

Madhouse Shenanigans
or
A Private Method

A Play in Three Acts

By Brian Aldrich

Inspired by
"The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether"
by
Edgar Allan Poe

May 4, 2016
Brian Aldrich
(310) 477-0270
Aldrich7@gmail.com

CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE STAFF

BUSHMAN, the Asylum Director

PUSSER, the Asylum Controller

DR. MAILLARD, the Chief Alienist

NURSE FLETCHER, the Head Nurse

MISS PAPIN, the Maid

JESSIE, the Attendant

THE PATIENTS

MARQUIS, he thinks he's the Marquis de Sade

PETER, a chronic masturbator and the Marquis' assistant

MRS. GRADY, she suffers from several delusions

MISS VENUS, an exhibitionist and a nymphomaniac

MR. WERTHER, a melancholic who cries uncontrollably

MR. BESTIOLE, a paranoid who eats bugs

THE OUTSIDERS

MR. SELLERS, the Real Estate Broker

MR. HANDLER, the State Inspector and Regulator

SETTINGS

Place: Barnum State Asylum
Time: Sometime between 1837 and the Present

Act One

Scene 1 Staff Dining and Conference Room
Scene 2-1 Director Bushman's Office
Scene 2-2 Staff Lounge
Scene 2-3 Staff Dining and Conference Room

Act Two

Scene 1-1 Director Bushman's Office
Scene 1-2 Staff Lounge
Scene 1-3 Staff Dining and Conference Room
Scene 2 Staff Dining and Conference Room

Act Three

Scene 1 Staff Dining and Conference Room
Scene 2-1 Director Bushman's Office
Scene 2-2 Staff Lounge
Scene 2-3 Staff Dining and Conference Room
Scene 3 Staff Dining and Conference Room

PRODUCTION NOTES

The settings, costumes, and dialogue are intentionally anachronistic.

The play has been designed as a walkthrough play, but can be performed in sequence, in the linear style of a traditional play as well.

ACT 1

SCENE 1

The Staff Dining and Conference Room of the Barnum State Asylum. A broad rectangular table covered with a floor length table cloth dominates center stage. There are several chairs placed around the table, two upstage and one at either end. There are doorways upstage left and right. The table is set with dishes for a tea service with settings in front of each chair. At present, the set is dark.

From somewhere offstage behind the set and through the doorways, a loud sobbing of a man can be heard. The sound rises in volume until the man's voice breaks into uncontrollable shrieking and crying. At this point, a woman's voice begins imitating the crow of a chicken-cock.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(O.S.)

Cock-a-doodle-doo! Cock-a-doodle-doo! Cock-a-doodle-doo!

(The Asylum Director BUSHMAN enters from upstage left. He wears an old fashioned frock coat with a vest. His head is bald, which he compensates for by having a long pointed Van Dyke goatee. He's unfolding a newspaper, but he stops in the doorway to look back out the doorway towards upstage right.)

BUSHMAN

For the love of god, please shut up!

(The crying and the cock-a-doodle-doing stops. Bushman continues walking to the stage right end of the rectangular table and takes his seat. He is engrossed in the newspaper. Reading something of particular interest, he shakes his head disapprovingly.)

BUSHMAN

Damn free thinkers!

(The Asylum Controller Mr. PUSSER enters from the same upstage left doorway. He wears a more modern three piece vested suit. He has long hair, tied in a ponytail, and sports muttonchops on each side of his face, which reach almost to his chin. Apparently fastidious, his right hand goes from buttoning his vest to adjusting the fit of his glasses. Carrying files in his left hand, he walks to the left stage end of the rectangular table and takes his seat across from Bushman.)

PUSSER

Bad news today, Director Bushman?

BUSHMAN

Congress has voted against the new bill.

PUSSER

No! How could they reject "No Lunatics Left Behind?"

BUSHMAN

Typical progressive fascism, they want us to do things their way.

(Pusser shakes his own head in agreement.)

BUSHMAN

If this bill had passed, we'd be able to do what we want to do with our patients and treat them as we think they need to be treated.

PUSSER

Damn them to hell....

(Pusser begins obsessively cleaning his glasses.)

BUSHMAN

It's that frog weakling Philippe Pinel and his "moral treatment" that should be damned to hell.

PUSSER

Yet another example of an increasingly permissive society.

BUSHMAN

They insist on us treating these loonies better than we treat ourselves. We must be nice to them. We must listen to them. We must let them express their lunacies. We must feed them well and let them find their sanity in the arts or sports.

PUSSER

No one has ever found their sanity in the arts or sports.

BUSHMAN

No more discipline. No more corporal punishment to the evil ones. No more locking them away to play in their own feces.

PUSSER

And no more visitors who pay to watch!

BUSHMAN

And who pays for this permissiveness? Why we do, the taxpayers. We pay for these lunatics to have fun and enjoy their insanity.

PUSSER

As a Controller, I can tell you it was cheaper to keep them in the old days.

BUSHMAN

That's what I'm saying. If we did things the way I think we should, we and the taxpayers would save money. It's a lot cheaper to contain the problem through rigorous discipline than let it flourish in indulgent self-expression.

PUSSER

We could do a lot with the savings.

BUSHMAN

(not listening)

Sometimes I think we should just open the gates and let them all go and live in the streets.

PUSSER

But their corpses would soon line the alleys and we would be out of work.

BUSHMAN

No, we wouldn't. We'd get better jobs in private nuthouses where rich neurotics can afford a life of institutionalized luxury and wealthy dynasties can pay premium rates to keep the family idiot locked away.

PUSSER

That would be glorious, but if it's so simple, why aren't you working at one of those places now?

BUSHMAN

I don't want to talk about it.

(Awkward silent pause.)

PUSSER

Still, we could do a lot with the savings.

BUSHMAN

What? What are you talking about?

PUSSER

If we did things the old way we could do a lot with the savings. That is if we didn't have to give it back to the taxpayers. Well, being as we are the taxpayers, we could use the extra money to buy a better brand of wine for the staff meals. Heck, we could afford better meals entirely.

BUSHMAN

How about staff vehicles? Higher salaries? Paid vacations?

PUSSER

Now you're talking. And we deserve it.

BUSHMAN

We certainly do that.

PUSSER

Where's the Maid with our tea?

(Finished with his glasses, Pusser now begins to compulsively winding his pocket watch.)

BUSHMAN

(yelling)

Miss Papin? Miss Papin? Miss Papin?

WOMAN'S VOICE

(offstage)

Cock-a-doodle-do!

BUSHMAN AND PUSSER

(in unison)

Shut up!

(The cock-a-doodle-doing stops. Bushman returns to his newspaper and Pusser pulls out a file and begins sanding his fingernails. The Asylum Maid, MISS PAPIN, wearing a maid's outfit, enters from upstage right, but stops in the doorway.)

MISS PAPIN

Yes, Director Bushman?

BUSHMAN

(turning around to face her)

Miss Papin, is our tea in any danger of being ready yet?

MISS PAPIN

Sir, the only danger is keeping me away from my kitchen long enough for one of the loonies to get in there to steal food or put fecal matter in the stew.

PUSSER

Miss Papin, sorry to bother you, but our meeting is due to start and it would be lovely to have the tea with it.

MISS PAPIN

The tea is almost ready. I'll bring it as soon as the water boils.

PUSSER

Thank you, Miss Papin. Thank you for all your hard work. We appreciate it.

MISS PAPIN

You're welcome.

(She starts to leave.)

BUSHMAN

Oh, Miss Papin?

(She sticks her head back in.)

MISS PAPIN

Yes, Director Bushman.

BUSHMAN

In the future, it would be more prudent to not refer to the patients as "loonies."

MISS PAPIN

Yes, Director Bushman, I suppose I've gotten in the habit from hearing you and Mr. Pusser use the term frequently.

(She starts to leave.)

BUSHMAN

Miss Papin?

(Her head reappears.)

MISS PAPIN

Yes, Director Bushman.

BUSHMAN

Only we can refer to our loonies as loonies. Is that clear?

MISS PAPIN

Yes, Director Bushman. I'll get the tea now.

BUSHMAN

Thank you, Miss Papin.

(She leaves. Bushman looks at Papin.)

BUSHMAN

(sotto voce)

Horrible woman!

MISS PAPIN

(offstage)

I heard that!

(Bushman and Pusser freeze for a moment.)

PUSSER

(sotto voce)

I hate her too. But she works cheap and doesn't eat much.

BUSHMAN

I thought you were related to her somehow?

PUSSER

I still hate her.

(Bushman returns to his newspaper
and Pusser to his fingernails.)

DR. MAILLARD

(offstage)

So, who are we talking about?

(The Asylum Alienist DOCTOR
MAILLARD enters through the upstage
left doorway followed by the head
nurse, NURSE FLETCHER.)

DR. MAILLARD

(continuing)

Who do you hate today, Mr. Pusser?

(Maillard wears a white lab coat
and Fletcher wears an old fashioned
nursing outfit with a cap. They are
both carrying files. They cross to
the upstage chairs at the
rectangular table. Maillard sits
next to Bushman and Fletcher sits
next to Pusser.)

PUSSER

This morning I hate everyone and everything.

DR. MAILLARD

Mr. Pusser, now you are sounding like the Marquis.

NURSE FLETCHER

Does the Marquis hate everyone and everything?

DR. MAILLARD

Being as the patient suffers from the delusion that he is the
Marquis de Sade, it is in character for him to hate anyone to
whom he feels superior towards, which is everyone.

NURSE FLETCHER

How does he feel about himself?

DR. MAILLARD

Oh, he adores himself. (Thinks.) But then he must hate himself too or he wouldn't think he's the Marquis de Sade.

BUSHMAN

I don't want to talk about it.

(All go quiet for a few moments,
until Fletcher breaks the
uncomfortable silence.)

NURSE FLETCHER

Where's the tea?

PUSSER

Miss Papin insists it's on it's way.

NURSE FLETCHER

Horrible woman.

PUSSER

Agreed.

BUSHMAN

So, good morning Nurse Fletcher. Dr. Maillard, do you have anything new to report?

DR. MAILLARD

Yes, I received a communication from my colleague, Mr. Reynard, the Chief Alienist at Mesmer State Asylum. Unfortunately, he is going to be looking for work as the State has decided to close the asylum. Apparently, he reports that the State Inspectors are looking at all the public asylums to find any excuse to shut them down and sell the properties for revenue.

BUSHMAN

Why did they chose Mesmer State Asylum?

DR. MAILLARD

The Inspector reported Mesmer State Asylum had a poor infrastructure. The State decided the cost of refurbishment was prohibitive and condemned the buildings.

NURSE FLETCHER

What did they do with the patients?

DR. MAILLARD

They are to be distributed among the other State Asylums. I suppose we'll be getting notice of some new patients shortly.

NURSE FLETCHER

I don't know whether to hope they are the violently ill that we can keep under lock and key or the merely neurotic whom we have to let wander the premises.

PUSSER

At least the State will have to give us more money.

NURSE FLETCHER

I wonder if we could hire some of their nurses and attendants to replace some of the losers we have working here?

PUSSER

Do you think they have, excuse me, had a maid who can work cheap?

BUSHMAN

I don't want to talk about it.

(A scream is heard off stage. A scantily clad woman, MISS VENUS, enters the upstage right doorway screaming and running from a little man, MR. BESTIOLE, who chases her, taunting her with a pink flyswatter and attempting to swat her behind. The attractive Miss Venus wears a white bra and white bloomers, stumbling through the scene in white high heels.

The unattractive Mr. Bestiole wears no shirt with white overalls that have green grass stains on the knees, legs, and buttocks. They cross to downstage center where Miss Venus stops and whirls around to face him, holding him back with her pointed index finger.)

MISS VENUS

Don't you dare touch me with that filthy thing.

MR. BESTIOLE

Let me slap your plump behind, heh...heh...heh...

(Bestiole licks one side of the flyswatter. Miss Venus squirms in revulsion and turns to run away. Bestiole catches her behind with his flyswatter. She screams and runs away, crossing to exit upstage left.)

NURSE FLETCHER

Miss Venus!

DR. MAILLARD

Mr. Bestiole!

(Offstage, Miss Venus' screaming fades away. But Bestiole sees something on the floor downstage left and stops. He appears to swat a bug on the floor with his flyswatter. He peels the bug off of his flyswatter and lifts it to his mouth to eat, but stops. He licks his lips and then deposits the bug into one of his pockets. He exits.)

BUSHMAN

(rising to his feet)

See, this is the result of Pinel's "moral treatment!" We just have to sit here while the loonies parade around acting like loonies.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(offstage)

Cock-a-doodle-do!

ALL

(in unison)

Shut up!

(The cock-a-doodle-doing stops.
Bushman sits, shaking his head.)

BUSHMAN

They're just ruining our tea.

NURSE FLETCHER

Where is the tea?

PUSSER

It's taking a long time for that water to boil.

BUSHMAN

If we could operate this institution without government regulations, I'd have them all in chains...in chains! I'd feed them bread and water and on Christmas Day they'd be lucky to get a chicken bone in their cup of tepid broth!

(Pusser turns to Maillard and
Fletcher, explaining.)

PUSSER

The Director and I were discussing this situation earlier before you both arrived. We lamented the restrictions the State maintains on our choices of therapeutic methods. We both agreed that if we could revert to the old ways of treating our patients, we could do so more inexpensively.

DR. MAILLARD

Hmm, then we could afford better wine for our meals.

(Fletcher turns first to Maillard.)

NURSE FLETCHER

Oh, yes. (Turns to Pusser.) Oh, yes! And better food for our meals as well!

(Maillard turns first to Fletcher.)

DR. MAILLARD

Oh, yes. (Turns to Pusser.) Oh, yes!

PUSSER

That's exactly what I said. These senseless government regulations are ruining our lives!

BUSHMAN

I don't want to talk about it.

(Another uncomfortable silence begins.)

MISS PAPIN

Tea time.

(Miss Papin enters from upstage right carrying a silver tea service on a tray. She crosses downstage in front of the table and sets it down in the middle. She begins to exit.)

BUSHMAN

Took an awful long time for that tea to boil.

MISS PAPIN

Water boils; tea brews. The tea had to brew, Director Bushman. It takes time for the tea to brew. You don't want to drink un-brewed tea do you? You might as well drink plain hot water.

PUSSER

Miss Papin, to be fair, you did say you'd bring in the tea after the water boiled. You didn't say anything about waiting for the tea to brew.

MISS PAPIN

Would you like to drink plain hot water? I can bring you all some plain hot water. But you'll have to wait for that. You'll have to wait for a new kettle of water to boil. Should I bring you all some plain hot water instead of this tea? If that's the case, I'll simply take this hot brewed tea away and bring you all some plain hot water after it has boiled.

NURSE FLETCHER

No, don't. I want brewed tea, hot brewed tea. Please keep it here, Miss Papin.

PUSSER

Please keep it here, Miss Papin. Thank you, Miss Papin.

BUSHMAN

Miss Papin, do you know how much I really hate you?

MISS PAPIN

I'm quite aware, Director Bushman. I'd say the compliment is reciprocated, but I'd rather warn you not to say such things in front of witnesses.

BUSHMAN

Are you threatening a lawsuit, Miss Papin? I'll have you know I can tell you how much I hate you anytime I wish. That's one thing the government hasn't deregulated.

PUSSER

Yet.

BUSHMAN

Indeed.

MISS PAPIN

Go ahead and fire me. See if you can find someone to work for you at what you pay me. Oh, and then Mr. Pusser can inform his mother that you have fired his father's cousin.

PUSSER

We're not going to fire you, Miss Papin. Don't worry and please don't say anything to my mother, thank you.

MISS PAPIN

(grumbling)

The tea is ready. Go ahead and pour it. Don't expect me to do your pouring as well. I'm expected to cook in an under-supplied kitchen with loonies, I mean lunatics, running through screaming all the time and I have to clean the floors without a proper mop.

(Nurse Fletcher begins to pour the tea into the four cups.)

PUSSER

What do you mean, Miss Papin? About the mop, I mean?

MISS PAPIN

I'll show you.

(She exits upstage right.)

