Goo goo.

DAUGHTER

What're you gonna do now that you're rich?

RED

(uncertainly)

Goo ga.

DAUGHTER

I know what I'd do. I'd buy a hundred party outfits and a hundred pairs of cowboy boots. Then I'd get a mound of paper and a bunch of pens and I'd do nothing but go to big parties and write things. Are you gonna leave now that you got lots of money?

RED

Ga?

DAUGHTER

I don't know. You showed up on our doorstep one day without a word, and I figured you might up and go the same way.

RED

(indicating the envelope)

Goo?

DAUGHTER

(embarrassed)

Oh, that's just something I did. You probably won't want it now that you're rich and got money.

(RED takes the envelope and pulls out a stack of paper that's been bound by hand in a neat but amateurish manner)

DAUGHTER

I didn't quite get it finished. I had to borrow your manuscript when you weren't using it, and it was kinda hard gettin' it back in time so you wouldn't miss it.

(RED has been going through it page by page. Now he flips the pages to the end.)

RED

How long have you been studying calligraphy?

DAUGHTER

I dunno. I found a book in the library that's got a lot of neat scripts and stuff. I thought you might like to see what it would look like when it got all printed up, but you got published before I got finished.

(RED weighs the manuscript in his hands)

RED

This is the nicest thing anyone has ever done for me. Thank you, honey, I love it. Would you like a set of pens specially designed for calligraphy?

DAUGHTER

Fantastic!

RED

Goo!

(MA enters with a piece of paper in her hand. PA and UNCLE follow.)

MA

But where could he have gone?

UNCLE

You're worrying yourself too much, Ma.
He's probably gone over to a friend's
house for the night.

MA

But why doesn't he say when he'll be
back?

DAUGHTER

What's a matter, Ma?

PA

Son's gone and left a note sayin' he's
gone.

DAUGHTER

Where'd he go?

UNCLE

Like I say, he's probably gone to a
friend's house. Not that that's the
safest thing to do, knowing kids these
days.

PA

He could be, you know, makin' an
adventure out of it. He sure don't get
much chance of it otherwise.

(RED takes the note from MA and reads it out loud)

RED

"Gone for a while. Don't worry. I got
money and extra socks. Will be gone for
a few days but not a whole lot longer.
SON"

MA

Why couldn't he at least say where he's
gone?

UNCLE

Ma, you worry too much. Holy Crackers, I
got an appointment with Mister Crudlow!
We can talk about this later.

(PA sits as UNCLE exits)

PA

You know, I did this once when I was a
boy.

(Pause)

MA

Well?

PA

Huh?

MA

You said you did the same thing.

PA

I did.

MA

Well?

PA

Well, what?

MA

Well, why did you say that you did the same thing?

PA

Because I did.

MA

(louder)

You did what?

PA

(louder)

The same thing!

RED

GOO!

(They look at RED)

RED

Ma, he's seventeen years old. . . .he can't stay a baby all his life.

(4) "FAMILY CALLS"

(alternates between anger and remorse)

Ma.

A STRANGER KNOCKS

I GIVE HIM EATS

A DOG IS HURT

I TREAT HIS WOUNDS

FAMILY CALLS

I RUN AT ONCE

OH, LORD, WHY AM I SUCH A FOOL?

ALL THAT'S MINE I GIVE AWAY

IS THERE A GREATER CURSE

THAN THE CHILD WHO HURTS?

PLEASE DON'T TAKE MINE AWAY

A BONE THAT'S CRACKED?

IT'S ME WHO CRIES

THEY HAVE NIGHTMARES?

THEN I CAN'T SLEEP

FAMILY CALLS

AND MY HEART SKIPS

OH, LORD, WHY AM I SUCH A FOOL?

ALL THAT'S MINE I GIVE AWAY

IS THERE A GREATER CURSE

THAN THE CHILD IN PAIN?

PLEASE DON'T TAKE THEM AWAY

THEY NEED CLOTHING?

THEY WANT MORE TOYS

THEY NEED LEARNING?

THEY WANT TO ROAM

FAMILY CALLS

I HOLD THEM CLOSE

OH, LORD, WHY AM I SUCH A FOOL?
ALL THAT'S MINE I GIVE AWAY
IS THERE A GREATER CURSE
THAN THE CHILD WHO'S GONE?
PLEASE DON'T TAKE SON AWAY

PA

He'll be okay, Ma.

MA

At least he coulda said where he's
tromping off to.

(A well-coiffed TV NEWSPERSON suddenly steps out from
one side of the stage and stands there. The family is
surprised. The man suddenly exits.)

RED

Goo ga, the Twinkies are here.

(The NEWSPERSON reappears with his CAMERAPERSON)

DAUGHTER

Look Ma! It's the TV people!

NEWSPERSON

(whispering)

Is this the guy?

CAMERAPERSON

(whispering)

He looks like a freak to me: must be the
one.

(The NEWS CREW charges across the stage towards RED. MA and DAUGHTER scatter separately. RED stands his ground.)

NEWSPERSON

Doctor Steenbeck?

RED

Goo.

NEWSPERSON

How does it feel to be on the bestseller list and to be awarded a prestigious national book award for your first publication?

RED

(with savoir faire)

Goo ga.

NEWSPERSON

Could you repeat that?

RED

Goo ga.

NEWSPERSON

Did he say "Goo ga"?

CAMERAPERSON

Yes, he did.

NEWSPERSON

Could you elaborate, Doctor Steenbeck?

RED

(crossing his arms)
Goo ga, goo goo goo, ga ga!

NEWSPERSON
I think we got a problem here.

SOUNDPERSON
Maybe he's one of those idiot-geniuses
who spend their time counting their toes
and can't talk.

RED
Goo?

NEWSPERSON
Watch out, I think he heard you.

(A SECOND NEWS CREW appears on the stage)

DAUGHTER
(shouting)
Hey, are we gonna be on TV?

2ND NEWSPERSON
Doctor Steenbeck! How long have you
known that you were a genius?

RED
Goo goo ga.

2ND NEWSPERSON
Could you speak up?

RED
Ga ga goo.

2ND NEWSPERSON

That isn't what you said the first time.
Are you sure you don't want to retract
that?

RED

Ga ga goo goo. Ga!

2ND CAMERAPERSON

(tapping his headphones)

Hold it, something's wrong. All I'm
gettin' is a bunch of goo's and ga's.

DAUGHTER

Pa! They're asking Red a bunch of
questions!

PA

Hush, dear, Red's busy being famous.

(A THIRD NEWS CREW appears)

3RD NEWSPERSON

There he is!

(The THIRD CREW rushes in, pushing its way forward.
RED is now surrounded.)

3RD NEWSPERSON

(very fast)

Doctor Steenbeck! When are you going to
make your first movie? Who's the co-
star? Will you do it in the nude? How
will it affect your image? What's your

salary? What's your birth sign? When
will you run for President?

(RED takes a deep breath, clears his throat, pauses
momentarily, and then--)

RED

Goo ga ga goo goo ga goo gagoo googa.
Goo goo goo--ga ga goo! Goo goo ga. . .

(He crosses his arms with finality)

RED

Goo!

3RD NEWSPERSON

Are you guys sure this is the right
address?

(The small figure of STELLA BRASS, followed by her
CAMERAPERSON, appears on the scene and attacks the
crowd)

STELLA

Bug off! Move it!

DAUGHTER

MA! PA! It's Stella Brass! Look, it's
Stella Brass!

(STELLA shoves her way toward the center of the crowd.
The other NEWS CREWS retreat.)

(5) "A HOT STORY" (SHE'S THE TOP!)