DR. MAILLARD

Horrible woman!

ALL

Agreed.

PUSSER

I hope she doesn't say anything to my mother. You don't think she'll say anything to my mother?

(Nurse Fletcher sits, shaking her head negatively to calm Pusser.)

DR. MAILLARD

Mr. Pusser, would you like to talk to me about your mother? Privately, of course.

(Pusser considers this and is about to respond when Miss Papin re-enters from upstage right carrying a mop without a mop head.)

MISS PAPIN

See? One can't mop a floor without a mop head? What am I supposed to do without a mop head?

PUSSER

I assume the mop came with a mop head. I certainly wouldn't approve the payment for a mop without a mop head.

MISS PAPIN

The Marquis steals my mop heads. He uses them for his wigs. The Attendant finds them in the Marquis' room and throws them out. Then, I get a new mop and right away the Marquis steals the new mop head every time.

DR. MAILLARD

I'll have a talk with the Marquis about the mop heads.

NURSE FLETCHER

I must say, the Marquis is a lot less volatile when he has a wig on his head. He tried substituting panties one time. I told him they made him look like a commoner and took them back.

DR. MAILLARD

You took his wig away from him?

NURSE FLETCHER

No, I took the stolen panties away from him and returned them to Miss Venus.

DR. MAILLARD

I didn't realize Miss Venus wore panties?

BUSHMAN

Neither did I.

PUSSER

Me too. Of course, I don't suppose I was looking?

MISS PAPIN

Maybe the Attendant can stop throwing the mop heads away?

PUSSER

I've never heard a more practical solution, Miss Papin. I will speak to the Attendant about the mop heads as soon as possible. Please inform my mother I approve of your mop head solution.

MISS PAPIN

You tell her. I haven't seen her since Easter. I'm working here all the time. I haven't seen anybody in a long time.

(She exits upstage right.)

ALL

(in unison)

Horrible woman!

(The foursome begin sipping their tea.)

MISS PAPIN

(offstage)

I heard that!

(They cringe in unison.)

JESSIE

(entering)

Mail's in.

(JESSIE, the Attendant, wearing a white smock and white pants, enters from upstage left carrying a stack of mail. He's got a serious weight problem. Jessie crosses downstage to the front of the rectangular table, and facing upstage, he delivers four separate stacks of mail to the staff members.)

JESSIE

Director Bushman...Dr. Maillard...Nurse Fletcher...and Mr. Pusser. There you go. It's all yours now.

PUSSER

Thank you, Jessie.

(They begin to look through their individual stacks of mail.)

NURSE FLETCHER

The tea's a little strong this morning. I think it needs a little milk.

(She adds milk to her tea.)

BUSHMAN

Probably from brewing too long!

DR. MAILLARD

I think I'll add some sugar to mine.

(He adds sugar.)

JESSIE

If there's nothing else ya want.

(Jessie has returned to upstage left and is about to leave.)

PUSSER

Oh, Jessie. Just one more thing.

JESSIE

(turning back)

Yeah? Uh, yes, Sir, Mr. Pusser?

PUSSER

We've become concerned about the Marquis and his use of the mop heads for his wigs. It seems he steals them from Miss Papin's mops, leaving her without the means to clean her kitchen floor. We thought it would be better if you allowed the Marquis to keep his mop heads and not throw them away.

NURSE FLETCHER

The Marquis seems a lot less volatile when he has his mop heads for his wigs.

JESSIE

But they get filthy and they're awfully disgusting. I thought I was doing us all a favor by gettin' rid of 'em.

DR. MAILLARD

You'd be doing us all a bigger favor, Jessie, by indulging the Marquis as we all do.

JESSIE

(shrugging)

Okay, if that's what you prefer.

PUSSER

Yes, that's what we prefer. Thank you once again, Jessie.

BUSHMAN

I think my tea needs more lemon. Awfully strong today.

(Jessie starts to turn and leave,
but remembers something and turns
back.)

JESSIE

What would you like me to do about Mr. Bestiole's bugs?

PUSSER

I beg your pardon?

DR. MAILLARD

Mr. Bestiole likes to kill and eat the bugs he finds crawling around the premises.

PUSSER

I'm aware of that. Well, if he kills and eats the bugs, there's not much else we can do about it.

NURSE FLETCHER

Having Bestiole around is more efficient than having a cat.

PUSSER

Well, that's just it, Sir. He's not eating them. At least he's not eating every one he catches. He's been saving them. I found a pile of cockroaches in his underwear drawer yesterday and I didn't know whether to throw them out or not.

BUSHMAN

Do we have a cockroach problem?

NURSE FLETCHER

Yes, a serious cockroach problem. They've been turning up in the laundry and the medicine cabinet.

PUSSER

The facility hasn't been fumigated in years. Too expensive.

JESSIE

Don't forget the crumbling walls and the poor plumbing. The pipes back up weekly and the concrete is so rotten I'm afraid the violent criminals are just gonna push their way out of their locked cells one night and murder us all in our sleep.

DR. MAILLARD

(to Jessie)

Let the poor man have his bugs. If eating them makes him happy, so be it.

BUSHMAN

Hmm, more permissiveness. I'll not have it.

PUSSER

But you must agree he gets rid of the bugs for us.

NURSE FLETCHER

Yes, like I said, he's better than having a cat.

BUSHMAN

You know, I thought we had a cat?

PUSSER

We do. Miss Papin's cat, Catterina. We've had her for years.

JESSIE

That's just it. She's old and slow now. Bestiole beats her to the bugs first.

BUSHMAN

(tastes his tea)

I need more lemon.

PUSSER

(to Jessie)

Just let him have his bugs for the time being, Jessie. We'll take the matter under consideration. Thank you.

JESSIE

Yes, Sir. I'll let Bestiole keep his bugs and the Marquis his mop heads. As you prefer, Sir.

(Jessie exits.)

BUSHMAN

I hate cats anyway.

PUSSER

I do too and I need some more lemon as well.

(Miss Papin enters from upstage right carrying a plate of cookies. She crosses upstage behind Bushman and Dr. Maillard to drop the dish down noisily between Maillard and Fletcher.)

BUSHMAN

Miss Papin, this tea tastes disgusting this morning.

NURSE FLETCHER

I don't think I've ever had a more bitter cup of tea in my life.

DR. MAILLARD

It's dreadful, I must say.

PUSSER

Miss Papin, we all know you usually make excellent tea each morning, but there's something wrong with this tea. Perhaps, the kettle or the pot wasn't cleaned properly?

MISS PAPIN

Now you think I don't know how to wash things in my kitchen? I do the dishes myself around here. I've no Attendants to help me with my cleaning.

PUSSER

No offense, Miss Papin. Could you bring us a fresh pot, please?

MISS PAPIN

Why don't you try it with a cookie? Take a bite of a cookie and then a sip of tea. Maybe your taste buds are screwy today?

PUSSER

(to the group)

Please, let's humor her.

(They each take a cookie from the plate, take a bite, and then a sip of tea. Meanwhile, Miss Papin has opened the top of the teapot and looked inside.)

MISS PAPIN

Holy crap, there's bugs in here!

(The staff members perform a collective spit take.)

BUSHMAN

Bugs?

MISS PAPIN

Cockroaches it looks like.

DR. MAILLARD

That damn Bestiole stashed his bugs in our teapot.

MISS PAPIN

No, there's a few spiders in here as well.

BUSHMAN

Oh god, I'm going to be sick.

MISS PAPIN

I'll get you some more tea.

(She starts to leave with the tray,
but turns back at the doorway.)

MISS PAPIN

But, I warn you, it'll take some time for the water to boil.

PUSSER

We understand, Miss Papin.

MISS PAPIN

And I'll have to wash the kettle and the pot first.

PUSSER

That's fine, Miss Papin.

MISS PAPIN

Of course, I could wash the kettle first and then while the
water is boiling, then I could wash the teapot.

PUSSER

That would be excellent, Miss Papin. Thank you.

(She exits.)

BUSHMAN

I think I'm going to be all right now.

PUSSER

Thank goodness for that, Sir. Thank goodness for that.

(They return to their mail.)

NURSE FLETCHER

Dr. Maillard, is there any record of anyone dying from drinking bug tea?

DR. MAILLARD

I don't think there's a record of there being bug tea anywhere. Maybe in Ancient Greece or maybe Egypt?

(Bushman appears to become incensed at the letter he is reading.)

BUSHMAN

Damn, damn, triple damn!

PUSSER

What's wrong, Sir?

DR. MAILLARD

Are you okay, Director?

NURSE FLETCHER

Is the bug tea still bothering you?

BUSHMAN

Bug tea be damned. The State Inspector is coming to inspect the facility.

PUSSER

But we have nothing to hide. Why worry?

DR. MAILLARD

Dr. Pinel's "moral treatment" is completely installed in our day to day operations.

NURSE FLETCHER

We keep the patients as clean and well fed as we can.

BUSHMAN

Don't you see. He'll be looking for a reason to close us down and then we'll all be unemployed.

PUSSER

Certainly there are other State institutions we could be transferred to?

DR. MAILLARD

If the State is trying to save money by closing asylums, then they'll be cutting back on administrators as well.

NURSE FLETCHER

And doctors and nurses.

PUSSER

And controllers?

(They all nod affirmatively.)

BUSHMAN

If the Inspector sees what rotten infrastructure this facility has, he'll close us down for sure. The government will condemn the property and sell it off for revenue.

PUSSER

Well, at least someone would be able to buy the property cheap. Maybe you could buy it and open your own asylum?

BUSHMAN

Not a bad idea. If I only had the money. If I could buy this place, I'd refurbish it for the rich and make a killing.

PUSSER

Don't forget that private institutions have more leeway with the government regulations than the State run asylums.

BUSHMAN

I could be free to institute "right to cure."

DR. MAILLARD

What's "right to cure," Director?

(Bushman stands, thrusting his thumbs into the vest pockets beneath his frock coat, and lectures.)

BUSHMAN

"Right to cure" is my private system, my own method of treating the lunatic class. I would hold control over the right to cure mental illness and the patients would be at my mercy.

PUSSER

The antidote to permissiveness and lack of discipline. I applaud you, Sir.

BUSHMAN

Exactly. They can chose to pay my premium rates and submit themselves to my rules or they can be out on their collective loony asses.

DR. MAILLARD

"Right to cure." Sounds more moral to me than Philippe Pinel's "moral treatment."

NURSE FLETCHER

Certainly for those of us who have to submit to the whims of the ordinary maniac.

PUSSER

But you don't have the money?

(Defeated by this reality, Bushman sits.)

BUSHMAN

I don't want to talk about it.

(They return to their mail stacks. One by one, they each take another cookie from the plate.)

PETER

Excuse me, Madame and Messieurs?

(From upstage left, a patient, PETER, enters. His posture is bowed in submissiveness.)

Peter wears an unflattering shirt with horizontal blue and red stripes. His dark pants are extremely baggy, many sizes too big, constrained at the waist with a rope for a belt. He wears a makeshift Napoleon bicorne hat on his head. It is made out of newspaper.)

DR. MAILLARD

Yes, Peter, come on in. State your business.

(Peter crosses to between Maillard and Fletcher, putting his hands into his pockets.)

PETER

I have no business of my own, Doctor. I've come on behalf of the Marquis.

DR. MAILLARD

Take your hands out of your pockets, Peter. No masturbating in public, please.

PETER

Yes, Sir. Sorry, Sir.

(He pulls his hands out of his pockets, but can't find a place to put them, so he puts them under his armpits.)

DR. MAILLARD

Go on.

PETER

(bowing again)

The Marquis requests an audience with you, Sir.

DR. MAILLARD

Now?

PETER

If it would please you, Sir.

BUSHMAN

It wouldn't please me. Can't you see we're in the middle of a staff meeting, you moron. It'll have to wait for later.

PETER

But the Marquis thinks you all might like to hear his request, Sir. It has to do with the asylum in general.

NURSE FLETCHER

Indulge him. It'll entertain us until Miss Papin returns with some fresh tea.

DR. MAILLARD

(to Bushman)

Dare we?

BUSHMAN

(shaking his head)

Dare we not? The Marquis will just make a big stink if we don't indulge him.

DR. MAILLARD

Okay, Peter. Entre. Bring him in. Let's hear it.

PETER

One more thing, Sir.

DR. MAILLARD

Yes, Peter?

PETER

May I have a cookie, Sir?

(Pusser picks up the plate and lifts it to Peter.)

PUSSER

Have two, Peter. To keep each of your hands occupied.

(Peter takes the cookies and then runs out upstage left.)

DR. MAILLARD

I think this might be fun.

NURSE FLETCHER

I do find him amusing sometimes.

PUSSER

Peter or the Marquis?

NURSE FLETCHER

Both.

BUSHMAN

One's a horny retard and the other's a pompous ass.

PUSSER

Which is which?

(Before Bushman can respond, Peter has returned to the doorway and makes a salute.)

PETER

(with cookie in his mouth)

Announcing! Announcing, Donatien Alphonse Francois de Sade, otherwise known as the Marquis de Sade.

(Peter releases his salute and steps out of the doorway, making a grandiose and low bow as he backs out. The MARQUIS enters, wearing an oversized white shirt under a crimson red vest. His short pants reach to just below his knees, looking like breeches. He wears tall white athletic socks and orange sneakers. Indeed, he is wearing a mop head on the top of his head, masquerading as a wig. He speaks with a bad French accent.)

MARQUIS

(bowing)

Bonjour, Madame and Messieurs.

BUSHMAN

Don't mind if we don't stand and bow, Marquis.

MARQUIS

No problem. I shall not hold your disrespect to me against you. After all, we are all citizens now, aren't we?

BUSHMAN

Yes, we're all citizens now, Marquis. Get on with it.

DR. MAILLARD

What have you come to ask us, Marquis?

MARQUIS

As you know, after the Revolution, I was a temporarily impoverished former aristocrat? I made a living in the theater.

BUSHMAN

Sure, sure, go on.

MARQUIS

You have installed an art program here, but you have no theater. I would like to put on a play.

BUSHMAN

Fine idea, Marquis, but we do not have a stage.

MARQUIS

I do not need a stage. We can designate this side of the room as the performance area and build a simple proscenium with a few pieces of lumber and some curtains.

DR. MAILLARD

I think it's an excellent idea. Good therapy. Right in line with the "moral treatment" method.

NURSE FLETCHER

It would keep him occupied. Too bad we don't have a stage.

MARQUIS

I do not need a stage!

PUSSER

As long as we don't have to bear the expense of building a stage.

MARQUIS

I do not need a stage!

BUSHMAN

All of you be silent. I'm the decider. I'm the decider. I'm the decider here! You all together have three votes. I have four by myself. You lose!

(Bushman gathers himself and turns back to the Marquis.)

BUSHMAN

But whom will you enlist to be your players?

MARQUIS

(smiles)

Ah, ha. I knew you would ask me that.

(The Marquis turns to look offstage and snaps his fingers. Peter enters with MR. WERTHER and MRS. GRANDY. Mr. Werther is a cadaverously skinny old man who wears an out of date tuxedo with tails. Handkerchiefs hang from each of his cuffs. He's sad looking and appears to be on the verge of crying. Mrs. Grandy is a short and stout middle-aged woman who wears an orange dress around her rotund figure and a bright red kerchief on her head. Her steps are awkward, perhaps pigeon-toed, and her head bops with every step. The Marquis' hands introduce them with a theatrical flourish.)

MARQUIS

Here are my leading players, Monsieur Werther and Madame Grandy.

(Immediately, Werther pulls out one of his handkerchiefs and begins sobbing into it. Grandy begins cock-a-doodle-doing.)

BUSHMAN

Shut that up!

(They cease their actions.)

BUSHMAN

So, what play do you want to stage?

MARQUIS

I do not need a stage!

BUSHMAN

All right already. What play?

MARQUIS

I have chosen one of my own. I wrote it long ago at Charenton while awaiting my release.

DR. MAILLARD

Tell us about it, please, Marquis.

MARQUIS

The play is a political romance concerning sex, death, and the monarchy. I've titled this masterpiece "Fellatio and Cunnilingus, a love story."

DR. MAILLARD

Could be quite a theatrical experience indeed, Marquis. What parts will Mr. Werther and Mrs. Grandy perform?

MARQUIS

Monsieur Werther will illustrate the character Fellatio...

(Werther begins sobbing again.)

MARQUIS

And Madame Grandy will render the role of Cunnilingus.

(Grandy offers a cock-a-doodle-do.)

NURSE FLETCHER

Perhaps, Werther should illustrate cunnilingus..

DR. MAILLARD

And Grandy render fellatio.

BUSHMAN

What do you think, Mr. Pusser?

PUSSER

I wouldn't know. I do not have a position on this matter. Like I said, I'm fine with the Marquis putting on a play as long as we do not have to bear the cost of building a stage.

MARQUIS

I do not need a stage!

(Miss Venus' screams are heard from offstage as she enters the room from upstage right with Bestiole in pursuit, slapping her behind with his flyswatter. Finding her exit blocked by the Marquis, Werther, Grady, and Peter, she crosses upstage of the rectangular table and exits from where she entered, screaming all the way.)

BUSHMAN

(stands)

Silence! This lack of discipline will drive me to my grave. Maillard, please go wrangle Bestiole and Fletcher, please calm down Miss Venus and put some clothes on her!

NURSE FLETCHER

She'll only take them off again.

BUSHMAN

Try! For the love of God, try!

(Maillard and Fletcher exit upstage
right. Bushman sits.)

MARQUIS

Regarding my request, Monsieur Director?

BUSHMAN

I have to think about it before I decide. I do not make my
decisions rapidly. I like to think about the details and
ramifications before I make a decision. (To Pusser.) Dismiss
them.

(Bushman returns to his newspaper.
Pusser swivels to look at the
Marquis.)

PUSSER

Marquis, the Director will make his decision and let you
know. You may leave us now. Thank you for your suggestion.

MARQUIS

(bowing)

Adieu.

(The Marquis exits. Peter pulls
Werther and Grandy along with him
as they exit.)

PUSSER

Heavens. Peace at last. Now, where's that tea?

(Bushman looks up from his
newspaper and addresses Pusser.)

BUSHMAN

Doesn't that mother of yours have some money?

PUSSER

A little. My father has more. But they are stubborn and greedy people. They will not allow me to have use of any of it.

BUSHMAN

What if we made them partners?

PUSSER

Partners in what?

BUSHMAN

In our new private asylum. You could do the numbers and show them how profitable it will be.

PUSSER

I could. I suppose I could even lie a bit if I had to? They would not know the difference. They never do.

BUSHMAN

Now, we need to make sure the Inspector condemns this asylum.

PUSSER

Could we bribe him?

BUSHMAN

Maybe, but I tend to think these government regulators are recruited from the ranks of altar boys and boy scouts.

(They sit in silence.)

MISS PAPIN

Tea time.

(Miss Papin enters with her silver tea service with some fresh cups. Again, she crosses downstage of the rectangular table and places the tray in the middle between Bushman and Pusser.)

PUSSER

Thank you, Miss Papin. All brewed or brewing?

MISS PAPIN

Brewed.

BUSHMAN

No bugs.

MISS PAPIN

No bugs.

PUSSER

Thank you once again, Miss Papin.

(She nods her head to Pusser, but ignores Bushman and begins to exit.)

BUSHMAN

Miss Papin?

MISS PAPIN

Yes, Mr. Director?

BUSHMAN

Would you mind pouring the tea, please. Dr. Maillard and Nurse Fletcher are not here and it is too far from either Mr. Pusser or myself.

MISS PAPIN

Perhaps, we could get one of your loonies to pour the tea for you. Then, the imbecile could mop my floors, clear the plumbing, paint the walls, and treat the patients. (Beat.) I do not pour the tea, period!

(She exits.)

BUSHMAN

Horrible woman.

PUSSER

(quickly and loudly, so Papin
can hear offstage)

I disagree, Sir. I think Miss Papin is a lovely woman and her suggestions are always beneficial to this facility.

BUSHMAN

Shut up. Pour the tea. So, you think we should let the loonies treat themselves?

PUSSER

That would be more cost effective.

(Pusser gets up and pours tea into Bushman's cup and then into his own. He sits.)

PUSSER

I have an idea. Have you ever read Edgar Allan Poe?

BUSHMAN

I don't read literary lunatics.

PUSSER

I read him in grammar school. He wrote this fascinating story, "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether," set in a madhouse where the loonies take over the asylum. They lock up the staff, roam at will, empty the wine cellar, and skin cats for fresh meat. A visitor arrives and thinks, while they are a bit peculiar, that they are the real staff. It's only when the real staff escapes that the loonies are re-captured and order restored.

BUSHMAN

But we can't let the loonies act like they're running the facility. The violent ones will overcome and kill us.

PUSSER

No, not the violent ones. Those we keep locked up. We just use the non-violent loonies, the trustees like the Marquis and his group. We make it look like the poor infrastructure led to patients escaping and taking over the facility.

(Offstage, Grady begins cock-a-doodle-doing and Werther's crying reaches shrieking proportions.)

BUSHMAN

Shut up!

(Silence.)

BUSHMAN

I'm going to kill them all in their sleep one day.

PUSSER

(smiling)

Not if they're rich patients paying premium rates.

(They smile to each other in
collusion. Blackout.)

ACT ONE

SCENE 2-1

The office of Director Bushman contains bookcases upstage and on both sides as well as a desk and chair stage left, with three other chairs across from them center stage. On the desk rests a conspicuous phrenology bust of the human head complete with lines delineating the various traits. On the upstage wall behind the desk hangs a copy of William Hogarth's last painting in his "A Rake's Progress" series set in London's Bethlehem Hospital (Bedlam).

Bushman sits behind the desk. The Marquis and Pusser sit across from him. Stage right, Peter sits in a chair with his hands in his pockets.

MARQUIS

But what about "Fellatio and Cunnilingus?"

BUSHMAN

Marquis, I just don't think we're ready for a play with such depth and scope. We need to warm up the institution first.

PUSSER

A little foreplay? Comprenez-vous?

(Bushman gives Pusser a stern look.)

BUSHMAN

Perhaps with an improvisation?

PUSSER

We're offering you the ability to inaugurate a new theater department here, Marquis. We need to start slowly.

BUSHMAN

Remember, when we started the art department, we began with butcher paper and crayons?

MARQUIS

Actually, the art department began with newspapers and fecal matter.

BUSHMAN

That was before we had a leader. You will be the Artistic Director of the new Barnum State Asylum Theater Department.

PUSSER

That's quite a responsibility, Marquis.

PETER

I can be the stage manager?

MARQUIS

I do not need a stage!

PUSSER

Some lumber and curtains will do nicely, as you proposed, Marquis.

PETER

Even without a stage, you'll need a stage manager?

PUSSER

Peter, take your hands out of your pockets.

PETER

Yes, Sir.

(He quickly removes his hands from his pockets and inserts them under his armpits.)

MARQUIS

(without turning to look at him)

I shall consider your qualifications, Peter.

PETER

But you promised me, Marquis.

(The Marquis does a long slow turn to face Peter with a stoic expression that silences him.)

PETER

Yes, Marquis. What ever pleases you, Marquis.

MARQUIS

(turning back)

It pleases me to do "Fellatio and Cunnilingus." (Beat.) I want to stage my play, not some improvisatori.

PUSSER

Marquis, wouldn't you like to present your play on a real stage in a real theater?

PETER

The Marquis does not need a stage!

(The Marquis gives Peter another look to silence him.)

BUSHMAN

Yes, alright, you don't need a real stage in a real theater to do your play. But what if you had a real stage in a real theater? Wouldn't you like to stage your play in a real stage in a real theater?

MARQUIS

Perhaps.

PUSSER

Marquis, there is a man coming for a visit, whom we wish to impress. If we utilize your God given gifts...

MARQUIS

I do not believe in God.

PUSSER

If we utilize your great talents to impress him, then perhaps we can convince him to give us funds to build a real theater with a real stage.

MARQUIS

You are talking about the State Inspector?

(Bushman and Pusser look at each other quizzically. Then, they turn to the Marquis with equal curiosity.)

MARQUIS

(dropping the accent)

The Marquis knows everything, Gentlemen, and so do I.

BUSHMAN

What happened to your accent?

PETER

(getting excited)

The Marquis has disappeared! Where is the Marquis? What has happened to the Marquis?

(Peter removes his hands from his armpits and thrusts them into his pockets.)

PUSSER

Peter, take you hands out of your pockets!

(Peter does and places both hands palms down on top of his head and his bicorne hat, making it look more like a dunce cap.)

MARQUIS

(continuing without accent)

Gentlemen, the Marquis is useful to me on a day by day basis. But when I am lied to, or about to be conned into doing something for someone else that will only profit that someone else, I revert to the man I once was and secretly continue to be.

(He takes the mop wig off his head and plops it on top of the phrenology bust.)

PUSSER

(testing him)

Then, what is your real name?

MARQUIS

Ralph, Ralph Baxter. Ralph Baxter is my real name.

(Bushman looks to Pusser.)

PUSSER

Yes, according to his file, Ralph Baxter is his real name.

BUSHMAN

He's not even French.

MARQUIS

Yes, I am, but on my mother's side.

BUSHMAN

So, make your point, Ralph.

MARQUIS

I am aware of your real intentions regarding the State Inspector. I am also aware that you have no real intentions of building a real theater with a real stage.

BUSHMAN

And what are our real intentions?

MARQUIS

You wish to convince the Inspector to condemn the facility, buy it for a song, and build a luxury asylum with which to get rich. Undoubtedly, you will transfer the current residents of this institution to other State Asylums.

PETER

Will I be going with you, Marquis?

(The Marquis does another long slow turn to Peter.)

MARQUIS

Peter, put your hands in your pockets.

(Peter transfers his hands from the top of his head into his pockets. Once they are there, he smiles. The Marquis turns back to Bushman and Pusser.)

MARQUIS

Allow him. It will keep him occupied and quiet.

(Bushman and Pusser nod their consent.)

MARQUIS

I have no intention of being denied a place in the new asylum. And for my own protection and solace, I demand my stage manager and my players be afforded the same accommodation.

(Pusser looks to Bushman, who reluctantly nods his consent.)

BUSHMAN

Okay, Ralph. If and I mean "if," you successfully stage this improvised performance, which we will detail, and "if" the State Inspector condemns the facility, then, and only then, will you and your players be given reservations in the new asylum.

PETER

What about the Stage Manager?

PUSSER

Yes, Peter, the Stage Manager too.

PETER

Oh, goody!

BUSHMAN

So, Ralph. Do we have a deal?

MARQUIS

Absolutely. Or I should say (reverting to his French accent and returning the mop to his head) "absolument."

(They all smile to each other
conspiratorially. Blackout.)

ACT ONE

SCENE 2-2

The Staff Lounge where the Staff goes to escape the patients if even for a short while.

The walls are decorated with vacation posters for Australia, Hong Kong, Hawaii, and Los Angeles. There's a picnic table center stage with benches on either side. A box filled with donuts rests on the table. Miss Papin sits on the stage right side holding a cup of coffee. Jessie sits across from her on the stage left side dunking a donut into his coffee cup. Stage left, Nurse Fletcher rests against a built-in table that bears the weight of a huge coffee urn and a tray of cups. She nimbly rolls an unlighted cigarette around her fingers like a magician with a coin. There's a water cooler upstage center. Stage right, Dr. Maillard sits on a step stool facing stage left with his feet on one of the pulled out steps. Behind him is a television with rabbit ears sitting atop an old fashioned floor model radio.

MISS PAPIN

Sounds dangerously illegal, if you ask me.

JESSIE

Certainly does. I don't want nothing to do with it.

NURSE FLETCHER

Oh, open your tiny mind for once in your petty life, Jessie.

JESSIE

Open my mind? Open my mind and I get in trouble. No thank you. Anybody want the last chocolate old fashioned?

(Dr. Maillard and Miss Papin shake their heads negatively. Jessie turns around to face Nurse Fletcher.)

NURSE FLETCHER

No. Not me. Enjoy yourself.

(Jessie takes the last chocolate old fashioned out of box, breaks it in two, and dunks one half into his coffee cup.)

DR. MAILLARD

This is our opportunity to advance in all our careers and increase our standards of living.

JESSIE

How's that?

DR. MAILLARD

As I've explained to you, once the new asylum is up and running, we'll have money for better food, higher wages, and even paid vacations.

JESSIE

What about the better wine? I thought you said something earlier about our getting better wine?

DR. MAILLARD

Yes, of course better wine.

NURSE FLETCHER

And the quality of patients will increase as well.

JESSIE

How's that?

DR. MAILLARD

These new patients will be rich people. Or, at least they'll come from wealthy families who will be able to pay our high rates for keeping their embarrassments locked away.

NURSE FLETCHER

They'll be simple neurotics. Just think, Jessie, no more having to deal with rapists and killers.

JESSIE

At least with rapists and killers you know where you stand.

NURSE FLETCHER

These new patients will be passive, drug sedated loonies. They will be criers, imbeciles, and of course, the delusional.

MISS PAPIN

What about bug eaters and nymphomaniacs?

NURSE FLETCHER

Yes, there will be more of them, but no more violent criminals warehoused here because of an insanity defense.

JESSIE

I don't know. I don't think I want nothing to do with it. I don't mind rapist and murderers so much. They ain't never done nothing to me.

NURSE FLETCHER

Jessie. Jessie, trust us.

(Dr. Maillard and Nurse Fletcher smile sweetly, but artificially, to Jessie.)

MISS PAPIN

So, what do we have to do?

JESSIE

We don't have to be tarred and feathered, do we, like in that story you read us?

NURSE FLETCHER

No, no, no. The actors will simply threaten us with being tarred and feathered.

DR. MAILLARD

Okay, here's how it works. The Marquis and his group take over our roles running the facility. On the morning the Inspector is to arrive, we'll put sleeping powders into the food we serve the violent patients and the non-participating non-violent patients. We'll also put it into the coffee we put out for the rest of the staff.

JESSIE

Sleeping powders? You mean Mickey Finn's?

DR. MAILLARD

Exactly. Everyone who takes the "Mickey Finn's" as you put it will be out for the rest of the day, if not into the evening.

MISS PAPIN

How can you be sure of that?

DR. MAILLARD

It will be your job to prepare the food. Nurse Fletcher and Jessie will see that the patients and staff ingest enough of the Mickey Finn's.

MISS PAPIN

What're we going to tell the staff when they wake up?

NURSE FLETCHER

We'll tell them that one of the loonies got into my medicine cabinet and your kitchen to dump the drugs into your food and coffee.

JESSIE

What if they don't drink coffee?

NURSE FLETCHER

Then, we'll put it in their tea. We'll work it out. They have to drink something.

MISS PAPIN

How about the water cooler?

NURSE FLETCHER

Excellent suggestion, Miss Papin. See, you're getting in the spirit of this enterprise already. I like that.

DR. MAILLARD

I like it too. Very reassuring to have you all actively participate in the planning.

JESSIE

I still don't know if I don't want nothing to do with it. Anybody want the last maple bar?

(Dr. Maillard and Miss Papin shake their heads negatively. Jessie turns around to look at Nurse Fletcher.)

NURSE FLETCHER

Not me. Go ahead. Live!

(Jessie takes the last maple bar and dunks it into his coffee cup.)

DR. MAILLARD

Now, the "B" wing has the best infrastructure remaining, so we'll gather the patients and the rest of the staff into there where just in case we can still lock the cell doors until the Inspector arrives. Then, we'll open them for the sake of appearances.

JESSIE

How are we gonna get them in there if they're sleeping?

NURSE FLETCHER

The drug takes approximately 30 minutes to take effect. We'll corral them all in there after breakfast on some pretext.

DR. MAILLARD

The "A" wing has the worst infrastructure, so we'll pull the bars out of the walls to make it look like some of the patients escaped from their cells to take over the facility.

JESSIE

(his mouth full)

But they're not gonna be the violent ones?