Stella.

YOU'RE IN MY WAY, KIDDIES!

Newspeople (*severally*).

"LOOK OUT! SHE'LL STAMP YOUR TOES"
"MOVE OUT! SHE'LL SMACK YOUR NOSE"
"WATCH OUT! SHE'LL RIP YOUR THROAT"
"SHE'S THE TOP"
"THE ONLY"
"STELLA BRASS!"

Stella.

YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS
WHAT I BRING BACK SELLS BIG
GOOD OR BAD, WHO CARES, I'M THE BEST!

WHO HOSTS PRIMETIME?
WHO INTERVIEWS THE PREZ?
I'M THE ONE! GET OFF MY BACK, PUNKS!

Newspeople (*severally*).

"SHE'S NOT KIDDING, YOU GUYS"
"ROUGH! TOUGH! SHE DOESN'T CARE!"
"NOBODY ESCAPES HER!"
"SHE'S THE BEST"
"THE ONLY"
"STELLA BRASS!"

Stella.

GET OFF MY ASS
I'M A GOOD REPORTER
A HOT STORY? A HOT CAREER!

NO INTERVIEW?
LET THEM BEG ON THEIR KNEES
NOBODY CAN SPREAD DIRT LIKE ME!

Newspeople (*together*).

"TRUE, RANK AMATEURS WE"

"CAN'T WE BE JUST LIKE HER?"

"IT'S THE ONE"

"THE ONLY"

"STELLA BRASS!"

Stella.

SO GET OUT OF MY WAY!

(Shoving her microphone out in front of her as if to impale him on a spike, STELLA confronts RED)

STELLA

(*accusatory*)

Doctor Steenbeck, it's well known that you habitually dress in boy's clothing and don't have a job. Yet you have suddenly written a book that has both the publishing world and the general public talking. Did you or did you not write this book?

(RED grins. He likes her.)

RED

And, lo, the black ships heaved themselves onto the grinding sands, when a shining cloud of beasts descended with fearsome roar and long-shafted spears, tearing flesh and letting the red life flow into the ebbing waters. Long that day they slew, and merciless were their faces, as each luckless warrior fell breathless and cold. As the ships burned, the Amazons danced.

STELLA

(unfazed)

Is that a denial?

RED

Goo ga.

STELLA

You insist that you are the author of
this book?

RED

Ga goo!

STELLA

And you'll stand on that statement in
court?

RED

Goo goo ga!

STELLA

Cut. Catch the reverse.

(The CAMERAPERSON runs behind RED and shoots STELLA
from over RED's shoulder)

CAMERAPERSON

Okay.

STELLA

(to RED)

You insist that you are the author of
this book?

RED

Goo g--

STELLA

(interrupting)

Right, got it. We'll shoot the house next. Do you live here, little girl?

DAUGHTER

I guess.

PA

Look out, Ma! She's goin' for Daughter!

MA

Oh my God!

(As MA struggles toward DAUGHTER, STELLA speaks to DAUGHTER in a very different tone)

STELLA

If you wouldn't mind appearing on TV with me, I need someone to show me where Doctor Steenbeck wrote his book, that type of thing. Could you do that?

DAUGHTER

I sure could!

(MA gets in front of STELLA)

MA

Now, you just listen, Ms. Newslady: this ain't right.

STELLA

We go through the house once. It will be over quickly and with as little inconvenience as possible.

DAUGHTER

Come on, Ma! Let's be on TV!

STELLA

In and out.

MA

Alright, then. But you listen to me, and I mean listen. You poke that microphone in my face, or one of you crazy people break something in my house, or you ask one of your *nasty* questions, and I'll not only sue you into the ground, I'll pound you there with my fist.

(to the assembled TV CREWS)

And that's goes for everyone of you. Is that understood?

EVERYONE

(together)

Yes, Ma.

MA

Fine. Then, get in line, and let's get going. That there is Pa. Wave for TV, Pa.

PA

(waving)

Howdy.

MA

And I'm Ma, and this is Daughter. And, my goodness, that's Red, or Doctor Steenbeck, or whatever. And this is our home and we're a good family, except that not all of us is here at the moment. Now, come this way, and I'll show you were Red does his writin', and then you can ask some *decent* questions.

(As MA exits with STELLA at her side and the NEWSPEOPLE following, CRUDLOW enters the opposite side with DOCTOR KISSIAVELLI. RED steps out of sight.)

CRUDLOW

What in hell is this?

KISSIAVELLI

The press, Mister Crudlow.

CRUDLOW

No joking, Doctor Kissiavelli. Now try telling me what they're doing here.

KISSIAVELLI

Filling airtime, Mister Crudlow, filling airtime.

CRUDLOW

Great.

PA

Good day, Mister Crudlow.

CRUDLOW

Homer to you, Pa. I'd like to introduce you to Doctor Kissiavelli.

PA

Pleased to meet you, sir. Are you visiting Little Big Town on business or pleasure?

KISSIAVELLI

Both, sir. You're beautiful community makes my business visit a pleasure. And I must compliment you, sir, on owning such gorgeous fruit trees. I believe I saw not only peach, pear, and apple, but plum trees. Do they grow well in this part of the country?

PA

They grow well wherever I've a mind to put'em.

KISSIAVELLI

So you're the one.

PA

Yes, sir!

KISSIAVELLI

My, my! As soon as I saw you, I said to myself that there's a man with the gift of growing. I'll bet he can tell rich soil by the smell. And if it isn't rich, by gum, he'll make it rich!

PA

I'm not a bragging man, but if it's something I know, it's how to let things grow. Let me show you my trees. It isn't often I get a chance to jaw with someone who knows good fruit trees.

KISSIAVELLI

Happy to, sir, happy to.

(PA talks as they exit)

PA

I mix my own nutrients, don't you know. Of course, I tried a new mixture using nuclear filings--to enhance the growth, don't you see--but I ain't quite got it worked out yet.

(PA and KISSIAVELLI exit. RED steps out where CRUDLOW can see him.)

CRUDLOW

So there you are, "Red".

RED

So here I am, Mister Crudlow.

CRUDLOW

What, you're not gooin' today?

RED

I have my goo's and ga's.

CRUDLOW

You're a bright fellow. Why don't you play along? It'll pay off good in the long run.

RED

What's the game?

CRUDLOW

Get the family to sell the house and land. Take the extra money and buy some new clothes. I'll handle it so they don't know a thing.

RED

Hmmm. But don't you know?

CRUDLOW

What?

RED

I'm rich. I didn't have money, now I do.

CRUDLOW

Don't start with me, joker.

RED

No kidding. Why do you think the press is here? My first book hit the bestseller list overnight.

CRUDLOW

You mean you would have accepted my offer if your book hadn't sold?

RED

No. But it's fun watching you turn red.

CRUDLOW

No moron in a baby suit is going to jerk me around!

(RED gives him "The Face")

(Enter UNCLE)

UNCLE

I've got it all neatly arranged, Mister Crudlow. All you have to do is give me the word, and I'll have the press over here quicker than you can snap your fingers. Say, what're all these vans?

RED

Goo?

UNCLE

Yeah. Look like television vans to me.

CRUDLOW

How perceptive! It astounds me to work with people with such keen eyes and quick deductive powers.

UNCLE

Why thank you, Mister Crudlow. I've always respected you, too.

CRUDLOW

Arrrgh!

(CRUDLOW turns and moves away)

UNCLE

Gee, his face turned red. I guess he's
actually a shy kind of person.

RED

Goo.

(Enter KISSIAVELLI without PA. He halts as soon as RED
turns to face him.)