NURSE FLETCHER

No, just some of the ambulatory, non-violent patients, the trustees, so to speak, who walk among us on a daily basis.

MISS PAPIN

So, where are we going to be?

DR. MAILLARD

The "C" wing. The walls surrounding the bars are crumbling too, but not as bad as the "A" wing.

MISS PAPIN

We're going to lock ourselves up in "C" wing?

DR. MAILLARD

Exactly. And Miss Papin, this will be your moment to shine.

MISS PAPIN

How's that?

DR. MAILLARD

You will be our deliverance. You and your potato peeler.

MISS PAPIN

Huh?

DR. MAILLARD

Miss Papin, you will have been captured while in your kitchen peeling potatoes. You will have hidden your potato peeler on your person. Once imprisoned behind the locked gates of "C" wing, we will use your potato peeler to dig our way out.

JESSIE

We have to dig a tunnel with a potato peeler?

NURSE FLETCHER

No, just remove the remaining concrete from around the bars, so we can push our way out in time to rescue the Inspector and recapture the facility.

DR. MAILLARD

Of course, that's how we'll explain our escape. In reality, we'll remove enough of the concrete surrounding the bars so it will be easy to scrape and push our way out when the time comes.

JESSIE

Well, that makes sense. I don't care for that much manual labor. I don't like to sweat unless I'm doing what comes natural, if you know what I mean?

(Jessie turns and winks at Nurse Fletcher who shudders in revulsion.)

MISS PAPIN

Okay, so what if we get caught?

DR. MAILLARD

Another excellent question, Miss Papin. If something goes wrong and our deception is revealed, we will simply explain it was part of the "moral treatment" therapy this institution provides.

MISS PAPIN

Say again?

JESSIE

I heard about that "moral treatment" stuff. When I first heard about it, I thought this nuthouse was gonna be turned into a convent.

DR. MAILLARD

We will explain that the Marquis and his players are performing an improvisation as part of their therapy. We justify this by saying we wanted to show the Inspector how well the "moral treatment" method is working.

MISS PAPIN

Why don't you just bribe him?

(Dr. Maillard struggles for an answer.)

JESSIE

Anybody want the last cinnamon roll?

(Blackout.)

ACT ONE

SCENE 2-3

The Staff Dining and Conference Room. The silver tea service lies upon the center of the rectangular table and there are place settings at each of the four chairs.

Miss Venus sits at the stage left end of the table and Mrs. Grandy at the stage right end. On the upstage side of the table, Mr. Werther sits next to Mrs. Grandy and Mr. Bestiole sits next to Miss Venus.

Mr. Werner sits crying into one of his handkerchiefs. Mr. Bestiole has his head laid down upon the table, his face pointing stage right. He appears to be napping. His flyswatter lies on the table beside his head between him and Miss Venus who is staring into her empty tea cup. Mrs. Grandy begins cock-a-doodle-doing.

MRS. GRANDY

Cock-a-doodle-do! Cock-a-doodle-do! Cock-a-doodle-do!

(Werner's crying gets louder.
Bestiole rouses from his nap.)

MR. BESTIOLE

What did you wake me for? Is it time to eat?

MISS VENUS

No, Bestiole. We're not eating now. We're not playing tag now either. Go back to sleep.

(He returns his head to the table.
This time his head faces stage left
towards Venus.)

MISS VENUS

I wish we had some tea. Is there any tea left in the teapot?

(Nobody moves.)

MISS VENUS

Isn't anyone going to check the teapot for me?

(Nobody moves. Venus picks up the
flyswatter and slaps it against
Bestiole's head. He wakes up
confused.)

MR. BESTIOLE

What did you do that for? You told me to go back to sleep. Is it time to eat?

MISS VENUS

No, check the teapot to see if there's any tea left.

(Bestiole stands up and reaches for
the lid to the teapot. He looks
inside.)

MR. BESTIOLE

Looks like there's some left, but it looks kinda cold.

MISS VENUS

That's ridiculous. How can liquid inside a teapot "look"
cold?

(He reaches his hand inside the
teapot.)

MR. BESTIOLE

Yep, feels cold too.

MISS VENUS

Now you had to ruin it with your filthy little hands.

MR. BESTIOLE

Sorry, Miss Venus.

(He replaces the top of the teapot
and returns to his seat.)

MISS VENUS

Go back to sleep.

MR. BESTIOLE

Yes, Miss Venus, my little angel.

(Bestiole puts his head back down
on the table, his face pointed
towards Venus. She slaps his head
with the flyswatter again. He sits
up.)

MR. BESTIOLE

What did you do that for? You told me to go back to sleep.

MISS VENUS

Don't call me "your little angel."

(Bestiole begins to say something.)

MISS VENUS

Don't say anything. Go back to sleep. Now!

(Bestiole returns his head to the
table, his face pointed away from
her.)

MRS. GRANDY

Where is everybody? I think something's going on we don't
know about. Mr. Werther, do you know anything that we don't
know about?

MR. WERTHER

I don't know anything. Not anymore.

(Werther exchanges his handkerchiefs, putting the used one back into his right cuff with his left hand, and then taking the one in his left cuff out with his right hand, and then using it to cry into.)

MISS VENUS

That's ridiculous! How can he know anything that's going on if we don't know anything that's going on?

MRS. GRANDY

Why not? Why couldn't he know anything that's going on even if we don't know if anything is going on?

MISS VENUS

Because he knows nothing. He said so. Besides, we are the ones who tell him everything, especially if there's anything going on.

(Werther stops crying. He removes the handkerchief from his face. A curious look comes over him as if he is trying to understand what Venus said. He shrugs his shoulders and gives up. He returns the handkerchief to his face and begins crying again.)

MISS VENUS

Oh, there he goes again.

(Venus picks up the flyswatter.)

MISS VENUS

I wish I could reach you with this flyswatter.

(Venus whacks Bestiole again instead.)

MR. BESTIOLE

(sitting up)

Ouch! What did I do now? Why did you do that?

MISS VENUS

That's for sitting between me and Mr. Werther. I could reach him with your flyswatter if he were sitting next to me.

MR. BESTIOLE

Do you want to trade places?

MISS VENUS

That's ridiculous. Don't be silly. I deserve to sit at the head of the table.

MR. BESTIOLE

But Mrs. Grandy is sitting at the head of the table too.

MISS VENUS

That's ridiculous. I'm sitting at the only real head of the table. Now, shut up and go back to sleep.

(Venus gives Bestiole another slap. Bestiole remains quiet for a beat, and then returns his head to the table. Werther blows his nose into his handkerchief.)

MRS. GRANDY

Poor, Mr. Werther.

MISS VENUS

Don't indulge him. That only makes it worse.

MRS. GRANDY

But Mr. Werther could know something about anything going on if we'd only just ask him if he knows if anything is going on.

MISS VENUS

That's ridiculous. He doesn't even know what's going on with himself. Go ahead, ask him.

MRS. GRANDY

Mr. Werther, why do you cry all the time?

(Werther removes the handkerchief
from his face to speak.)

MR. WERTHER

Because I'm sad and everything is so hopeless.

MISS VENUS

That's ridiculous. Not everything is hopeless.

MRS. GRANDY

Are you sad because everything is hopeless?

MR. WERTHER

Yes, I am that I am. I'm sad and hopeless.

MISS VENUS

That's ridiculous. Mr. Werther, one cannot just be sad and
hopeless. One must be sad and hopeless about something. What
exactly are you sad and hopeless about?

MR. WERTHER

Where do you want me to start? There's no peace anywhere.
Babies are stillborn. Parents abuse their children. The
elderly are forgotten. There are natural disasters and wars.
The wicked are rewarded and the good are punished. The rich
live in splendor while the poor starve and struggle. Then,
they are blamed for being poor and told they are subhuman or
unpatriotic. Oh, it's just too much. I can't go on.

(Werther returns to crying into his
handkerchief.)

MR. BESTIOLE

Does he mean he can't go on listing things to be hopeless
about or does he mean he can't go on living anymore?

MRS. GRANDY

Probably both.

MISS VENUS

That's ridiculous. Mr. Werther, that's just the way of the world. There's nothing we can do to stop injustice. It's God's plan.

(Werther sobs louder. Grandy begins to gently pat his left hand.)

MRS. GRANDY

Now, Mr. Werther. There, there. Listen to me now. Is there anything going on at the asylum that we others don't know about but you do?

MR. WERTHER

Maybe.

MRS. GRANDY

What do you mean, Mr. Werther?

(Werther takes the handkerchief from his face and looks at Grandy.)

MR. WERTHER

You're very kind, Mrs. Grandy.

(Werther turns to Venus.)

MR. WERTHER

And you, Miss Venus, are a mean human being.

MISS VENUS

That's ridiculous. I love the common man. Everybody knows I love the common man. But I love the uncommon man even more.

(Venus' phony smile turns into a leer.)

MR. WERTHER

You do know you are a slut, don't you?

(Venus is shocked speechless.)

MR. BESTIOLE

(sitting up)

Let's hear it for sluts! Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!

MRS. GRANDY

Cock-a-doodle-do! Cock-a-doodle-do! Cock-a-doodle-do!

MISS VENUS

Stop that!

(They stop. Bestiole returns his
head to the table.)

MISS VENUS

You're all ridiculous. I'm not going to speak to anyone of
you.

(Venus crosses her arms.)

MR. WERTHER

Mrs. Grandy, have you always been a chicken-cock?

MRS. GRANDY

No, I once was a tea kettle.

MISS VENUS

Then, why don't you go boil us some water for tea?

MR. BESTIOLE

I thought you weren't going to speak to anyone of us.

MISS VENUS

I happen to have been speaking to Mrs. Grandy, not just
anyone of us.

MR. BESTIOLE

Like that's not ridiculous.

MR. WERTHER

Why did you retire your life as a tea kettle, Mrs. Grandy?

MRS. GRANDY

My blood pressure began to suffer and I could no longer tolerate the runny noses.

MISS VENUS

That's ridiculous.

MRS. GRANDY

Before the tea kettle, I spent a year or so as a frog. I did the most lovely frog call you could ever hear. I miss it sometimes.

(Grandy appears to search her memory.)

MR. WERTHER

That's lovely, Mrs. Grandy. Your saying that actually gives me a little hope.

(Werther rolls his hand over to embrace hers. Grandy smiles in appreciation.)

MRS. GRANDY

Thank you, Mr. Werther.

MISS VENUS

Stop it! Stop it! Stop it! That's ridiculous. We're getting off the point.

MR. BESTIOLE

Did we have a point?

(Venus gives him another whack.)

MRS. GRANDY

I like this conversation better.

MR. WERTHER

So do I.

MISS VENUS

Mr. Werther. You said that maybe you knew something about anything going on that we didn't know was going on? What is it?

MR. WERTHER

I think the State Inspector is coming to shut this place down. We'll all have no place to live. We'll be forced to sleep in the alleys of the city and eat out of the garbage pails.

(Werther starts crying again.)

MRS. GRANDY

There, there, Mr. Werther. You can sleep in the alley next to me if you want to, Mr. Werther. I'll take care of you.

MR. BESTIOLE

(sitting up)

I'm not eating out of garbage pails and that's final!

MISS VENUS

That's ridiculous. Don't worry about that. The government would simply transfer us to another asylum.

MRS. GRANDY

But what if there are no other asylums?

MR. WERTHER

(stops crying)

But there will be. Director Bushman plans to buy this facility and turn it into his own private asylum.

MRS. GRANDY

Then, we'll stay here.

MR. WERTHER

But we're not invited.

(Werther breaks down into huge sobs.)

MISS VENUS

Well, we'll see about that. I'll get an invitation to live in this new asylum even if I have to sleep with Bushman.

MR. BESTIOLE

But haven't you already, my slutty little angel?

(Venus slaps him with the flyswatter. Mrs. Grandy finally remembers and begins croaking like a frog. Blackout.)

ACT TWO

SCENE 1-1

*Director Bushman's office.
Bushman sits behind the desk.
Pusser stands pacing stage right.
MR. SELLERS, the Real Estate
Broker, sits across from Bushman
center stage. Mr. Sellers is a
dapper middle aged man wearing a
suit of thick vertical stripes,
yellow and white, with a pink
vest beneath. In his downstage
hand, he holds a straw hat along
with white gloves and a walking
stick. The three men have
tumblers filled with some sort of
brown liquid.*

BUSHMAN

Sellers, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for you to get rich. In exchange for you selling the asylum property to us at the rock bottom rate, we will not only pay your broker fees, but we will use your contractors to refurbish the facility into a luxury asylum. You'll make a fortune from the kickbacks you'll receive from your vendors.

SELLERS

But, Sir, no matter to whom I sold the property to, I'd get the broker fee anyway and at a higher amount if I sold the property at a higher price. Besides, I could make a similar deal with any new owner. What about a partnership instead?

BUSHMAN

Well, we've already developed a partnership with Pusser's family who have agreed to give us the money for the purchase and the refurbishment. I'm afraid we have no more room for partners.

SELLERS

Well, I don't think this proposal will work for me. My contractors in this area dominate their competitors and already pay me kickbacks for obtaining their services. Also, like I said, I could make a similar deal with any new owner. I've done this before and I'll do it again.

PUSSER

Maybe a small partnership, Director Bushman?

(Bushman shakes his head negatively.)

SELLERS

I could forgo the broker's fee and invest the kickbacks into the reconstruction costs if I was given a substantial partnership. I suppose I could even invest some of my personal capital as well? How much do you think this refurbishment is going to cost?

PUSSER

The facility has to look expensive. The wealthy will pay higher rates for their relatives to live in a palace instead of a dungeon.

(Bushman stands, thrusts his thumbs into the vest pockets beneath his frock coat, and begins to give his brief lecture as if it were an election speech.)

BUSHMAN

Rich families will come from heaven and hell to pay extravagant rates for us to hide away their lunatic relatives, their imbecilic nephews, their delusional aunts, their nymphomaniac nieces, their opium addicted uncles, their melancholy cousins, their senile grandparents, and their mad as a hatter children. We'll take them in and they will no longer have to suffer from public embarrassment nor the drudgery of having to care for them every bloody day and night.

(Sellers seems impressed. Nodding
along with Bushman.)

PUSSER

We plan to place a roadside advertisement nearby that reads
"If you were nuts, you'd be home now."

(Sellers doesn't laugh.)

PUSSER

Sorry. Just a little asylum humor.

BUSHMAN

(sitting)

Quite a little. I'm sorry for his remark, Mr. Sellers.

(Sellers waves away the problem.)

PUSSER

I have done the numbers. I can assure you the return on your
investment will be sizeable.

SELLERS

Hmm. Tempting. But just to beg the question, what's stopping
me from buying the facility, gathering my own investors, and
building my own luxury madhouse?

BUSHMAN

We would have you declared insane and locked up with our
violent lunatics.

PUSSER

Your first night, you would be killed in your sleep.

BUSHMAN

If you could get to sleep. Otherwise, they'll gut you where
you lay.

SELLERS

(stands)

I think we can come to an agreement, gentlemen. It would be
nice to be rich, all of us, together.

(Bushman and Pusser stand as well.)

PUSSER

Plus, just think of all the good we can do...together.

BUSHMAN

Yeah, right. So, do you want to get rich, Sellers?

PUSSER

Do you accept our proposal?

SELLERS

I'd be crazy not to.

(They all smile conspiratorially.
Blackout.)

ACT TWO

SCENE 1-2

The Staff Lounge. Nurse Fletcher sits on the stool. Her unlighted cigarette rides around her knuckles. Miss Papin and Jessie are back at their former places across from each other at the picnic table.

NURSE FLETCHER

What do you mean, you've reconsidered?

JESSIE

We ain't gettin' a fair shake in this deal. We either get a fair shake or I ain't havin' nothing to do with it.

NURSE FLETCHER

What's wrong with the deal? You get to keep your jobs. In fact, they're better jobs. You'll get higher wages, paid vacations, better meals (looks to Jessie) and better wine. Plus, the quality of the patients will be improved and so won't have to work as hard or as dangerously.

MISS PAPIN

We're worried about job security. Management could fire us six months after the new asylum opens.

(Dr. Maillard enters.)

DR. MAILLARD

Management could fire the both of you right now!

(Maillard crosses to the stool and points to it. Fletcher steps off the stool and crosses to the coffee urn. She pours herself a cup of coffee as Maillard takes his customary seat.)

NURSE FLETCHER

Sweetening the offer like that isn't going to help, Maillard.

JESSIE

I wanna know I still got a job here if I participate in this phony masquerade.

DR. MAILLARD

Hmm, Miss Papin teach you a new word, Jessie?

JESSIE

I want assurances or I don't have nothing to do with it.

DR. MAILLARD

Assurances? What assurances can I give you. I'm staff just like the three of you.

MISS PAPIN

Exactly. So, why aren't we talking with Bushman and Pusser?

JESSIE

Yeah, why are you the mouthpiece?

(Maillard searches for an answer.)

NURSE FLETCHER

They're asking a decent question, Maillard.

DR. MAILLARD

When Bushman and Pusser first discussed this idea with me, we all decided it would be better to have a buffer between management and staff.

MISS PAPIN

And you're the buffer?

NURSE FLETCHER

Obviously. If things go really wrong, Bushman and Pusser can always put the blame on you, Maillard.

DR. MAILLARD

Nothing is going to go wrong.

JESSIE

You can't guarantee that either, can you?

DR. MAILLARD

No, I guess I can't.

MISS PAPIN

We want contracts.

DR. MAILLARD

Contracts?

MISS PAPIN

We want written guarantees that we'll keep our jobs at a higher salary with increased benefits for at least the next five years.

JESSIE

Yeah, that's it or we don't have nothing to do with it.

(Maillard looks to Fletcher.)

NURSE FLETCHER

Sounds like a good idea to me. Maybe you could get yourself a contract too, Maillard? Doesn't hurt to try?

DR. MAILLARD

(sighing)

People. I will go to Bushman and Pusser with your requests. I will fight for you. But let me warn you, these are dangerous people we're working for. They are capable of anything. They are determined and desperate to become filthy rich.

JESSIE

(laughing)

Ain't we all?

(Blackout.)

ACT TWO

SCENE 1-3

The Staff Dining and Conference Room. The Marquis stands in the center behind the upstage side of the rectangular table. Mr. Werther sits next to him stage right and Mrs. Grandy sits next to him stage left. Mr. Bestiole stands upstage left in the doorway with his hands in his pockets. Miss Venus sits at the stage left end of the rectangular table. Peter stands behind her eating a cookie. The chair sitting at the stage right end of the rectangular table is empty. There is nothing on the table except the table cloth.

MARQUIS

(angry, saying each word individually)

You...must...not...sit...in...the...chair!

MISS VENUS

Why not? I deserve to sit at the head of the table.

MARQUIS

What is this "head of the table?" There is no "head of the table." This table has two ends.

MISS VENUS

This side is the head of the table. It must be the head of the table because I am sitting here.

MARQUIS

But you are not playing you. You are playing Miss Papin. Miss Papin doesn't sit at the table at all.

MISS VENUS

Why not? Why can't Miss Papin sit at the table. I'm playing Miss Papin and I deserve to sit at the head of the table.

MARQUIS

(screaming)

There is no "head of the table!"

MISS VENUS

Then, why am I sitting here?

(The Marquis thrusts his hands outward as if he were going to choke Venus by the neck. He begins to shake.)

PETER

Marquis, I can drag her out of the chair if you want me to. Can I?

BESTIOLE

No, let me! I want to drag her out of the chair!

MARQUIS

Silence!

(The Marquis calms himself.)

MARQUIS

(patiently)

Miss Papin brings in the food and serves the wine. You can not bring in the food and serve the wine if you are sitting in a chair.

MISS VENUS

Why not?

MARQUIS

Do you want to perform in Fellatio and Cunnilingus?

MISS VENUS

(sexy)

I usually do.

MARQUIS

Then, get out of that blasted chair and stand in the doorway!

MISS VENUS

But you're playing Director Bushman and you're not sitting in his chair.

(Venus points across to the empty chair. The Marquis crosses around to the chair and sits.)

MARQUIS

There, are you happy now? Will you please leave the chair? Do it or I'll have Peter and Bestiole drag you from the chair and throw you into the violent ward.

(Venus reluctantly stands and crosses to the upstage right doorway.)

MISS VENUS

At least, there would be some real men there.

MARQUIS

I am sure they would treat you in the manner to which you are accustomed.

MR. WERTHER

She's a very mean human being.

MRS. GRANDY

Very mean! And nasty too!

MARQUIS

Okay Peter, sit in the chair.

(Peter eagerly sits in the chair.)

MARQUIS

Now, I am playing Director Bushman. I will take the lead in this improvisatori. You follow along with what I say and play your parts. Understand?

ALL

Yes, Marquis.

MARQUIS

Bien. Now, Peter plays Mr. Pusser. He says very little, but always in agreement with me, the Director. Also, Peter, it is imperative that you keep your hands out of your pockets until the proper time and off the food at all the times. Understand, Peter?

PETER

Yes, Marquis.

MARQUIS

Mr. Werther, you are playing Doctor Maillard. You can also approve of whatever I say about the therapy done here. Hold off on the crying until the proper moment. Also, you must act like you are quite charming unlike the real Doctor Maillard. Understand, Mr. Werther?

MR. WERTHER

Yes, Marquis.

MRS. GRANDY

Mr. Werther is quite charming. And a gentleman, too.

(Grandy holds out her hand to
Werther and he takes it.)

MARQUIS

Mrs. Grandy, you play Nurse Fletcher.

MISS VENUS

I should be playing Nurse Fletcher. I look much sexier in a nurses uniform than the clothing a maid wears.

MARQUIS

But you were born to play Miss Papin. You both share certain character traits. How should I say?

(Pregnant pause.)

MRS. GRANDY

They're both mean and nasty human beings?

MARQUIS

Bien. Comme ca.

MISS VENUS

At least I'm not some fat old lunatic who thinks she's a rooster.

MARQUIS

Ignore her. Mrs. Grandy, as Nurse Fletcher, you say very little and do not "cock-a-doodle-do" until the right moment. Understand, Mrs. Grandy?

MRS. GRANDY

Yes, Marquis. Do I get to do my frog call and my tea kettle?

MARQUIS

We will see.

MRS. GRANDY

Because I've been practicing.

MARQUIS

Bien. Now, Bestiole.

MR. BESTIOLE

Yes, Marquis?

MARQUIS

You are to play Jessie, the Attendant. He speaks in a manner much like yourself. You are both from low origin and both have different, but base, desires. However, you will greet the Inspector at the front door and bring him here to us. Understand, Bestiole?

MR. BESTIOLE

Yes, Marquis.

MARQUIS

And Bestiole, no bugs in the wine or in the food.

MR. BESTIOLE

I was told I would be able to eat my bugs.

MARQUIS

Later, later when you are cued to start eating the bugs.

MR. BESTIOLE

What if I see one crawling around?

MARQUIS

(considers this)

Okay. If you see one crawling around, you can kill it and eat it.

MR. BESTIOLE

Sometimes, I do like to eat them when they still alive.

MARQUIS

Fine. Whatever you want to do. Fine. Bien. Understand, Mr. Bestiole?

MR. BESTIOLE

Yes, Marquis.

MARQUIS

Okay, Miss Venus?

MISS VENUS

Finally getting to me last, eh?

MARQUIS

I'm sure you are accustomed to that.

MISS VENUS

Not really. I usually get what I want first.

MARQUIS

Then, hopefully, what you will eventually get last in this life will be what you deserve.

MISS VENUS

Huh?

MARQUIS

(ignoring her question)

Now, as Miss Papin, you will bring in the food and the wine. Then, you will pour the wine into each of the glasses. Try as much as humanly possible to be a little charming. Understand, Miss Venus?

MRS. GRANDY

Mr. Werther is always charming.

(Werther nods his thanks.)

MISS VENUS

Yeah, I'll be charming. Maybe I should speak with a phony French accent. That would make me seem charming. As charming as a dead rat on toast.

MR. BESTIOLE

Yummy!

(Blackout.)

ACT TWO

SCENE 2

The Staff Dining and Conference Room. The rectangular table has been elegantly decorated with candelabra, crystal, china, and the finest silver. The four place settings and chairs exist as usual with the addition of a fifth setting and chair in the center of the downstage end of the table.

The Marquis, dressed in a frock coat but still wearing the mop wig on his head, sits in Bushman's chair tapping the side of a glass with a knife. Peter, wearing an oversized three piece suit, sits in Pusser's chair with his hands in his pockets. Werther, wearing a lab coat, sits in Maillard's chair and Grandy, wearing a nurse's uniform, in Fletcher's. They are holding hands. The fifth chair is unoccupied. Venus, wearing a maid's outfit, stands leaning in the upstage right doorway playing with her fingernails. Bestiole, wearing the white smock and pants, stands stage left of the upstage left doorway, holding his flyswatter and looking around for bugs.

*The Marquis' monotonous tapping
is all that's heard until Bushman
enters wearing a patient gown
over his underwear.*

BUSHMAN

The patients and the rest of the staff are all asleep in "B"
ward.

MISS VENUS

Looking pretty desirable, Director Bushman.

BUSHMAN

(ignoring her)

Let's get ready.

(The Marquis stops his tapping.)

MARQUIS

We are ready.

(The Marquis begins his tapping
again.)

BUSHMAN

Stop that tapping!

(The Marquis stops his tapping.)

MARQUIS

Why? Does it bother you?

BUSHMAN

Yes, it bothers me.

MISS VENUS

Threaten to throw him in with the violent patients. That
might get him to stop.

MARQUIS

Shut your hole. As if that were a possibility.

(Pusser enters through the upstage left doorway. He wears a patient gown over his underwear too.)

PUSSER

The Inspector has arrived. He'll be at the front door any second now.

(The Marquis pulls the mop wig off his head and pockets it. Peter pulls his hands out of his pockets. Werther and Grandy stop holding hands. Venus stands up straight and adjusts her apron. Bestiole puts his flyswatter into his back pocket.)

BUSHMAN

Okay, let's go. Good luck everybody. Remember, you're not loonies until you get your cues.

(Bushman and Pusser exit through the upstage left doorway. Bestiole follows them out.)

MARQUIS

Okay, cast. Remember to follow my lead at all the times. Break your legs!

MISS VENUS

Don't get me started...

(Venus exits. Offstage, a door slams shut and voices can be heard.)

MR. BESTIOLE

(offstage)

Welcome, Mr. Inspector, Sir. My name is Jessie. The Director and the staff are waiting for you in the dining room.

INSPECTOR

(offstage)

Thank you, my good man.

(Bestiole enters upstage left, escorting the INSPECTOR, a thin man with glasses carrying a brown briefcase. He wears a brown corduroy jacket with matching pants, a pair of black shoes, and a burgundy tie over a white shirt. Bestiole takes his hat and coat and exits.)

MARQUIS

(without his French accent)

Greetings, Mr. Inspector, Sir. Welcome to our humble asylum.

(The Marquis, Werther, Grandy, and Peter stand.)

INSPECTOR

Thank you, Sir. You must be Director Bushman?

(The Inspector crosses to the Marquis and shakes his hand.)

MARQUIS

May I introduce Doctor Maillard, Nurse Fletcher, and our Controller Mr. Pusser?

(The Inspector shakes each of their hands in turn.)

MARQUIS

Please sit down. Dinner is almost ready.

(The Inspector begins to sit.)

INSPECTOR

After you, Nurse Fletcher.

(Grandy curtseys and sits. The Inspector sits in the fifth chair facing upstage. The others sit.)

INSPECTOR

I didn't expect such a formal dinner. I would have dressed more appropriately.

MARQUIS

It is not often we have someone special visiting us.

INSPECTOR

Oh, thanks, but I'm nobody special. I'm just a civil servant.

MARQUIS

(using his French accent)

A citizen like the rest of us, you might say?

INSPECTOR

Yes, yes, indeed. Say, do you have an accent?

MARQUIS

(clearing his throat)

No, just a little frog in my throat.

MRS. GRANDY

Croak. Croak. Croak.

(Everyone laughs politely.)

INSPECTOR

That's a very good impression of a frog call, Nurse Fletcher.

MRS. GRANDY

Thank you, Sir.

MARQUIS

(covering)

We used to have a patient here that thought she was a frog and used to croak all the time. Nurse Fletcher makes us laugh from time to time by remembering her and imitating her croaking.

MRS. GRANDY

I can do a chicken-cock too.

MARQUIS

Perhaps, later, Nurse Fletcher.

INSPECTOR

(being gracious)

Promise not to forget?

MRS. GRANDY

Oh, I won't.

INSPECTOR

So, how are things going here with Doctor Pinel's "moral treatment" method? Is everyone adjusting well?

MARQUIS

Perfectly.

MR. WERTHER

Outstanding.

MRS. GRANDY

Lovely.

PETER

Fantastic.

(Peter puts his hands into his pockets.)

INSPECTOR

That's good to hear. Some of the other State Asylums have reported difficulties with the change. But the problems seem to be more with the staff than the patients.

MARQUIS

We've achieved success because we've adopted some improvements to the method.

INSPECTOR

Improvements? By your design, Doctor Maillard?

MR. WERTHER

Yes, by my design, and with Nurse Fletcher's assistance, I might add.

(Werther and Grandy nod appreciatively to each other.)

MARQUIS

Doctor Maillard has developed a "soothing system" that accentuates the best elements of Doctor Pinel's "moral treatment" method.

MR. WERTHER

My improvements have sought to make everyone more content, more happy, more hopeful.

INSPECTOR

What inspired you to make such improvements? Your own research, perhaps?

MR. WERTHER

Not exactly. I was inspired by other research. Have you ever heard of the system of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether?

INSPECTOR

Hmm. I don't think so, but the names do sound familiar.

MARQUIS

(distracting the subject)

Would you like some wine, Inspector?

INSPECTOR

Well, if you are all having some? Yes, I suppose.

MARQUIS

(yelling)

Miss Papin, bring in the wine.

(Venus enters carrying a crystal decanter of wine. She's fashioned the maid's outfit to be as sexy as possible by wearing nothing under the apron. She crosses to the Inspector.)

MISS VENUS

(sexy and suggestive)

Greetings, Inspector. May I pour you some wine?

INSPECTOR

Yes, Miss...Papin it was?

(Venus pours his glass to the brim with wine.)

MISS VENUS

It was and it is, In-spec-tor.

INSPECTOR

Thank you, Miss Papin.

(Venus goes around, via the upstage side, filling the others' wine glasses from the Marquis to Peter.)

INSPECTOR

So, pray tell me more about this "soothing system," Doctor Maillard?

MR. WERTHER

Well, as you know, our patients come from different walks of life in this cruel, cruel, cruel world of ours.

(Werther pulls out a handkerchief.)

INSPECTOR

Yes, yes, of course.

MR. WERTHER

There's no peace anywhere. Babies are stillborn. Parents abuse their children. The elderly are forgotten. There are natural disasters and wars. The wicked are rewarded and the good are punished. The rich live in splendor while the poor starve and struggle. Then, they are blamed for being poor and told they are subhuman or unpatriotic. Oh, it's just too much. I can't go on.

(Werther breaks down sobbing.)

INSPECTOR

I understand, Doctor Maillard. It is a sad world we live in, but we must do our best to make conditions as better as we are capable of doing so.

MISS VENUS

You're the one that got him started.

(Venus exits.)

MARQUIS

Here, here. That calls for a toast. Raise your glasses, everyone.

(They all stand and raise their glasses, even Peter who takes his hands out of his pockets to do so. The Inspector does so awkwardly, spilling some wine.)

INSPECTOR

Oh, dear me, I've spilled some wine.

MARQUIS

No matter. Everything has to be cleaned eventually.

PETER

Costs the same whether it is wine or blood.

INSPECTOR

I suppose that's true enough.

MARQUIS

To our special guest and fellow citizen, the Inspector. May your inspection be fruitful.

(They all drink, save Grandy.)

MRS. GRANDY

Cock-a-doodle-do!