KISSIAVELLI

You!

(RED grins and gives a little wave)

UNCLE

That's right, Doctor Kissiavelli. You
spotted him right off--this is Red. Say
hello to the doctor, Red.

RED

(enunciating carefully)

Goo-goo-ga-ga.

UNCLE

He's pleased to meet you.

(KISSIAVELLI recovers himself)

KISSIAVELLI

And I am certainly pleased to meet you.

. . .Red.

CRUDLOW

How did you get on with Pa?

KISSIAVELLI

Splendidly. He's resting at the moment,
so let's talk.

UNCLE

That's exactly what I was about to
suggest. Now, I think I can straighten
this thing out so's everyone can get a
good grasp on its importance.

KISSIAVELLI

(pulling paper from a pocket)

That's fine, splendid! Could you be so
kind as to call the people on this list?
Simply explain that I am detained here
in Little Big Town for the foreseeable
future, and that I will get back to them
as soon as possible.

UNCLE

Yes, sir! I can do that right away.

KISSIAVELLI

Good. Excellent! And thank you very
much.

UNCLE

Not at all, sir.

(UNCLE exits. KISSIAVELLI and CRUDLOW look at each
other, then at RED. RED smiles.)

CRUDLOW

Alright, let's --

(At this point, STELLA BRASS reenters without her crew. From this angle she can't see his face, but she recognizes him at once.)

STELLA
Kissiavelli!

KISSIAVELLI
Uh oh.

STELLA
How often have I seen your backside
waddling in retreat from the scene of a
crime?

KISSIAVELLI
Why it's the charming Stella
Brassknuckles. Or do you still answer to
the quaint nickname of "The Steel Bra"?

STELLA
I earned it: I'm harder than you'll ever
get. I hear rumors of a statewide
dumping scam that originated at the
center of your sticky web.

(MOLLY POLLY enters)

KISSIAVELLI
Try for once to control your nasty
disposition, Ms. Brass. I am an honest,
hardworking businessman of national
repute, who specializes in giving
businesses and industry advice on
developing their plans of future growth.

STELLA

So that's why half the state's buried in nuclear filings.

MOLLY

Excuse me.

KISSIAVELLI

Yes, Ms. Polly?

STELLA

Polly-Wolly?

MOLLY

Oh, no, Molly Polly. Oh, Ms. Brass, I've seen you on TV so much! The time when you were talking with a terrorist and he pulled out a hand grenade and you took it away from him. And the time you used your microphone to subdue the football player who went mad after his team lost the Superbowl.

STELLA

Yes, well--

MOLLY

And when you rapelled down the side of an office building on live TV to talk to that man who was threatening to jump.

STELLA

Of course--

MOLLY

And you did a very touching memorial at his funeral.

STELLA

What are you doing here, child?

MOLLY

Oh, I have a message from Mister Crudlow's office. I'm on his office staff, you know.

STELLA

I'm astonished.

CRUDLOW

Ms. Polly?

MOLLY

Mister Crudlow--Oh, is that Mister Red, the Goo-Ga Man?

RED

Just Red.

MOLLY

"Just" Red?

RED

Red.

MOLLY

(laughs)

Red. You only say 'goo' and 'ga'?

RED
'Goo' and 'ga'.

MOLLY
Wonderful!

CRUDLOW
Ms. Polly.

RED
Sometimes I say 'ga' and 'goo'.

MOLLY
Really? Sometimes I say 'oh' all the
time, but, oh, that isn't like 'ga' or
'goo' at all.

"Rumplestilskin was a Pillskin.
All he said was goo. . .
Or ga!"

(RED laughs)

MOLLY
That's silly. Why do you wear those
funny clothes?

RED
They're silly and make me laugh. What
makes you laugh?

CRUDLOW
Ms. Polly.

MOLLY

Sipping wine and reading Lewis Carroll
when Alice tumbles down into Wonderland
and has all those crazy things happen
that never happen in real life at all,
except when somebody's running for
President or something like that. That's
a cute teddy bear.

RED
His name's Fred.

MOLLY
Fred and Red!

RED
We look alike except that all my hair
sank down through my scalp and came out
my face.

MOLLY
Red and Fred!

RED
Ga!

CRUDLOW
Ms. Polly!

MOLLY
Yes, Mister Crudlow?

CRUDLOW
Why are you here?

MOLLY

Mister Cranch of Enormous Television Corporation called looking for Ms. Brass. He had a message for her.

STELLA
Grabben Cranch?

MOLLY
Yes.

STELLA
And what was the message?

MOLLY
That you're supposed to go to the Sorrowful Moan Steel Mills in Michigan to cover the strike vote in case there's a riot.

STELLA
I see. How convenient for you, Kissiavelli.

MOLLY
I've never talked to a Senior Vice President of Network Public Relations before.

RED
You haven't been away from home very long, goo?

CRUDLOW
About time to wrap it up, wouldn't you say, Ms. Brass?

STELLA

There's nothing to keep me from coming
back for a little special report, is
there, Mister Crudlow?

KISSIAVELLI

Well, of course not. The legitimate
press is always welcome here.

CRUDLOW

But it is hard working day and night--

STELLA

Like a thief in the night.

KISSIAVELLI

--and then have your good, honest
efforts trampled by the press in the
morning light.

STELLA

We have to wipe our shoes afterwards.

CRUDLOW

Oh, come now. . .

STELLA

What?

(6) "THE GREEK SHELLGAME"

Kissiavelli.

GIVE US OUR DUE.

Stella.
WHO, YOU?

Crudlow.
WE TWO. . .

Kissiavelli.
OUR DUE.

(Suggest beginning with alternately begging and jibing violin, then add a sneaky, snickering kettle drum)

Crudlow.
(*Strophe*)
DAY AND NIGHT, NIGHT AND DAY
WE WORK, PRESERVING PUBLIC MORALITY--
HONOR, DIGNITY, CIVILITY, AND THE FLAG
NEVER DO WE FALTER, OR BEAR MALICE
WE SMILE, PRAY, AND HOPE FOR THE DAY
WHEN WE'LL RECEIVE OUR TRUE DUE

Stella.
(*Antistrophe*)
HAH! YOU RUN US INTO THE GROUND
CHASING SCHEMES, BRIBES, AND
INCOMPETENCE
WE! WE SAVE THE PUBLIC FROM YOU
YOU! YOU SELL THE PUBLIC YOUR DUE
EVER AND EVER DO WE FIGHT
TO SAVE THE PUBLIC FROM YOUR BLIGHT

Kissiavelli.
(*Offer*)
THE WORLD IS SO BIG, AND SO MUCH IT
HOLDS

SILLY TO CHASE ALL FOR THE GOOFS OF A
FEW
CANNOT TODAY'S SLIP BE OVERLOOKED
FOR WHAT MIGHT BE CAPTURED TOMORROW?
A MISTAKE HERE, AN ERROR THERE
IT EVENS OUT IN THE END
IF ONE IS FOR THE REST,
THEY SAY, IT COMES OUT BEST

Stella.

(Counteroffer)

I AM THE PUBLIC, I AM THEIR EYES
BUT THEY TIRE OF PETTY DETAILS
AND STORIES WHERE VILLIANS PEAK FROM
MIRRORS
I LIKE SILKEN CLOTHES, AND A SOFT BED
HARD STORIES, HARD ROADS, RED EYES
YOU DO YOUR BEST YOU SHOW THE MESS!
AND THEY SAY, "SORRY! IT DOESN'T SUIT
OUR COMMERCIAL SPONSOR!"

(Lose the violin and drum)

Kissiavelli.

THINK OF YOUR CAREER.

Crudlow.

A STRIKE IS MUCH MORE CLEAR.

Kissiavelli.

GOOD GUYS, BAD GUYS. . .

Crudlow.

AND IT FITS ON THE EVENING NEWS!

Stella.

THE AMERICAN DREAM, THE HIGHEST DREAM.

Kissiavelli.

A WINK. . .

Crudlow.

A BLINK. . .

Stella.

ANOTHER STORY'S JUST AS GOOD!

(RED hits the palm of his hand with the teddy bear)

RED

Goo.

(LIGHTS DOWN)

ACT III

(Some families are made of more than people. Some have cats, others dogs, still others chickens and pigs. This family has trees. Six strong fruit trees, carefully arranged and even more carefully tended. It isn't a forest, but it is this family's orchard. It's also where they walk when there are things on their minds, which is what DAUGHTER and SON are doing.)

(DAUGHTER follows SON doggedly about the stage)

DAUGHTER

Gosh, you went all the way to Memphis?
You said you were and you sure enough
did. Are you gonna get it.

SON

I don't care. I went and I'm back and it
was. . . . fun!

DAUGHTER

You coulda been knocked in the head or
sold as a white slave, or anyway that's
what Uncle says about people who run
away on the road. Boy, are you gonna get
it.

SON

Aw, shutup. You ain't told me what's
been goin' on around here.

DAUGHTER

Aw, the press got bored and went away
and took all their cameras and stuff.
And Uncle's been following Mr. Crudlow
and that guy Kissiface around like a
puppy dog. And we haven't been on the
news, or TV, or on the radio, or
anything in two whole days.

SON

I was in a cafe outside Memphis when
they showed a piece of film they shot
here. Nobody in the cafe said much.

DAUGHTER

Did you go to Elvis's house?

SON
Sure.

DAUGHTER
Well? What was it like?

(7) "THE GREAT WALL OF ELVIS"
(OR, SON'S CHANCE TO IMPRESS DAUGHTER)

Son.
I SAW HIS HOUSE
AND BIG STONE WALL
WHERE PEOPLE SCRATCH
STUFF ON THE WALL
WHILE THEY WAIT IN LINE

Daughter.
WHAT DO THEY WRITE, HUH?

Son.
REALLY SILLY THINGS LIKE
"ELVIS--A GIFT FROM GOD"
"YOUR HEART OF GOLD IS GOLD"
"IF ELVIS DIDN'T DIE--
"I WOULD HAVE KILLED HIM"

Daughter.
WOW, THAT'S NEAT! WHAT ELSE?

Son.
"OUR LIFE FOR ONE OF YOUR SMILES"
"I'M HERE! MY LIFE IS COMPLETE"

"I BELIEVED AND WAS RECEIVED"
"ELVIS HAS LEFT THE BUILDING"
CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?

Daughter.
THAT'S DUMB! KEEP GOIN'!

Son.
LOTS AND LOTS WAS WRIT
TO ME THE BEST WAS
"WITHOUT A SONG, MY
"DAY WOULD NEVER END"
THAT WAS A GOOD ONE

Daughter.
DID YOU SEE THE HOUSE?

Son.
IT'S FINE. REAL BIG,
YOU KNOW? NICE LAWN WITH LARGE OAKS
THREE HOLLY TREES
A SYCAMORE NEAR THE FENCE
PIN OAK UP LEFT
TWO RED CEDAR BY THE DOOR

Daughter.
I MEAN FROM *INSIDE*.

Son.
NO. NOT ENOUGH MONEY
TO EAT AND THEN TOUR
I ATE A BURGER
AND LOOKED AT THE WALL

Daughter.

NOT ENOUGH MONEY--WHY?

Son.

BECAUSE I DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH TO TAKE!
I JUST TOOK WHAT I HAD
AND IT WASN'T ENOUGH!

Daughter.

I HAD SOME--NOT MUCH.

Son.

THANKS.
BUT TOO LATE!

(SON aimlessly draws a design in the dirt)

SON

How's Red?

DAUGHTER

(jumping up)

Wooo! You haven't seen him? It's *weird*.

SON

Huh?

DAUGHTER

Red got dressed! He slicked his hair
down, trimmed his nosehair, and got
duded up in some fancy clothes, and then
he went on a date!

SON

A date? Red?

DAUGHTER

Yeah, and we don't know who she is except that he borrowed some of Pa's stink'em from World War Two and went out without telling anybody where he went.

SON

On a date.

DAUGHTER

Red looks strange in real clothes like somebody normal.

MOLLY

(from OFF-STAGE)

Is anybody around?

DAUGHTER

Out back in the garden, Molly! There she is!

(DAUGHTER waves)

SON

Who's that?

DAUGHTER

Mr. Crudlow's Special Assistant, Molly Polly.

(MOLLY enters)

DAUGHTER

Hi Molly!

MOLLY

Hi, honey! Do you have a *lumbago*?

DAUGHTER

No! But I gotta *chrysanthemum* and a *polymath*.

MOLLY

What would you say if I had a *procompsognathid*?

DAUGHTER

Wow, neat! Tyrannosaur!

MOLLY

Apatosaur!

DAUGHTER

Maiasaur!

MOLLY

Pterosaur!

DAUGHTER

Stegosaur!

(MOLLY quickly whispers in DAUGHTER'S ear. They jump together and, side by side, pump their arms in rhythm.)

MOLLY & DAUGHTER

Hyp-si-loph-o-don-tids!

(The girls giggle)

DAUGHTER

This is my brother, Son, and he doesn't like words much, but he's always fixin' cars and stuff. He's just back from running away to Memphis. He went for a few days to see Elvis and only saw his fence but he's back now.

(MOLLY extends her hand to SON. Dazed by the situation in general and MOLLY in particular, he shakes her hand mechanically.)

MOLLY

It's very nice to meet you, Son!

SON

Wow. You look like Miss America.

Molly

(embarrassed)

Why, how sweet! My name's Molly. Did you enjoy your trip? I'll bet it was exciting.

SON

Uh, well. . .

MOLLY

I'm sure it was something just to be able to go there. Elvis was such a warm person, don't you think? I hear he was really sweet, even though he was rich, made movies, and was famous and all. Are you a big Elvis fan?

SON

I went. . . you see. . . .

MOLLY

But there's a lot of reasons to go to Memphis cause it has all types of nice people and trees and Beale Street and the Peabody ducks and everything.

SON

Yeah, Beale Street. Yeah, I went there.

MOLLY

Really? Can you tell me about it sometime cause I've never been?

SON

Oh, sure.

MOLLY

Wonderful! Oh, my, I'm sorry, I was looking for Red and I do need to find him.

SON

Red?

DAUGHTER

Did you two go out on a date last night?

MOLLY

Why, yes!

(laughs)

He's so funny.

SON

Funny?

MOLLY

And so thoughtful--I must find him
before the news conference.

SON

Well, I have to find my parents. If I
see Red, I'll tell'em you're lookin'
for'em.

MOLLY

Okay! I'll see you later.

(He turns away looking a bit stunned)

SON

(to himself)

Red went on a date with *her*. That's
crazy.

MOLLY

Oh, dear, you better go with your
brother. I think he might need moral
support.

DAUGHTER

Okay!

(DAUGHTER EXITS skipping and singing to herself)

DAUGHTER

Stegosaur! Maiasaur! Hadrosaur!
Apatosaur! Pterosaur!. . .
Triceratops!!!

(MOLLY'S face loses its cheerfulness as DAUGHTER disappears. Now she looks lost and alone.)

(8) "MISS AMERICA, ME?"