(Grandy drinks. They all look at her.)

MRS. GRANDY

I thought this might be the appropriate time to show you my chicken-cock cock-a-doodle-do.

INSPECTOR

Thank you, Nurse Fletcher. Most entertaining.

(They all sit. Peter puts his hands back into his pockets.)

MARQUIS

(yelling)

Miss Papin, you may serve the dinner now!

(Venus comes to the doorway.)

MISS VENUS

I'm going to need a little help bringing the food out. Care to help me, Inspector?

(The Inspector begins to rise.)

MARQUIS

No, no. Inspector, you are our guest.

(Venus waves her fingers at the Inspector flirtatiously.)

MARQUIS

(yelling)

Jessie!

(Bestiole enters upstage left.)

MR. BESTIOLE

Yes, Mar...Director Bushman?

MARQUIS

Go give Miss Papin a hand in the kitchen.

(Bestiole crosses downstage and
back up to exit upstage right.)

INSPECTOR

Mr. Pusser, your remark reminds me of a question I planned to ask? Has implementing the "moral treatment," and for that matter, the "soothing system" improvements, led to an increase in costs?

(The Inspector faces Peter who looks confused. Unseen by the Inspector, the Marquis mimes taking hands out of pockets to Peter. Peter does and sits up straight.)

PETER

Not that I'm aware of.

MARQUIS

Inspector, Mr. Pusser is a man of few words. He's an accountant after all. They're only good with numbers. Right, Mr. Pusser?

(All heads turn to Peter.)

PETER

38, 24, 36, they're my favorite numbers. Oh, and 69 as well. That's a good one.

INSPECTOR

(laughs politely)

That's quite funny, Mr. Pusser. But perhaps a bit bawdy for my tastes and in the presence of Nurse Fletcher?

PETER

Sorry.

(Feeling criticized, Peter returns his hands to his pockets, which summons a discrete smile.)

INSPECTOR

Don't feel bad. I understand you're only trying to make me feel welcome and comfortable. I appreciate it from all of you. Thank you. I've rarely been welcomed as nicely as this.

(Venus screams offstage.)

MISS VENUS

(offstage)

Stop that, you filthy little thing you!

MARQUIS

Bestiole, come here immediately!

INSPECTOR

Bestiole? He told me his name was "Jessie?"

MARQUIS

That's his last name. Jessie Bestiole, That's him.

(Bestiole and Venus enter.)

MARQUIS

Now, what happened you two?

MISS VENUS

This cretin assaulted me. He touched me someplace he shouldn't have touched me.

MARQUIS

Jessie?

(Bestiole hangs his head.)

MR. BESTIOLE

But you told me to give her a hand in the kitchen?

(The Marquis shakes his head. Venus pulls the flyswatter from Bestiole's back pocket and prepares to swing it at him.)

MISS VENUS

Why, I ought to...

MR. BESTIOLE

(smiling)

Do it. You know you want to.

(Venus stops herself.)

MISS VENUS

No, I won't do it. You'd like it too much.

MARQUIS

Give me that thing!

(Venus hands the Marquis the flyswatter.)

MARQUIS

Jessie, hold out your hands. Palms up.

(Bestiole holds out his hands palms up. The Marquis slaps his hands three times with the flyswatter. Bestiole frowns and shakes his hands to alleviate the pain. Then, Bestiole reaches out to retrieve his flyswatter.)

MARQUIS

I'll keep this for the time being. Now, help Miss Papin bring out the food.

(Venus and Jessie exit.)

MARQUIS

Sometimes, the staff acts like the patients.

(The Inspector nods in understanding.)

PETER

And sometimes, the patients act like the staff.

(The Marquis, Werther and Grandy nod in agreement.)

MARQUIS

That too.

(Bestiole enters struggling to carry a silver serving dish with a huge domed cover. Venus follows carrying another.)

MARQUIS

Ah, dinner is served.

MISS VENUS

Here's your grub.

(Bestiole crosses downstage to sit his dish on the stage right side of the table. Venus crosses downstage to sit her dish on the stage left side of the table. The Inspector switches his head from his left side to his right side to watch her every move.)

MISS VENUS

(to the Inspector)

Eat up, honey. Who knows, it might be your last meal? But save a little room for dessert. I bet you like a little cream in your coffee?

(Venus bats her eyes at him suggestively. The Inspector smiles, feeling complimented.)

MARQUIS

Thank you, Miss Papin. And thank you, Jessie.

(Venus crosses to exit upstage right. Bestiole starts to follow her, but she stops and points for him to go to the other side of the room. Bestiole storms downstage and across to the upstage left doorway, but stops. He sees a bug on the floor, steps on it, peels it off the bottom of his shoe, waves it at the group sitting at the table, pops it in his mouth, and exits. The Inspector was too busy watching Venus exit to notice Bestiole's demonstration.)

MARQUIS

And the main course is?

(The Marquis pulls the lid off of the dish close to him revealing the roasted carcass of a small animal with an apple in its mouth.)

MARQUIS

Oh, excellent. My favorite. Rabbit au Chat.

(Werther, Grandy, and Peter make appreciative sounds.)

INSPECTOR

Rabbit au Chat. Cat Rabbit?

MARQUIS

The name is merely a reference to the sauce.

INSPECTOR

I see.

MARQUIS

Peter, lift the lid on that dish. Let's see what else we have to enjoy.

(Peter takes his hands out of his pockets and stands to lift the lid off the dish close to him revealing a vegetable dish of some kind.)

PETER

It looks like blood, mushrooms, and weeds.

MARQUIS

Ah, yes, my second favorite dish. Toadstools au Sang, served on a bed of endive.

(Again, Werther, Grandy, and Peter make appreciative sounds.)

INSPECTOR

Toadstools?

MARQUIS

Merely a chef's morbid attempt at humor. Oh, and, of course, the blood is also a reference to the sauce.

INSPECTOR

Sounds tasty to me. I'm game.

MARQUIS

You certainly could be.

(The Marquis picks up a serving spoon and fork. The Inspector holds out his plate and the Marquis serves him some meat. Peter has picked up a serving spoon and fork also. When the Inspector turns his plate to him, Peter serves him some vegetables.)

The Inspector puts the plate in front of him, picks up his own fork and knife, and begins eating. The others look at him expectantly.)

MARQUIS

You like?

INSPECTOR

Delicious sauce. However, the meat's a little stringy, but I like stringy. Thank you.

MARQUIS

Try the mushrooms.

(The Inspector does and makes a sound of rapturous enjoyment.)

INSPECTOR

Equally superb. Unusual, but superb. Never had endive like this. The sauce smells particularly pungent. Did your cook put marjoram in the sauce?

MARQUIS

Possibly. Miss Papin puts her heart, her soul, and perhaps a few other body parts into everything she does.

BESTIOLE

(offstage)

Director Bushman?

(Bestiole enters upstage left awkwardly carrying a huge metal pail containing a steaming black liquid. He also has a thick coil of rope over his shoulder.)

MARQUIS

Yes, Jessie?

BESTIOLE

The tar is ready. Where do you want me to put it?

MISS VENUS
(offstage)

Director Bushman?

(Venus enters upstage right
carrying a large sack.)

MARQUIS

Yes, Miss Papin?

(Venus reaches into the sack and
pulls out a huge clump of
feathers.)

MISS VENUS

The feathers are ready. Where do you want me to put them?

(Everyone looks at the Inspector
who begins to laugh.)

INSPECTOR

Oh, you are all the most amusing people I have ever met. Just think, you've gone to all this trouble to entertain me. Tar and feathers. Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether. I get it now. You're referencing the Edgar Allan Poe story about patients taking over an asylum. How marvelously funny. Hysterical even. How divinely droll.

(All of the others join him in
laughing.)

MARQUIS

Yes, Inspector, and more divine is that the joke is on you!

(The Marquis whacks the Inspector
over the head with the flyswatter.
The Inspector stops laughing.
Werther starts crying
uncontrollably and Grandy starts
cock-a-doodle-doing repeatedly.
Peter, with his hands in his
pockets, begins moving them up and
down, laughing manically.)

Bestiole comes up behind the Inspector and throws the rope over his head, Venus helps Bestiole tie the Inspector to the chair.)

INSPECTOR

What's going on?

(The Marquis and Bestiole turn the chair around to face downstage. Venus slides into the Inspector's lap, placing her arms around his shoulders.)

MISS VENUS

Do I get to undress him prior to the tar and feathers?

(The Inspector becomes horror stricken.)

BUSHMAN

(offstage)

Stop! Stop everything!

(Bushman, Fletcher, and Jessie enter upstage left as Pusser, Maillard, and Papin enter from upstage right. They are all wearing patients gowns over their underwear. Fletcher grabs Grandy. Jessie grabs Peter and pulls his arms out of his pockets. Pusser pulls Venus off of the Inspector's lap. Maillard grabs Werther. Papin holds her potato peeler as a weapon, pointing it threateningly at the Marquis. In response, the Marquis drops the flyswatter as if it were a dangerous weapon and puts up his hands.)

BUSHMAN

Inspector? Thank God we escaped in time. Untie him this instant, I demand you.

(Bestiole and Venus begin to untie the Inspector.)

INSPECTOR

Escape? What's happened?

BUSHMAN

The most horrible experience ever! The patients took over the asylum and took us captive.

PUSSER

Damn this worn out infrastructure! I knew that crumbling crummy concrete wouldn't hold those iron bars for too much longer!

DR. MAILLARD

Damn Pinel's "moral treatment" method!

NURSE FLETCHER

Thanks be to God for Miss Papin and her potato peeler. It proved a God send.

(Untied, the Inspector stands.)

INSPECTOR

A potato peeler a God send?

JESSIE

We was able to carve our way out of the cell we was locked in by using Miss Papin's potato peeler to dig out the no good crumbling crummy concrete.

(Papin points to the meat dish.)

MISS PAPIN

Oh, my God in heaven, they've skinned and roasted Catterina!

(Fletcher points to the vegetable dish.)

NURSE FLETCHER

Look! Toadstools!

BUSHMAN

Inspector, did you eat any of this food?

INSPECTOR

Yes, I ate some of each dish. I was told that was rabbit and this was mushrooms.

BUSHMAN

We've got to get you to a hospital to get your stomach pumped quickly!

(The Inspector falls back into his chair.)

BUSHMAN

Get these lunatics back to their cells! Go! Go, you maniacs! Get back to your cells or I'll put each and everyone of you into chains and flog you mercilessly myself!

(Fletcher pulls Grandy away from Werther. Maillard pulls Werther away from Grandy. Werther and Grandy try to reach out to each other, but fail. Fletcher and Grandy exit upstage left. Maillard and Werther exit upstage right. Jessie pulls Peter and Bestiole out the upstage left doorway. Pusser exits with Venus upstage right. Papin, still using her potato peeler as a weapon, wrangles the Marquis out the upstage right doorway.)

INSPECTOR

Maybe I'll just vomit and you won't have to take me to the hospital?

(The Inspector holds his stomach, but Bushman gets him to his feet.)

BUSHMAN

We can't take any chances with toadstools!

(Bushman pulls the Inspector's arm around his shoulder and begins to carry him toward the upstage left doorway.)

INSPECTOR

Okay, if you insist. Thank you.

BUSHMAN

And on the way, I'll tell you all about our decaying infrastructure and our chronically backed up sewage.

INSPECTOR

Oh, the thought of sewage is making me sicker!

BUSHMAN

The pipes back up at least twice a month. You should see the toilets when that happens. The kitchen sink too!

INSPECTOR

Oh, dear God!

(They exit.)

BUSHMAN

(offstage)

Oh, and don't let me forget to tell you all about our cockroach problem. (The Inspector moans.) It will only get worse now that we don't have a cat.

(Blackout.)

ACT THREE

SCENE 1

The Staff Dining and Conference Room. Bushman, Dr. Maillard, Nurse Fletcher, and Pusser are all dressed in their usual clothing and sitting in their usual seats looking through their individual piles of files. The table is laid with the silver tea service and the place settings. There is a cookie plate in front of Maillard with one cookie remaining. No candelabras. Offstage, the sounds of noisy construction can be heard: nail hammers nail, iron bars and boards fall on one another, and, occasionally, jackhammers hammer. At best, the staff members have to yell at each other to be heard.

DR. MAILLARD

That racket is making me insane!

NURSE FLETCHER

Would you like your straight jacket now or after lunch, Doctor Maillard?

DR. MAILLARD

I'd like lunch. Maybe a sharp knife to stab through my ear drums?

NURSE FLETCHER

How about a potato peeler?

(Maillard reaches for the last cookie.)

DR. MAILLARD

My heart is racing. All I've had is cookies and tea all morning.

(Maillard devours the cookie.)

BUSHMAN

The tea? No bugs?

(Bushman looks at Pusser who shakes his head in response.)

PUSSER

No bugs.

(Fletcher stands to lift the lid of the teapot and looks inside.)

NURSE FLETCHER

No bugs.

(Fletcher sits.)

BUSHMAN

What did you say?

NURSE FLETCHER
(yelling louder)

No bugs!

BUSHMAN

Thank you. Glad to hear it.

(The jackhammer stops. Some pipes crash together.)

NURSE FLETCHER

Despite the noise, I must say, fall has arrived and it's beautiful outside. Plus, it's much more pleasant and it feels so much less dangerous with the violent patients shipped out to the other asylums.

DR. MAILLARD

Yes, and the ambulatory, non-violent patients will be gone by the end of today.

NURSE FLETCHER

What about the trustees, so-to-speak, the Marquis and his group?

BUSHMAN

They'll remain here.

PUSSER

For now.

DR. MAILLARD

For now? I thought you promised them they could stay and be integrated into the new asylum free of charge?

BUSHMAN

They can. They can stay until the paying patients begin to fill up the luxury suites. We can't have an empty asylum when prospective customers begin to arrive to peruse the facility on behalf of their mad relatives.

NURSE FLETCHER

Then what?

PUSSER

They can chose another State Asylum or the city streets.

DR. MAILLARD

Do you think that's fair?

(Bushman and Pusser laugh at this.
Soon, Fletcher joins in, and
eventually, so does Maillard.)

MISS PAPIN

More cookies?

(Miss Papin enters with two plates of cookies. She crosses to the downstage side of the table and places the plates in front of Maillard and Fletcher. Maillard reaches for a cookie immediately.)

PUSSER

Awfully nice of you to bring us more cookies, Miss Papin. Thank you for being so considerate.

MISS PAPIN

Ya gotta eat.

DR. MAILLARD

If I was a diabetic, I'd be in a coma by now. When do you suppose lunch will be ready, Miss Papin?

MISS PAPIN

Don't start with me. Today's stew is on the stove cooking. When it's done, I'll let you know.

BUSHMAN

Boiling the hell out of the meat as usual, Miss Papin?

MISS PAPIN

You know, I was in a good mood when I came in here. Don't you start with me either!

PUSSER

Miss Papin, how is Catterina feeling?

MISS PAPIN

To this day, she's still spooked since we locked her up in the closet all day long the day the Inspector came.

DR. MAILLARD

But that was months ago.

NURSE FLETCHER

Just think how long a month is in a cat's life?

(Maillard considers this.)

MISS PAPIN

But she's getting better, day by day.

PUSSER

Thank goodness for that.

NURSE FLETCHER

Has she been catching any bugs?

MISS PAPIN

Ha. She hasn't had a bug in weeks. Bestiole acts like he's on a mission from God. He beats her to them every time.

(Papin starts to leave.)

MISS PAPIN

I'll put on some more water for tea.

BUSHMAN

Please make sure there's no bugs in the tea before you serve it to us this time.

MISS PAPIN

If you remember, Director Bushman, the bugs were in the teapot, not the tea kettle.

(Papin exits.)

BUSHMAN

She's still a horrible woman.

MISS PAPIN

(offstage)

I heard that!

(The four cringe.)

DR. MAILLARD

Speaking of locking things up, are we still going to have lockable cells in case one of the rich patients suddenly goes berserk?

BUSHMAN

Oh, yes. State law says every asylum, even the private institutions, must have some lockable cells for just that occasion.