Molly.

A "MISS AMERICA"

HE SAID

WHO, ME?

WHAT A DREAM THAT IS

WHAT A GORGEOUS DREAM THAT IS

WALKING DOWN THE AISLE

TO SING

TO DANCE

IN FRONT OF THE WORLD

WHAT A GORGEOUS DREAM THAT IS

TO BE SHOWERED WITH LOVE

BY THOSE I LOVE

FORGET ALL THE PAST

GRASP A BETTER LIFE

WHAT A GORGEOUS DREAM THAT IS

TOURING THE WORLD

BLESSED BY HAPPY FACES

SEE THE POPE, THE PRESIDENT!

TO BE LOVED BY ALL

WHAT A GORGEOUS DREAM THAT IS

WHAT WAS IT HE SAID?

OH, YES, IT WAS

THAT I MIGHT BE

"MISS AMERICA"

ME?

(MOLLY pauses as if not certain what to do, then a smile appears. She sings and skips out the opposite side to DAUGHTER)

MOLLY

Tyrannosaur! Nanosaur! Ultrasaur!
Maiasaur! Hadrosaur!. . .
Triceratops!!!

(MOLLY EXITS)

(Enter MA, PA, DAUGHTER and SON)

DAUGHTER

You're gonna get it now.

MA

Well, nice to see you again. Good of you
to drop by.

DAUGHTER

You gonna whop'em, Ma?

MA

I sure would like to--devililing us the
way he did. But I guess he's too big for
that now.

(SON'S chest expands)

PA

You scairt us, Son, you scairt us a lot.

(SON'S chest deflates. UNCLE enters.)

UNCLE

There he is. Well, young man, have you explained yourself?

DAUGHTER

He went to Memphis and saw Elvis's house. Then he ran out of money and came back home.

MA

Memphis! How in the world did you get to Memphis?

UNCLE

Thumbing rides, of course, the quickest way to Satan's house. These younger generations. . .

(RED enters wearing "fancy" clothes)

UNCLE

No respect. No respect for their elders. Why I--

RED

(interrupting)

GOO GA?

DAUGHTER

Red's been on a date with Molly Polly!

Red's been on a date with Molly Polly!

(MA is not surprised, but PA and UNCLE are stunned)

UNCLE

You went out with Molly Polly?

RED

(shrugging)

Goo goo ga ga.

DAUGHTER

Red's been on a date with Molly Polly!

Red's been on a date with Molly Polly!

MA

Hush!

PA

Quiet now, Daughter. We've got some serious things to discuss. Pretty soon, Crudlow and that Doctor Kissy fellow will be coming and we gotta decide what to say.

UNCLE

Now, that's just the thing--

PA

But first we have to talk about some things with your brother. So you shoo on in the house.

DAUGHTER

Aw, Pa . . .

(Pa jerks his thumb at the house)

PA

Git.

(DAUGHTER exits. RED moves behind SON, facing the others.)

UNCLE

As for you, my fine feathered friend,
don't you realize that people can't take
off anytime they want? There's
responsibilities and, uh hm,
responsibilities. Why, it isn't done.
Now, Mexico, I could understand--

PA

Uncle, my brother, you're a part of the
family. But this is for Ma and me.

UNCLE

Well, okay. I got other things to do
anyway.

(UNCLE exits. RED moves behind MA and PA, leaving SON
by himself.)

MA

Son. . . why did you run away?

SON

I didn't run away. I just didn't think
anybody would need me for a while.

MA

Anybody need you? I don't understand.

PA

I think I know what he means, Ma.

MA

Well, maybe you can explain then, cause
I sure don't know. Are you unhappy here?
Are you mistreated?

SON

No, it's alright. I. . .

MA

Well?

SON

I wanted to go. Don't you see? I wanted
to go.

MA

Go where? You traipsed all over the
countryside, wandered around who-knows-
where on the highways, and you call that
goin' somewhere? Do you know what kind
of people are out there?

SON

Nothin' happened.

MA

Listen: it's dangerous out there.

PA

Ma, he's got a right.

MA

Got a right? Got a right to get himself
hurt?

PA

He's not a boy anymore. He's the one who's been supporting the family, bringing in money from side jobs to supplement my pension, doing the work around the house and in the garden that I can't do. And goin' to school, too. If I weren't so worthless, I'd of taken him myself long before this.

MA

To Memphis? Why's everyone suddenly dumbstruck on Memphis?

PA

That ain't the point!

MA

What is the point?

PA

The point is the place don't matter.

MA

Well, what does matter?

PA

(loud)

The *goin'* matters!

MA

(loud)

You can go anywhere, but what have you got once you get there?

PA

You got the GOIN'!

RED

(stamping in a circle)

Goooo ga ga ga ga!

(They stop arguing and look at him)

MA

(to herself)

It don't make sense.

RED

Ma, does a tree bear fruit just for it
to be eaten?

PA

Ma! He understands!

MA

Understands what?

PA

That a tree is a tree, and goin' is
goin', and what you do matters! Not just
where you go!

MA

What are you talkin' about?

PA

(hopping up and down)

I'm talkin' about life! You gotta do
more than plant the seed, you gotta eat
the fruit!

(PA starts coughing violently and repeatedly. MA
supports him, leading him OFF-STAGE to the house.)

RED
Ma?

MA
It's okay, Red. We'll talk about this
later, Son.

*(RED holds SON back from following MA
into the house)*

RED
(to himself)
Let us tend our garden.

SON
Huh?

(9) "BOB"

(at a good pace)

Red.
(clears his throat, then--)
TALK!

Son.
WHAT ABOUT?

Red.

GOOD TRIP?

Son.

OH, YEAH.

Red.

YOU SAW WHAT?

Son.

HOUSE OF ELVIS.

Red.

HE SAY HI?

Son.

NO. HE'S DEAD.

Red.

THEN WHAT?

Son.

SAW BEALE STREET.

Red.

WAS IT SWELL?

Son.

YEAH. I MET THIS OLD, BLACK BLUESMAN [8]

SITTIN' ON THE SIDEWALK ON BEALE [8]

HE HAD A GUITAR AND A CHAIR [8]

HE JUST SAT AND PLAYED, PLAYED AND SAT

[8]

HE'S WAITIN' TO BE CALLED HOME, HE SAID

[9]

BUT HE NEVER LEFT WHILE I WAS THERE [9]

Red.

WERE YOU AFRAID?

Son.

NO, WAS I SUPPOSED TO BE?

Red.

WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO?

Son.

THERE WAS THIS GUY I MET
OUTSIDE A GROCERY
HE HAD THIS BEARD, YOU KNOW,
IT JUST DIDN'T GROW STRAIGHT OUT
BUT CAME OUT FLOWING DOWN AT AN ANGLE
IT WAS A REALLY, REALLY GREAT BEARD

Red.

WHAT WAS THE NAME
OF THE OWNER
OF THIS GREAT BEARD?

Son.

"BOXCAR BOB", HE TOLD ME,
BECAUSE HE ROAD THE RAILS
HE WAS GOIN' HIS WAY
NORTH FOR THE SEASON
BOB IS A GOOD NAME

Red.
WHAT ELSE?

Son.
HE WAS A MESMERIST
WE ATE, CHEESE 'N CRACKERS,
AND DRANK SOME ORANGE CRUSH
THEN MESMERIZED ME
TO GIVE A BIT O' LUCK
GAVE ME A DOUBLE DOSE
(confidentially)
(JUST LOOKED AT ME REAL HARD,
BUT I THANKED HIM ANYWAY)
(reflective)
EVERYTIME HE BELCHED I SMELLED BEER

Red.
WERE YOU AFRAID?

Son.
NO. WAS I SUPPOSED TO BE?

Red.
DID YOU LEARN ANYTHING
FROM THIS BIG JOURNEY?

Son.
WHEN I CHOOSE MY NAME,
I THINK I'LL PICK. . . ."BOB".

(Ma enters)

RED
Here comes Ma. How's Pa?

MA

He's lying down.

RED

He's a traveling man, Ma, and he's not afraid to learn.

SON

Ma. . . .I'm sorry for scaring you and Pa. I didn't mean to, but I had to go. Do you forgive me, Ma?

MA

Well, I guess I'll have to.

(SON hugs her. MA pulls him away and looks him square in the eye.)

MA

I'll forgive anything you do as long as you're not mean. It's *bad* to be mean, whether you intend it or not.

(KISSIAVELLI enters)

MA

Guess I better be gettin' supper goin'. How about some fried chicken with black-eyed peas, mashed potatoes, fried okra, and biscuits? And apple cobbler with some homemade vanilla ice cream for dessert?

SON

Great!

(*exiting*)

I'm gonna see Pa, and then I'll be ready!

KISSIAVELLI

A delicious sounding repast, Ma.

MA

You ain't invited, "Doctor" Kissiface.

(CRUDLOW enters)

MA

(exiting)

Nor you, Mister Lowcrud.

CRUDLOW

Well, if it isn't the Goo-Ga Man.

KISSIAVELLI

Greetings, Professor Steenbeck.

RED

Good day, Doctor Kissiavelli

KISSIAVELLI

Your approach to things has always been unusual.

RED

And you've clearly prospered in the expected manner.

KISSIAVELLI

I go with the currents of the day, while you've always stood like a boulder in

mid-stream--immoveable. However, time
wears everything down.

RED

Oh, I roll. But the direction is my
choice.

CRUDLOW

You two know each other?

(9) "SCHOOL SCUM"

Kissiavelli.

CLASSMATES

Red.

SCHOOL CHUMS

Kissiavelli.

ONE FOR ALL

Red.

AND EACH FOR

HIMSELF

Kissiavelli.

YOUR UNIVERSITY PROBLEM

COULD HAVE BEEN SOLVED EASILY

Red.

I HAVEN'T YOUR MORALITY

Kissiavelli.

THE WORLD'S NOT GOOD

CAN NEVER BE

DROP THESE BUMPKINS
YOU DESERVE MORE

Red.

MOST PEOPLE DESERVE MORE
MORE MONEY, MORE COURAGE
MORE INSIGHT, MORE REASON
MORE GENTLENESS, MORE HOPE

Kissiavelli.

LISTEN! HA! UNDILUTED
IDEALISM--HOW DISGUSTING
PEOPLE LIKE YOU CAUSE TROUBLE
NO WONDER YOU WEAR THOSE CLOTHES

Red.

IDEALS TAKE TIME TO GROW
FILTH LIKE YOU CAN TEAR THEM DOWN
BEFORE THEY REACH FRUITION
YOUR KIND DRAINS LIFE OF ITS SWEETNESS

Kissiavelli.

FEEBLE INSULT
LOST YOUR CUNNING?
WHEN IN SCHOOL DAYS
YOU WENT GUNNING
ONLY I STOOD
YOUR VERBAL BLAST.
SQUATTING WITH PIGS
DULLING YOUR GRASP?

Red.

TRUE, MY TRICKS WERE
GOT FROM YOUR ILK
RUTHLESS, VICIOUS

I WAS YOUR MATCH
BUT IT MEANT ZILCH
WHEN MY LIFE TURNED.
GIVING MEANS MORE
THAN MINDLESS GAIN.

Kissiavelli.
WEAK FOOL

Red.
SLY CLOWN

Kissiavelli.
IDIOT!

Red.
HYPOCRITE!

Kissiavelli.
SON OF A--!

(CRUDLOW, unable to hold off any longer, interrupts)

CRUDLOW
WHAT A MINUTE! You "college" boys are
wastin' time. Let's start talking
straight.

RED
So talk.

CRUDLOW
We mean to have this land. That's our
point. You can't stop us. That's two-to-
zero, our favor.

RED

I'm glad you can count. We have lawyers,
we can delay. That makes two-to-one.

CRUDLOW

You can't delay very long.

RED

Long enough for your backers to become
anxious. Your deal will unravel and it's
bye-bye Crudlow and Company. That's two-
to-two.

CRUDLOW

There are other ways.

RED

True, but they involve unavoidable risk.
Why not make an offer?

CRUDLOW & KISSIAVELLI

What?!

RED

I have not yet heard a concrete,
specific, and definable offer.

KISSIAVELLI

So you *have* grown accustomed to the
taste of money!

RED

I like a lot of things. Say something
worth hearing or go away.

CRUDLOW

Seventy thousand.

RED

Is that an offer or a joke?

KISSIAVELLI

Stop chiseling, Crudlow.

CRUDLOW

Alright, dammit. The house and property isn't worth two hundred thousand on the market. I'll make it an even three hundred thousand.

RED

I haven't heard a thing.

CRUDLOW

Four hundred.

RED

Hmmm?

CRUDLOW

Four hundred and fifty thousand, and that's as far as I go!

RED

Seven million, five hundred thousand dollars. . . .per year.

CRUDLOW

What!

RED

You've got a combination theme park, shopping mall, and industrial complex. You have parking area for the industrial complex, but not for the theme park and shopping mall, which is where you'll make your profit. This land is your parking lot.

KISSIAVELLI

Uncle's been talking.

RED

Now, it would be terribly foolish to sell such valuable property, especially when it can be rented in perpetuity. It's a sound business principle.

CRUDLOW

Seven million five hundred thousand dollars for a parking lot?

RED

Per year. In fact, make it an even ten million dollars. The figure rolls off the tongue much more easily.

(CRUDLOW chokes)

KISSIAVELLI

We'll take it.

CRUDLOW

What! Take!

RED

Grand of you to agree so charmingly,
Crudlow. Ah, goo goo goo, here's Uncle.

(UNCLE enters)

UNCLE

Mister Crudlow, Doctor Kissiavelli, I've
got the problem solved. Ma just hasn't
been looking at the situation from the
proper perspective. Now, I'll tell her--

CRUDLOW

Ma!

KISSIAVELLI

That obstacle's been vaulted.

(looks at RED)

Ma *will* see eye-to-eye with us?

RED

Goo.

CRUDLOW

Goo!

UNCLE

Now, don't you start, Mister Crudlow.
One Red is enough.

(CRUDLOW's hands go to his head)

CRUDLOW

Enough!

KISSIAVELLI

What Mister Crudlow means to say is that we're ready to close the deal and announce it to the world.

UNCLE

Yes, sir!

KISSIAVELLI

Would you be so kind as to draw together the details for our press conference? We'll hold it here.

UNCLE

Yes, sir!

KISSIAVELLI

And please bring Mister Crudlow a glass of water. He needs to clear his throat.

UNCLE

Yes, sir!

CRUDLOW

Ahhhh! My profits!

UNCLE

Yes, sir!

(As UNCLE exits, MA and PA enter)

UNCLE

Pa, it's all set. Can't hold back progress! *Pilar*, here I come.

PA

Is that so, Red?

RED

Can't hold back progress. Goo?

KISSIAVELLI

There are rewards big enough for all.
Your ship has come in, Pa.

PA

Sure been waitin' on the dock long
enough. Somehow, I can't quite get to
hoppin' around about it.