PUSSER

As you know, the "B" ward is the best of the lockable cells, so we're going to keep them as lockable cells for the time being.

BUSHMAN

We'll clean them up. Remove the debris from the cells, paint the walls, oil the locks, replace the smashed toilets, put in fresh linen over the beds, and install curtains.

NURSE FLETCHER

Curtains?

PUSSER

We agreed that by putting in curtains over the bars, it would look less severe to any visitors.

BUSHMAN

Besides, this is going to be a luxury asylum. If we're going to turn the "C" ward cells into suites worthy of a palace with amenities comparable to a four star hotel, then we can't have the rest of the building looking like a prison.

PUSSER

In with the niceties, out with the badities. Those jackhammers you hear are ripping out the iron bars from the "C" ward and what's left from the "A" ward.

NURSE FLETCHER

No bars in the suites?

BUSHMAN

We're replacing the bars with special doors designed for just this purpose.

DR. MAILLARD

What purpose?

BUSHMAN

To keep the rich loonies locked in without making it look like we're locking them in.

NURSE FLETCHER

Again? I don't understand?

PUSSER

We're having metal doors with heavy locks installed into the entrances of every suite. However, the exteriors and interiors of the metal doors will be covered in wood to give the appearance of a simple, ordinary, but luxurious, door.

DR. MAILLARD

Brilliant!

NURSE FLETCHER

What's going on with the "A" ward?

BUSHMAN

We're transforming the "A" ward into a multi-purpose room. We will be able to hold the art classes and the yoga classes there instead of in the cafeteria.

PUSSER

And, I might add, at some considerable addition to our capital costs.

NURSE FLETCHER

Now, that's an outstanding decision!

BUSHMAN

Yes, I think it will impress the prospective clients.

PUSSER

And increase the overall equity of the property. If we ever decide to sell.

(They all nod in agreement.)

MR. SELLERS

(offstage)

Lunchtime! 30 minutes!

(All the offstage construction noise stops immediately. Sellers enters through the upstage left doorway wearing a hard hat and carrying a clipboard.)

MR. SELLERS

Is lunch ready yet?

PUSSER

Not yet, Mr. Sellers. Uh, Mr. Sellers, are you actually giving the workers a lunch break?

MR. SELLERS

Yes, of course.

PUSSER

Well, I may have to take this out of their paychecks.

MR. SELLERS

Not if you want the kickback money to keep rolling in.

PUSSER

But it's the principle of the thing. We hire laborers to work, not to eat.

MR. SELLERS

You best not pursue this, Mr. Pusser. Your principles may wind up with an iron bar falling on your head.

(Pusser considers this.)

PUSSER

Point taken.

(Sellers crosses to the downstage side of the table and takes the center seat.)

MR. SELLERS

Yum, cookies.

(Sellers takes a few and begins eating them ravenously and then swivels in his chair to face Bushman.)

MR. SELLERS

Bushman, I got to talk to you about that frog loony, the Marquis.

BUSHMAN

Yes, but try to do so with your mouth not so full.

DR. MAILLARD

That's one of the first things we teach the lunatics around here, Mr. Sellers, not to talk with their mouths full.

(Sellers swallows his mouthful.)

NURSE FLETCHER

And to always zip up their flies.

(Sellers looks down and zips up his pants.)

MR. SELLERS

Thank you for your discretion, Nurse Fletcher.

(Fletcher nods her welcome. Sellers looks back up at Bushman.)

MR. SELLERS

That frog maniac is pushing my limits.

BUSHMAN

How so?

MR. SELLERS

He and that jack off, and I mean jack off, that he has for an assistant keep interrupting our work in "A" ward. He insists we build a stage in the far corner of the ward.

PUSSER

And all that time the Marquis insisted he didn't need a stage?

DR. MAILLARD

You give people an inch...

NURSE FLETCHER

They take over the room.

MR. SELLERS

What am I supposed to do? I keep telling him a stage is not in the blueprints. He keeps asking to see the blueprints and I have to tell him the blueprints are none of his business. Then, he starts swearing at me in French. Can't we lock him up in "B" ward? Him and his jack off assistant? My men are getting sick of seeing that little creep stroke himself in public.

BUSHMAN

Actually, I think a stage is a good idea.

PUSSER

The "prospectives" may find it attractive. Culture is always attractive to the rich and pretentious.

BUSHMAN

Let's add the stage to the blueprints. Give them some curtains too.

PUSSER

This will undoubtedly increase our capital costs.

BUSHMAN

So be it. The impression it will make on the prospective customers will be worth the extra investment.

DR. MAILLARD

But you won't need a stage if you're planning on getting rid of the Marquis eventually.

BUSHMAN

Good point.

PUSSER

There's always some fool who thinks they can put on a play.

NURSE FLETCHER

Absolutely.

(Papin enters carrying the tea kettle, crossing to Sellers's position.)

MISS PAPIN

Ahem. Excuse me.

MR. SELLERS

No, no, excuse me, Madame.

(Sellers stands up so she can reach the teapot and refill it.)

MISS PAPIN

Mademoiselle, if we're being French. I never married.

BUSHMAN

How many lucky men missed out on her for an opportunity?

MISS PAPIN

Be careful, Director. I have boiling water in my control.

(Sellers moves behind Bushman, tapping his shoulder. Bushman turns around to face Sellers.)

MR. SELLERS

I have to meet with you privately today, Bushman.

BUSHMAN

Tell me now.

MR. SELLERS

No. This is business. It demands privacy. Believe me.

BUSHMAN

Okay, after lunch.

MR. SELLERS
(satisfied)

Alrighty.

(Papin finishes filling the teapot
and steps away from the chair.)

MISS PAPIN
You may have your seat back, Sir.

MR. SELLERS
Thank you, Mademoiselle, ma Cherie.

(Flattered, Papin giggles and exits
happily.)

DR. MAILLARD
So, Mr. Sellers, you speak frog, but you don't like the
French. Quite intriguing. Would you like to talk to me about
your feelings towards the French? Privately, of course.

MR. SELLERS
No, thank you. I must confess I'm French on my mother's side,
but she didn't speak frog around the house and so she wasn't
in the habit of cussing me out in the French language.

NURSE FLETCHER
What language was she in the habit of cussing you out in?

JESSIE
(offstage)

Mail's in.

(Jessie enters the room through the
upstage left doorway carrying his
usual bundles of mail. He circles
around the table, handing piles to
each staff member.)

JESSIE
Director Bushman, Dr. Maillard, Nurse Fletcher, and Mr.
Pusser. There you go. It's all yours now. Say, Director?

BUSHMAN

Yes. Go ahead. Speak.

JESSIE

Now that I'm kinda special staff here. Do I get to chow down with youse guys at this table?

PUSSER

I object to the phrase "special staff." But you may dine with Miss Papin in her kitchen rather than the Staff Lounge or the cafeteria.

BUSHMAN

Is that acceptable?

JESSIE

Yea, I guess so.

(Jessie turns to Pusser.)

JESSIE

Mr. Pusser?

PUSSER

Yes, Jessie? Go ahead. Speak.

JESSIE

I been lettin' the Marquis keep his mop head, but it's gettin' really, really, really filthy.

PUSSER

Let's let the Marquis worry about his own filth.

NURSE FLETCHER

I believe the Marquis is quite endlessly aware of his filth.

JESSIE

And I been lettin' Bestiole keep his bugs. He's got a lot of them now and he's been organizing them on top of his dresser by what kind of bugs they is. I don't care. I've seen worse things, but I'm a little worried about Catterina. Ya know, a cat has to have some bug meat once in a while to stay sane. It's just natural you know?

PUSSER

Catterina is fed the best of scraps from both the staff dining room and the patients' cafeteria. Don't you worry about it.

JESSIE

Okay, if you insist.

BUSHMAN

We insist.

PUSSER

You may leave now, Jessie.

JESSIE

See ya in church.

(Jessie leaves upstage left as
Bushman appears to become outraged
at another letter.)

BUSHMAN

Damn. Damn. Damn.

(The rest look up at him.)

PUSSER

Bad news again? We do have the title to the property, don't we?

BUSHMAN

Yes, yes, it's not that. It's that damn State Inspector. He's coming for another visit.

PUSSER

But we're not even open yet?

BUSHMAN

Yea, I know.

DR. MAILLARD

He inspects both state and private asylums?

PUSSER

Yes, it's a small department for an even smaller endeavor.

NURSE FLETCHER

So, what's the big deal? He'll just see the place is under reconstruction?

PUSSER

At worst, he'll offer some suggestions, point out anything that's against regulations, and leave. That will be that.

BUSHMAN

He's written something strange in his letter. He says he knows what we did last summer and he wants to talk about it.

(They all look at one another with concern.)

PUSSER

Guess, we're going to have to bribe him after all?

(The others nod in agreement.)

MISS PAPIN

(offstage)

Lunchtime! Food's coming. Watch out!

(Jessie comes running in from upstage left and crosses downstage to exit upstage right. There's a huge crash offstage.)

MISS PAPIN

(offstage)

You idiot!

JESSIE

(offstage)

Sorry, Miss Papin.

(Blackout.)

ACT THREE

SCENE 2-1

*Director Bushman's office.
Bushman sits at his desk. Sellers
sits across from him. No drinks
this time, just business.*

MR. SELLERS

I know about the potato peeler hoax and the masquerade you held for the Inspector's benefit.

(Sellers pulls a potato peeler out of his pocket and throws it on the desk. Bushman picks it up and examines it.)

BUSHMAN

One of your own or did you swipe it from Miss Papin's kitchen.

MR. SELLERS

She wasn't using it last time I checked. There's no way you could have dug your way out of the cell bars in "C" ward with that, no matter how bad the concrete had decayed. It must have been prepped prior to your phony incarceration.

BUSHMAN

Prove it. Anything is possible, Mr. Sellers, particularly in a court of law with twelve human beings assembled to disagree with one other.

MR. SELLERS

Do you think the Inspector was fooled?

BUSHMAN

I think so. He's coming for a visit. We'll soon find out.

MR. SELLERS

Do you think the Inspector's visit could ruin our plans in any way?

BUSHMAN

No. The Inspector is just a civil servant with the mental capacity of a civil servant. Pusser and I decided we'll invite him for a real dinner this time, feed him some roast duck, pour him a lot of wine, nosh a little cheesecake, end the meal with coffee, cigars, brandy, and then offer him a bribe. He'll take it. He's got nothing he can prove. There's nothing he can do. He's probably looking forward to the bribe anyway. If the bribe doesn't work we'll let him sleep with Miss Venus.

MR. SELLERS

You could take some photographs of him with Miss Venus. Could be used against him if all else fails.

BUSHMAN

Hmm. Good idea. I'll think about it. What did you want to see me privately about, or is that it? Basically, you know squat. Big deal!

MR. SELLERS

I'm not happy with our arrangement. I think I deserve a bigger piece of the pie.

BUSHMAN

How about a night with Miss Venus?

(Sellers shake his head negatively.)

BUSHMAN

Sellers, Sellers, Sellers, you're lucky I brought you into this deal at all. I even made you a partner.

MR. SELLERS

A minor partner. I've contributed my broker's fee. The kickbacks all go into the construction account. I've even invested some of my own capital into this project. I deserve a larger percentage than our agreement specifies.

(Bushman continues fondling the potato peeler.)

BUSHMAN

Sellers, let's be honest with one another. You are a crooked real estate broker in a backwater county. That is your lot in life, period. Nobody would have placed an offer on this crappy, dilapidated, fecal-ridden facility. I'm the only one who's interested in this property. You've made a good deal, Sellers. Now stick by it. Do what's expected of you and you'll be rolling in cash soon enough.

MR. SELLERS

I worry about this, Bushman. I suppose I could keep quiet, say nothing, and collect my pittance, or I could have a talk with the Inspector and tell him about our deal, the phony masquerade you held, and the potato peeler business. My contractors and I have been working with concrete for 20 years. I think I could convince the Inspector that you're the fraud and I'm the innocent. In the long run, you and Pusser could wind up in prison and I could buy this facility for myself. What do you think about that?

(Still holding the potato peeler, Bushman stands and begins walking from behind his desk to behind Sellers who swivels in his chair to keep facing him.)

BUSHMAN

You could do that, Sellers. You could go back on your agreement with me. You could give up the time and monies you've already invested. You could stab me in the back and become the richest man in this county. But you won't.

MR. SELLERS

Why not? What's to stop me?

BUSHMAN

Me and this potato peeler.

(Bushman thrusts the potato peeler into Sellers' upstage eyeball. Blood shoots out of his eye socket splattering Bushman. Sellers falls to the floor dead.)

BUSHMAN

Damn you. Just look at the mess you've made me make.

(Bushman flicks the blood on his
hand towards Sellers' corpse.
Blackout.)

ACT THREE

SCENE 2-2

The Staff Lounge. Dr. Maillard sits on his stool holding a coffee cup. Miss Papin sits on the stage right side of the picnic table holding a coffee cup. Jessie sits on the stage left side of the picnic table picking through the donut box. Nurse Fletcher stands stage left filling her coffee cup with coffee. A cigarette rests behind her right ear.

JESSIE

I thought I saw a jelly donut in here.

NURSE FLETCHER

I ate it.

JESSIE

And the maple bar?

DR. MAILLARD

I ate it.

JESSIE

Miss Papin, did you eat the cinnamon roll?

MISS PAPIN

I don't eat donuts. Donuts make you fat or don't you realize that yet?

JESSIE

No offense, Miss Papin, but I think what everybody says about you is right. You're a horrible woman.

MISS PAPIN

And you're a fat pig with an intelligence level to match.

PUSSER

Greetings, everyone.

(Pusser strides in from the upstage left doorway, crossing to the stool, and motioning for Maillard to move.)

PUSSER

Ahem.

(Maillard moves to stage left to refill his coffee cup while Fletcher moves to the upstage side of the picnic table between Papin and Jessie.)

PUSSER

Okay, what's the problem? I gave you all signed contracts. What do you want me to give you now?

MISS PAPIN

Someone stole my potato peeler.

PUSSER

Okay, we'll get you a new potato peeler.

MISS PAPIN

Thanks. See? Instant results. It's nice to talk to you for a change instead of to the buffer.

PUSSER

Who's the buffer?

(Maillard raises his hand. Pusser nods acknowledgement.)

PUSSER

What else? Tell me you didn't call me here merely to discuss a missing potato peeler?

JESSIE

I ain't seen any better food in the staff meals yet. I certainly ain't been drinkin' any better wine. And these donuts? Why can't we get enough jelly donuts so we don't have to go stealing them from one another?

(Jessie gives Fletcher a sharp look. She rolls her eyes.)

MISS PAPIN

Heck with the food. Where's our higher pay? Where's the benefits you promised? I need a vacation!

PUSSER

The facility is in transition. You can hear all the construction going on? We haven't received any new patients yet, thus we haven't received any revenue yet. When we get new patients and begin receiving revenue, we'll discuss the higher pay and benefits.

MISS PAPIN

We have contracts.

JESSIE

Yeah, we got contracts. We got a right to what you promised us and we want it now.

PUSSER

Maillard, Fletcher, help me get them to understand. Or are you in this "rebellion" with them?

NURSE FLETCHER

Well, Pusser, to be frank, I see a lot of money changing hands around the facility and I wonder why we're not getting a few shekels for ourselves?

PUSSER

The money you see changing hands is all related to capital costs. We're rebuilding an infrastructure. Salaries, benefits, and jelly donuts are not capital costs. Maillard? Help me here.

DR. MAILLARD

I've tried. They don't listen to me. I'm only the buffer.

JESSIE

We want what we got coming or we walk.

PUSSER

You're going to walk out on a contract that eventually insures you more money and benefits?

MISS PAPIN

It's hard to believe a liar.

DR. MAILLARD

I think they doubt your reliability.

PUSSER

I haven't lied to anyone.

NURSE FLETCHER

Well, the show we put on for the Inspector wasn't exactly genuine.

JESSIE

And we ain't seen any better food or wine, much less more money, paid vacations, and jelly donuts.

PUSSER

What if I told you to go ahead and walk?

NURSE FLETCHER

I've gotten offers.