(Pa moves to a chair from which he can look at his
trees. KISSIAVELLI drags the slumping CRUDLOW off to be
revived. MA moves to RED.)

MA

Red.

RED

Goo?

MA

You've goood enough for one day. What I
want to know is this--is this right?

RED

Right?

MA

You know what I mean.

RED

Yes, I do, Ma.

MA

And?

RED

You know about the fox in the henhouse?

MA

What has that to do with it?

(MOLLY POLLY enters with MISTER GLITZ, the Producer)

RED

Once he gets in, he has to get out.

(RED grins and waves at MOLLY. She grins and waves back.)

RED

Keep a stiff upper lip, Ma. Things are just fine.

(RED goes to MOLLY and they exit)

MA

Fine for who?

(MA exits. UNCLE enters with the press.)

UNCLE

Here we are, ladies and gentlemen. In a few moments, the Honourable Mister Crudlow and the distinguished Doctor Kissiavelli will make a surprise

announcement profoundly affecting the future of our entire community.

PRESS REPORTER

It doesn't have anything to do with nuclear filings, does it?

UNCLE

Used in the proper proportions with black earth, nuclear filings are extremely efficacious and healthful. Why, they've made me the man I am today!

PRESS REPORTER

I'll take that as "no comment".

(PA looks around wearily, then he exits as CRUDLOW and KISSIAVELLI enter with MISTER BLANK, the B.I.G. Corporation Company, Incorporated, Representative)

(KISSIAVELLI speaks like a siren drawing sailors onto the rocks; the PRESS CORPS is very receptive)

KISSIAVELLI

Welcome, pressmembers and, I might add, fellow workers in the vine-yards. Today, Mister Homer Crudlow has an announcement of tremendous import, of stupendous implications for everyone, including each and every one of you good members of the press. It is our blessing to live in the greatest city of the greatest state in the greatest nation in the world. Prosperity is bountiful throughout the land. And, now, the auspicious community of Little Big Town will thrive as never before. Why? Because of the

hard-working genius of Mister Crudlow and the incredible foresight of the B.I.G. Corporation Company, Incorporated, of which Mister Blank here is a Representative. What are the details? Why, simply this the B.I.G. Corporation Company, Inc., will soon be relocating their national headquarters to this wonderful city.

PRESS REPORTER

Why?

(The PRESS CORPS separates itself from the questioner)

KISSIAVELLI

Now *there's* a direct question. Why, indeed? Because of the industrial management genius of Mister Crudlow, that's why. He asked himself, "What would attract a worthy industrial giant like the B.I.G. Corp Comp Inc. to our fair community?"

PRESS REPORTER

Bigger profits?

(More commotion from the PRESS CORPS. Some punch at the REPORTER'S arms.)

KISSIAVELLI

Imagination! A vastness of vision that could see the possibilities of the future lying here in the germ of Little Big Town! And that's what he has given them. Ladies and gentlemen, we stand on

the future site of the Little Big Town
Amusement Shopping Center and Industrial
Park!

(Oohhs and aaahhs from the PRESS CORPS, as well as
some applause)

KISSIAVELLI

The wave of the future is consolidation,
and we're on the forefront of the crest
of the tip of that wave. Envision this--
after a full day's work in the B.I.G.
Industrial park, it's a short ride via
trolleycar to the Theme Park and
Shopping Mall. Once there, the family
can enjoy rides on a full-scale
submarine in the indoor lake, mass hang-
glidings, and ski rides down the
mountainside.

PRESS REPORTER

We don't have a mountain.

OTHER PRESS REPORTER

We'll build one!

KISSIAVELLI

Infectious, isn't it? Ah, we're blessed
to live in a day of such momentous
imaginings. And, now, I invite Mister
Blank to say a few words.

(MISTER BLANK reads from a sheet of paper, never
changing expression in face or voice)

MISTER BLANK

"The B.I.G. Corporation Company, Incorporated, is pleased to join with Mister Homer Q. Crudlow in his development plans for the Little Big Town Amusement Shopping Center and Industrial Park. On completion of the stated terms in our mutually signed contract, the B.I.G. Corporation Company, Incorporated, will relocate to the mutually agreed upon areas in Little Big Town." No comment.

KISSIAVELLI

Thank you, Mister Blank, for your kind enthusiasm. Now--

(Enter suddenly STELLA BRASS and her CAMERA CREW. SON and DAUGHTER follow.)

STELLA

Hold it there, Kissiavelli. I've got a few questions.

KISSIAVELLI

Uh, hmm, Ms. Brass. How nice of you to attend. I thought--

STELLA

They settled the strike without a riot. In fact, they settled the strike without a strike.

KISSIAVELLI

How fortunate for you.

(RED enters accompanied by MOLLY POLLY and MISTER GLITZ)

RED

Ladies and gentlemen! Your attention,
please.

MOLLY

I have a statement to make.

UNCLE

Honey, you make a statement without
saying a word.

MOLLY

Oh how sweet! But I *do* have something
important to say.

KISSIAVELLI

Ms. Polly, do you really think this is
the correct time for personal
announcements?

MOLLY

Oh, of course. How could I tell anyone
that you and Mister Crudlow are crooks
if I didn't tell the press while the
press is here waiting to be told
something?

STELLA

Everybody knows that they're crooks,
child. Proving it--aye, there's the rub.

KISSIAVELLI

Slander, Ms. Brass?

STELLA

Opinion, "Doctor" Kissiface.

MOLLY

Oh, no, I have documentary evidence. At least, I did before I gave it to the District Attorney. You know, check stubs, memoes about fixing official documents, letters concerning certain bribes, and things like that.

(STELLA's CAMERA CREW goes to work. STELLA has her microphone out.)

KISSIAVELLI

What?

MOLLY

Oh, sure. Mister Crudlow showed them to me and bragged about how he had your signature on compromising documents.

KISSIAVELLI

(to CRUDLOW)

You!

MOLLY

I got to thinking that maybe I ought to keep them safe, since he was being so careless. So I hid them in my hat, a little each day, and carried them to my safety deposit box. I knew he wouldn't notice because he never looks at my hat.

STELLA

And you simply walked out the office door.

MOLLY

Oh, he hardly said anything to me at the office. His wife pops in sometimes, you know.

(MISTER BLANK moves to go)

CRUDLOW

Mister Blank!

KISSIAVELLI

That concludes the press conference, ladies and gentlemen.

(CRUDLOW grabs BLANK's arm)

CRUDLOW

Going so soon?

MISTER BLANK

(moving away)

Goodbye, Mister Crudlow.

CRUDLOW

(shouting)

You think you're simply walk away with my two hundred thousand dollars in your pocket?

(STELLA BRASS laughs)

PRESS REPORTER

What do you mean by that Mister Crudlow?

2ND PRESS REPORTER

Has there been some kind of sweetheart deal?

(BLANK escapes CRUDLOW'S grip and exits)

3RD PRESS REPORTER

Does your wife know about your affair with Ms. Polly?

CRUDLOW

Get away from me, you vultures!

(CRUDLOW escapes with most of the PRESS in pursuit)

DAUGHTER

Wow! This is great!

(DAUGHTER and SON follow the PRESSMEMBERS pursuing CRUDLOW)

KISSIAVELLI

The Harpes descend.

(RED slaps him on the back)

RED

Get yourself a good lawyer, school scum, old pal.

KISSIAVELLI

I am a lawyer.

RED

That, too? How can one man have so many vices?

KISSIAVELLI

(exiting)

Rot in hell.

(RED gives him "The Face")

STELLA

Tell me, Ms. Polly, why did you suddenly decide to tell all?

(UNCLE walks to one side and sits)

MOLLY

My word! I couldn't let them bilk a whole town. I didn't understand at first, because I thought that's just the way things are done. But when Red explained it to me last night, I knew I had to do the right thing for posterity.

STELLA

Whose posterity?

MOLLY

Why, everyone's.

STELLA

And who may this gentleman be?

MOLLY

Oh, this is Mister Glitz.

STELLA

And what does Mister Glitz do?

MISTER GLITZ

I am a producer.

STELLA

And what do you produce?

MISTER GLITZ

Many things.

STELLA

Such as?

MISTER GLITZ

Ms. Molly Polly at the moment.

STELLA

Would you care to elaborate?

MISTER GLITZ

Along with publishing her exclusive account of the trials and terrors of being an agent of justice, without portfolio, we will feature in the same issue a complete pictorial layout of the true Molly Polly, without clothes. Then will come the television interviews, followed by her debut in a new feature film based on her true-to-life adventures.

STELLA

So, Ms. Polly, you're not only going to send at least one man to jail, you're also going to make a bundle in the bargain.

MOLLY

(puzzled)

Well. . . .yes.

STELLA

Can we see the documents?

MISTER GLITZ

Talk to the D.A. *Au revoir.*

(GLITZ leads MOLLY out. STELLA turns to her CAMERAPERSON.)

STELLA

Let's find Kissiface. I haven't asked him any questions yet.

(Exit STELLA and her CAMERAPERSON)

UNCLE

Dead in the water.

RED

Cheer up, old boy. The world hasn't run its course.

UNCLE

Every time I get something good going-- well, here I am again.

RED

I don't think you're looking at this from the right perspective, Uncle. I know an investor with some extra funds to dispose, uh, invest.

UNCLE

Yeah?

RED

Sure enough. You see, he has this boat he would like to buy--a rather nice little craft, actually. And, of course, he wants it kept in good condition year round.

UNCLE

Of course.

RED

And he has some friends--it's a family, you see--he'd like to take down for a vacation on the Gulf of Mexico whenever he wished.

UNCLE

A boat on the Gulf of Mexico?

RED

That's right. And he'll probably want someone who can oversee a business of his dealing in. . . .uh, hmm. . . .

UNCLE

Equipment rental?

RED

That's it! That's right, equipment rental.

UNCLE

Do you think he'd be interested in me?
I've got good references and everybody knows I'm a hard worker.

RED

Everybody.

(loudly)

MA! MA! MA! MA! MA!

(MA, PA, SON, and DAUGHTER enter)

MA

Good Grief! What's wrong now?

RED

Son!

SON

Yes, sir?

RED

Get your cap. Daughter!

DAUGHTER

Where're you goin', Red?

RED

We're going to the library.

DAUGHTER

The library?

RED

That's right! I'm going to show you the
world. Goo!

LIGHTS DOWN

CHARACTER LIST

THE FAMILY

MA--the mother of the family, wife of the husband; no one is a stranger to her

PA--the father of the family, husband of the mother; he loves trees

UNCLE--brother to Pa, who is married to Ma; a salesman who would rather be fishing

SON--son to Ma and Pa, who only have one son, whom they call "Son"; a mechanical whiz

DAUGHTER--eldest daughter to Ma and Pa, niece to Uncle, brother to Son, a chatterbox to the neighborhood, a distraction to her teachers, and a lover of strange and rare words

RED ("PROFESSOR RUDOLF STEENBECK")--nobody knows who he is, except that he appeared on the front porch one day in baby clothes, and soon took over a table in the living room for his "scribbling"

THE OTHERS

HOMER Q. CRUDLOW--a businessman-politician of comparative-ly high caliber, rating somewhere between child molester and used car salesman

DOCTOR KISSIAVELLI--slick, smooth, oily, sophisticated, cunning, witty, suave, and debonair former politician with sticky fingers and a fat butt

STELLA BRASS--a smash-and-jab newsreporter who is the top in her field, a position that she defends mercilessly

MOLLY POLLY--playful, whimsical, trusting. . . and with a body that makes men quiver

MISTER BLANK--faceless representative of a faceless corporation

MISTER GLITZ--Holwywood pproducer (his first name is rumored to be Elmer)

PRESS REPORTER--a lone, badgered voice in the wilderness

SUMMARY

Living near Little Big Town is a family consisting of Ma and Pa, Pa's fruit trees, Son, Daughter, and their less-than-successful salesman uncle, Uncle, who sells nuclear filings for fertilizer. One day, "Red" appears on the doorstep. He is middleaged, irascible, wears baby clothes, and only says "goo" or "ga". The family does what must be done: they take care of him.

Things go along swell, until a politician by the name of Mr. Crudlow appears one evening. He tries to slicker the family into signing away their home, but Red whacks him with his teddy bear and makes him go away.

As everything is about to get back to normal, one of Red's philosophic tracts becomes a bestseller and makes the family filthy rich. Then, like insatiable Harpies, the press descends including the unstoppable Stella Brass, the only top TV news-reporter to interview a pro linebacker by first wrapping her microphone cord around his neck.

Just as things couldn't be more irritating, Mr. Crudlow returns with his partner-boss, Dr. Kissiavelli, who immediately begins weaving dreams and delusions. If Stella will only overlook their activities, she's sure to find a "big story" elsewhere that will further her career. And if the local press will play along with their plans for a new Amusement Shopping Center, which will feature a full-scale submarine in an indoor lake, there will be lots of jobs for everyone. And if Uncle will only coax Ma and Pa into signing over their land to provide a parking lot, then, by gum, he'll be a real hero!

Meanwhile, back with Ma and Pa, they've found that Son has walked away from home. Going to Memphis, he saw the trees in Elvis's front yard (he didn't have the money to go inside), talked to a railroad tramp named "Bob", and missed seeing Red go on a date with Mr. Crudlow's very private secretary, the whimsical bombshell, Molly Polly. But the trip wasn't a total waste, because Son found that home cooking is the best, especially if you haven't eaten, and that he likes the name "Bob".

The final confrontation is at hand, and both sides let 'er rip. Kissiavelli sings a siren song that has the press excited about using public funds for a man-made mountain that will allow snow-skiing. But Molly Polly makes a sudden revelation: she has given the DA evidence that Kissy and Crudlow are frauds! Red convinced her that it was right and good to turn state's evidence on these crooks. (Molly's next revelation will be a nude pictorial in a national magazine, which will be followed by a movie which exposes even more of her selfless undercover work for justice.) The press chases the crooks from the scene.

Having managed to save the family from almost certain moral temptation, Red now turns to wearing "normal clothes like a real person", gets Uncle a regular job, and takes Son and Daughter for a vacation in the local library.

THE SONGS

1st Act

Uncle (#1) "WHEN I SUCCEED" [p.7]
Red (#2) "WITH A GOO AND A GA" (I TRY TO HELP) [p.17]
Crudlow (#3) "CLEVER" (YES, I AM) [p.21]

2nd Act

Ma (#4) "FAMILY CALLS" [p.28]
Stella & Newspeople (#5) "A HOT STORY" (SHE'S THE
TOP!) [p.31]
Stella, Kissiavelli, Crudlow (#6) "THE GREEK
SHELLGAME" [p.43]

3rd Act

Son & Daughter (#7) "THE GREAT WALL OF ELVIS"
(OR, SON'S CHANCE TO IMPRESS DAUGHTER) [p.46]
Molly (#8) "MISS AMERICA, ME?" [p.51]
Red & Son (#9) "BOB" [p.56]
Red & Kissy (#10) "SCHOOL SCUM" [p.59]