DR. MAILLARD

Same here. Just for the record.

MISS PAPIN

I'm old. I got a pension coming from the State. I can take my cat and screw out of here anytime I want.

JESSIE

Do you know how easy it is to get a job corralling loonies, wiping up their messes, and delivering mail to you snotty types? The State will take me back in a minute. I'd be no worse off than I am now. I'd even have that job security thing.

PUSSER

You are all replaceable. Maillard, your deal includes a percentage of the profits to come. Are you going to stand there and go along with these people?

DR. MAILLARD

Folks, he's right. We've made our deals. We have our contracts. The good stuff will come, even the jelly donuts. I promise. Look, we have nothing left to leverage with. Management holds all the cards. I'm sorry. You guys are on your own. I'm staying put.

NURSE FLETCHER

Pardon the pun, but I think we have a Joker or two up our collective sleeves. We all know about the masquerade we held for the Inspector. We all know about the deal Bushman made with the Real Estate Broker.

DR. MAILLARD

So what? If we reveal the truth, we'll just be incriminating ourselves.

NURSE FLETCHER

Maillard, what do you think the State Board for Psychiatric Licensing would do with that license of yours once they learned you participated in a hoax and manipulated patients to help you?

(Maillard becomes enraged. He crosses to Fletcher, grabs her by the throat, and begins strangling her.)

DR. MAILLARD

You merciless witch, I'd like to burn you at the stake like your Godless ancestors!

(Seeing this, Jessie vaults the picnic table, grabs Papin by the throat, and begins strangling her.)

JESSIE

(to Pusser)

Can I kill her, please? I've wanted to kill her for years!

PUSSER

Stop this! Any strangling that must be done, must be done off this property.

(The strangling stops. Maillard and Jessie hang their heads in shame. Fletcher and Papin put their hands to their throats.)

DR. MAILLARD

Sorry, Nurse Fletcher.

JESSIE

Sorry, Miss Papin.

(Fletcher and Papin nod acceptance.)

PUSSER

Okay, if you want to quit and leave, go ahead. Do what you want. Go ahead and leave. I just don't care anymore. You are all replaceable. Go. Bye-bye!

(Pusser stands, crosses to the upstage left doorway, and exits.)

JESSIE

So, what are we gonna do now, Nursey?

NURSE FLETCHER

I'll peruse my offers. Miss Papin will take Catterina and retire. And Jessie, you'll return to a State Asylum and have your job security. Of course, Pusser could return with an offer, but I won't get my hopes up.

MISS PAPIN

What about you, Doc?

DR. MAILLARD

Like I said, I'm staying with the facility. I'll get what's coming to me soon enough.

MISS PAPIN

That's what I'd expect a buffer to say.

JESSIE

Gee, just for now until we get that revenue stuff, I woulda settled for a dozen jelly donuts.

(Blackout.)

ACT THREE

SCENE 2-3

The Staff Dining and Conference Room. There's nothing on the table but the floor length table cloth. The patients wear their usual clothing. Werther and Grandy sit close together holding hands on the upstage side of the table. Venus sits ("at the head of the table" as she sees it) on the stage left end of the table.

MISS VENUS

I like sitting in this room when the staff isn't in here, especially in this chair at the head of the table. It makes me feel as special as I already know I am.

(Werther and Grandy nod politely to Venus and then return their infatuated attentions to each other. He's not crying and she's not cock-a-doodle-doing.)

MR. BESTIOLE

(offstage)

Darn it!

(Bestiole enters through the upstage right doorway. He's holding his flyswatter and looks upset.)

MR. BESTIOLE

I can't find a single bug in that kitchen. There's not a cockroach to be found, much less a spider. That darn cat is depriving me of my nourishment. I wish we had really roasted her. Then, there would be bugs a plenty for me.

MISS VENUS

Oh, Bestiole. All you can think about is yourself. No wonder you live in a madhouse.

MR. BESTIOLE

You live here too.

(Venus ponders this.)

MISS VENUS

Yes, but I don't just live here. I "reside" here.

MR. BESTIOLE

What's the difference?

MISS VENUS

The difference is you're a booby and I have boobs.

(Bestiole shrugs at this. He returns his attentions to the stage right floor and walls, looking for bugs.)

MR. WERTHER

Mrs. Grandy, since we've "connected" I feel much better about myself. Why, I'm so happy I could cry, but I won't.

(Grandy kisses his hands.)

MRS. GRANDY

Mr. Werther, since we've "come to an understanding" I feel much better about myself too. Why, I'm so happy I no longer want to see myself as a chicken-cock.

(Werther kisses her hands.)

MR. WERTHER

Do you see yourself as a woman?

MRS. GRANDY

More like a hen. But I'd like you to be the rooster.

MR. WERTHER

I'll try.

(Werther tries to cock-a-doodle-do,
but his performance is lackluster.)

MRS. GRANDY

That's not bad for a first attempt. I'll have to give you
more instruction.

MR. WERTHER

And as a hen, what will you be doing, Mrs. Grandy?

MRS. GRANDY

(suggestively)

That's entirely up to you, Mr. Werther.

(They kiss each others' hands in
turn, first Werther, then Grandy.)

MISS VENUS

You old folks are so romantic. It makes me horny. Bestiole,
would you like to show me your bug collection?

(Bestiole turns to her and licks
his lips.)

MARQUIS

(offstage)

No time for bugs!

(The Marquis enters through the
upstage left doorway carrying a
file folder. Peter follows
obediently behind.)

MARQUIS

I found what I was looking for! I told you I would!

(The Marquis crosses to the stage
right end of the table and takes
his seat, spreading out the folder
in front of him.)

Peter stands behind him with his hands in his pockets looking over the Marquis' shoulder.)

MR. BESTIOLE

Did you need a map?

MARQUIS

What map?

MR. BESTIOLE

The one Miss Venus said you needed in order to find your ass.

(The Marquis, Peter, Werther, and Grandy look at Venus who shrugs, putting up her hands and shaking her head in denial.)

MISS VENUS

Bestiole, now you've put me completely out of the mood to see your bug collection.

MR. BESTIOLE

Won't be for long, I bet.

(Bestiole snickers.)

MARQUIS

Enough of that. Silence! I've found Bushman's extensive plans for the new asylum and I don't see any mention of us.

(The Marquis continues flipping pages.)

MISS VENUS

Why would he mention us in his plans at all?

MARQUIS

My deal with him was to keep us on in the new asylum, but I don't expect him to give each of us one of those luxury suites he's building in the "C" ward. He's got to put us somewhere else.

PETER

What if he keeps us in the cells in "B" ward where we're "tempo-rare-rily" staying right now?

MARQUIS

Bushman wouldn't dare. I'd have his balls for lunch.

MISS VENUS

You might find that tasty. I can recommend them.

PETER

I like it in "B" ward. It's warm in there, and quiet, and they leave you alone a lot. I like the new curtains too.

MR. BESTIOLE

There have been no bugs in "B" ward since they cleaned, painted, and put in the new sinks and toilets. It's like the bugs were disgusted at the cleanliness and took off. I tell ya, when they do come back, and they will, if Catterina steps one paw in there I'll beat her to death with my flyswatter.

(The Marquis finishes turning the last page and closes the folder.)

MARQUIS

Nope. That's it. No mention of us anywhere in these plans.

MR. WERTHER

Oh, that is sad. Makes me want to cry.

(Grandy pats his hands.)

MRS. GRANDY

Werther, honey, I adore the cell we share.

(A huge smile comes to Werther's face.)

MISS VENUS

Well, I don't like my cell. I have no privacy. I don't get any visitors when I don't have privacy. An adult woman's got to have her privacy. Got to have visitors too.

MARQUIS

I don't approve of my cell either. Makes me feel like a common commoner.

MISS VENUS

So, Marquis, what are we going to do about this?

MARQUIS

(stands)

I think we're going to have to have a revolution.

(The jackhammer starts, filling the room with sound. Peter pulls his hands out of his pockets and covers his ears. While the others cringe, Venus appears to enjoy the noise. It stops. Peter puts his hands back into his pockets.)

MISS VENUS

I love that sound. It's so aggressive, assertive, assaulting, provocative. It makes me horny.

MR. BESTIOLE

See, I told you, it wouldn't take her long.

(The jackhammer resumes. Peter covers his ears again. As the others cringe, Venus closes her eyes in ecstasy. Blackout.)

ACT THREE

SCENE 3

The Staff Dining and Conference Room. The table is once again set for a formal dinner party with silver, crystal, china, and chairs for five settings. A candelabra dominates the center of the table and on either side there rests serving dishes with huge domed covers. The wine has been poured, but the meal has not been served.

The patients wear their usual clothing and sit at their usual places. Werther and Grandy sit holding hands on the upstage side of the table. Venus sits at the stage left end. The Marquis sits at the stage right end once again tapping the side of a crystal wine glass with a knife. Peter stands obediently behind him.

Offstage, a door slams shut and the Marquis stops his tapping.

MR. BESTIOLE

(offstage)

Greetings, Inspector. How nice to have you back with us. May I take your hat and coat?

INSPECTOR

(offstage)

Aren't you one of the patients who masqueraded as one of the staff? You're the bug eater, aren't you?

MR. BESTIOLE

(offstage)

Yes, that was me. My name is Bestiole. I played the Attendant Jessie.

INSPECTOR

(offstage)

Yes, I remember. Excellent performance. So, what's going on? Are you playing the Attendant again?

MR. BESTIOLE

(offstage)

Everything will be explained immediately, Inspector. Come this way.

(The Inspector and Bestiole enter through the upstage left doorway. The Marquis, Werther, Grandy, and Venus stand.)

MARQUIS

(speaking in his French accent as usual)

Entre. Entre. Entre. Excellent! Welcome, Inspector. We are enchanted to have you for our guest once again. Come sit down.

(The Inspector hesitantly approaches the chair on the downstage side of the table where he sat before.)

INSPECTOR

Where is Director Bushman and Mr. Pusser? I am to dine with them.

MARQUIS

They will be with us shortly and you will be dining with us all this evening.

INSPECTOR

(suspicious)

You're going to need some more chairs.

MISS VENUS

You could sit on my lap, Inspector.

(Venus sits and spreads her hands,
inviting him to her lap.)

INSPECTOR

I'll just sit here for now, thanks.

(The Inspector takes his seat.
Werther and Grandy take theirs. The
Marquis, Peter, and Bestiole remain
standing.)

MARQUIS

I know you met us all before, but if I may make a proper
introduction. Bestiole you have already met. This is Mr.
Werther who played Doctor Maillard and this is Mrs. Grandy
who played Nurse Fletcher.

(Werther and Grandy bow their heads
to the Inspector who smiles and
returns their bow.)

MARQUIS

That lovely mademoiselle is Miss Venus. She portrayed our
maid, Miss Papin.

(Venus waves her fingers at him in
flirtation. The Inspector smiles
and nods politely.)

MARQUIS

This is my assistant Peter behind me. He did his best to
portray Mr. Pusser. I believe he shared his favorite numbers
with you?

(Peter and the Inspector share
respectful nods of greeting.)

INSPECTOR

Yes, I remember finding that quite amusing, if not a bit
bawdy for my taste.

MARQUIS

Finally, I am Donatien Alphonse Francois de Sade, but you may call me the Marquis.

INSPECTOR

Oh, I see. Pleased to meet you, to meet all of you. You all did give such a remarkable performance. The staff did as well with their hoax about the patients taking over the asylum.

MARQUIS

So, you know that it was all a masquerade?

INSPECTOR

Yes, yes. My suspicions first developed when I arrived home and reviewed my experience throughout the time from my arrival to my release from the hospital emergency room.

MARQUIS

They found nothing wrong with you. No food poisoning?

INSPECTOR

Nothing at all. Turns out they had to pump my stomach for no reason at all. No cat meat, no toadstools, and no blood. Just rabbit, mushrooms, and a pungent red sauce.

MARQUIS

I'm so glad. Did that provoke your suspicions?

INSPECTOR

Yes, indeed it did. But what convinced me was after I recommended the State to condemn this property, and they did, I soon learned that Bushman had purchased it and was planning to open his own private asylum. That settled it. I realized it was a hoax all along.

MARQUIS

And are you angry, upset, vengeful?

INSPECTOR

Not at all. I found the whole extravaganza marvelous! I applaud you all and the real staff for your performance and ingenuity. Look, there is no doubt that the infrastructure of this property was in bad shape. With the government cutting costs, condemning this place was the right thing to do. No one can object to that and that's why I'm here. I want Director Bushman and all the rest of you to know I hold no hard feelings and I only wish good luck for the new asylum. As for the hoax, I haven't had so much fun since my fraternity days. In fact, I want to thank you all for giving me the experience of a lifetime.

MARQUIS

You're quite welcome, Inspector. I hope this evening will not dissatisfy by comparison.

INSPECTOR

Well, you'd have to pull some really crazy shenanigans to beat the last time.

MARQUIS

Speaking of time. It is time to dine. Some wine, Inspector?

INSPECTOR

Certainly.

(The Marquis pours wine into the
Inspector's glass.)

MARQUIS

Peter, Bestiole, bring in the appetizers, please.

(Peter exits upstage right and
Bestiole exits upstage left.)

INSPECTOR

What are we having tonight, Marquis? Cat-rabbit again with toadstools in blood?

(The Inspector begins to laugh and
the others join in.)

MARQUIS

Oh, no. Tonight we have a piece de resistance more appropriate to this splendid occasion.

(The Inspector tucks his napkin into the front of his collar.)

INSPECTOR

Well, I'm hungry.

(The Inspector raises his glass for a toast.)

INSPECTOR

To all the company present tonight, I salute you.

(The Inspector drinks.)

INSPECTOR

Delicious.

MARQUIS

For this evening, only the best wine from our cellars.

INSPECTOR

I can't wait to see the appetizers. What are they?

MARQUIS

We shall be enjoying several different kinds of fowl prepared in an exquisite and unique manner just for tonight.

INSPECTOR

Oh, yummy. I adore fowl. I love pheasants. I love partridges. I love ducks. I love geese. I'll eat any kind of bird meat, except pigeons of course.

MARQUIS

(yelling)

Peter! Bestiole! Bring in the fowl appetizers!

(Peter, from upstage right, and Bestiole, from upstage left, enter holding onto a long chain.)

Behind Peter follows Papin and Jessie. Behind Bestiole follows Maillard and Fletcher. The chains hold the four staff members in bondage. They are all tarred and feathered, looking like giant birds. Additionally, their eyes have been carved out and their sockets appear black from bruising and red from bleeding. Blinded, they stumble in, not knowing which way to turn or walk. Peter, Papin, and Jessie stop downstage right. Bestiole, Maillard, and Fletcher stop downstage left.)

MARQUIS

The appetizers! Inspector, would you like a leg or an arm?

INSPECTOR

Oh, my dear God in heaven! What have you done?

MISS VENUS

We used a potato peeler to carve the fowl.

INSPECTOR

You've all gone mad. I mean, madder than mad. Have you taken over the asylum for real this time? Where's Director Bushman and Mr. Pusser?

MARQUIS

Well, Inspector, if you don't care for any appetizer, then I suppose we must move on to the main course.

INSPECTOR

The main course?

MARQUIS

Mr. Werther and Mrs. Grandy, will you do the honors, please? For tonight's piece de resistance, we have...

(Werther and Grandy remove their respective silver domed serving tray covers. The disembodied head of Bushman lies in front of Werther and the disembodied head of Pusser lies in front of Grandy. The two disembodied heads have had their eyes gouged out too.)

MARQUIS

...head of pig and head of ass.

(The Inspector stands and turns to run and escape, but faints to the floor downstage center. Venus kneels to hold his head in her lap as the Marquis approaches him with a potato peeler.)

MARQUIS

And for dessert, we discussed many different choices. But finally, we decided the eyes have it.

(The Marquis stabs the Inspector's upstage eye with the potato peeler. Blood shoots out of his eye drenching Venus and the Marquis. They lick their lips.)

MARQUIS

As Chef Georges Auguste Escoffier said, "the sauce makes the meal."

(Blackout.)