THE EXIT INTERVIEW was first produced as part of a Rolling World Premiere by Orlando Shakespeare Theater, Sand Diego REPertory Theatre, InterAct Theatre Company, Riverside Theatre, Actor’s Theatre of Charlotte, and Salt Lake Acting Company as part of the National New Play Network’s Continued Life program.

THE EXIT INTERVIEW was developed at the Orlando Shakespeare Theater’s Harriett Lake Festival of New Plays. The Orlando Shakespeare Theater, in partnership with UCF, also staged its world premiere on September 29, 2012. It was directed by Patrick Flick. The set was designed by Robin Watts, the costumes were designed by Corinne Walsh, the lighting was designed by Mary Heffernan, and the sound was designed by Britt Sandusky. The stage manager was Melissa E. Koerner. The cast was as follows:

DICK FIG ........................................... Michael Marinaccio
EUNICE ............................................. Anitra Pritchard
ACTRESS #1 ...................................... Lauren Butler
ACTRESS #2 ...................................... Janine Klein
ACTOR #1 .......................................... Nathan Sebens
ACTOR #2 .......................................... Alexander Mrazek
CHARACTERS

DICK FIG - A young college professor with his leg in a cast - His PhD was on Bertolt Brecht
EUNICE - A pawn in the human resources department

ACTRESS #1
CHEERLEADER #1 - With pompons
MARY - An oboe player - Dick's ex-girlfriend
Samantha - A mother with a baby carriage
BUSINESSWOMAN #2 - An expert on underwear
DR. DOBSON - PhD in religious studies from Yale

ACTRESS #2
CHEERLEADER #2 - With pompons
MRS. MEREDITH - Mary's mother
CHLOE - Eunice's young assistant
A MAKEUP LADY - She can make you look good
BETH - A mother with a baby carriage
BUSINESSWOMAN IN A BRA - An expert on bras
LADY NEWSCASTER - Foxy Fox Newscaster
ACTRESS #1 - Bertolt Brecht announcer
DR. KATTS - A distinguished scientist

ACTOR #1
MASKED GUNMAN - Who has killed ten people
ACTOR #1 - Bertolt Brecht announcer
A PRIEST - A celibate
BUSINESSMAN #1 - An expert on underwear
DR. HUBERT - President of the LDS Church
HANK STARLING - A professional baseball player

ACTOR #2
WALTER - Foxy Fox Newscaster
BUSINESSMAN #2 - An expert on underwear
DR. JAEGGER - A distinguished scientist
ACTOR #2 - Bertolt Brecht announcer

Please Note: this play can be produced with a much larger cast.
SETTING

A theatre - The theatrical lights and bare walls of the stage are exposed. Scenes can be staged with as little as a few chairs and a desk – or, money allowing, a series of platforms. Whatever you do, never let the audience forget they’re in a theatre.

Above the stage is a projection screen where scene titles appear. This projection screen represents god, and this play tilts away from realism.

The walls of the theatre, even those around the audience, are covered with banners and slogans:

- Nature vs. Scripture
- Create your purpose vs. Follow God’s purpose
- Human needs vs. God’s needs
- Humans are capable vs. Humans are imperfect
- I did it! vs. God did it!
- I did it! vs. The devil made me do it!
- Many books vs. One book
- Research vs. Revelation
- The world happened vs. The world is designed
- Observation vs. Theology
- All people vs. Chosen people
- Now vs. Later

Mixed in are:
- Pepsi vs. Coke
- Boxers vs. Briefs
- Mac vs. PC
- Honda vs. Toyota
- Big Mac vs. Whopper

AUTHOR’S NOTES

This play contains several advertisements in the second act. Some of these ads are projected from the screen above the stage; others are contained within the dialogue. If the theatre finds local businesses or organizations that would like to buy one of these advertisements, that section of the script may be rewritten to accommodate.

For more information about the play, including script updates, photos, production designs, interviews and notes, visit The Exit Interview website: www.uwyo.edu/thd2/downs/exit.htm.
Special thanks to: Patrick Flick, Jim Helsinger, Jason Loewith, Seth Rozin, Sam Woodhouse, Jody Hovland, Dan Shoemaker, Lou Anne Wright, Jojo Ruf, Michael Mainaccio, and Kelie Rae Rockey.
ACT ONE

(Raucous Rock and Roll. The screen above the stage doesn’t just light up, it’s a technical event as it oscillates to life. It reads:)

Warning Labels!

(Two effervescent college CHEERLEADERS complete with pompoms enter cheering. They’re followed by a ski-masked GUNMAN – He doesn’t react; he stands unassumingly in the background pointing his gun in their direction, and listening to an iPod.)

CHEERLEADER #1. (bubbly) Welcome, Ladies and Gentlemen!

CHEERLEADER #2. (spirited) Are you ready!

CHEERLEADER #1. Give me an “O!” Come on give me an “O!”

(They prompt the audience to respond.)

AUDIENCE. O!

CHEERLEADER #2. Give me an “F!”

AUDIENCE. F!

CHEERLEADER #1. Give me another “F!”

AUDIENCE. F!

CHEERLEADER #2. Give me an “E!”

AUDIENCE. E!

CHEERLEADER #1. Give me an “N!”

AUDIENCE. N!

CHEERLEADER #2. Give me an “S!”

AUDIENCE. S!

CHEERLEADER #1. Give me an “I!”

AUDIENCE. I!
CHEERLEADER #2. Give me a “V!”
AUDIENCE. V!
CHEERLEADER #1. Give me an “E!”
AUDIENCE. E!
CHEERLEADER #1. What’s that spell?
CHEERLEADER #2. Offensive! Offensive! This play is Offensive!

(They chest bump.)

BOTH. Yeaaaaaaaaaa!
CHEERLEADER #1. Before we start. Please take a moment to off your cells and pagers!
CHEERLEADER #2. Cell phones totally off!
CHEERLEADER #1. Also, for those of you under the age of thirty—
CHEERLEADER #2. Yeaaaaa under thirty!
CHEERLEADER #1. Please know that it’s considered rude to text or twitter during a play.
CHEERLEADER #2. That’s right! It’s time to grow up and admit that no one gives a flying crap about what you’re doing right now!
CHEERLEADER #1. The opinions expressed in this play do not necessarily reflect the views of ____ (fill in the name of your theatre).
CHEERLEADER #2. Let’s hear it for ____ (fill in the name of your theatre).
BOTH. Yeaaaaaa!
CHEERLEADER #1. This play is not suitable for viewers who find any of the following objectionable:
CHEERLEADER #2. Gun violence! Bang! Bang!
CHEERLEADER #1. Women in the workplace! Yea!
CHEERLEADER #2. Soccer moms discussing scientific method!
CHEERLEADER #1. Criticism of Fox News!
CHEERLEADER #2. Candid discussions on religion and politics!
CHEERLEADER #1. Priests defending the Holy Trinity using perplexing analogies!
CHEERLEADER #2. Plane crashes!
CHEERLEADER #1. (upbeat) With no survivors!
CHEERLEADER #2. School shootings!
CHEERLEADER #1. (joyous) With few survivors!
CHEERLEADER #2. Babies being run over by trains!
CHEERLEADER #1. Or Lutheranism!
CHEERLEADER #2. Or audience members who think realism is the only kinda theatre.
CHEERLEADER #1. Boo! Realism!
CHEERLEADER #2. This play contains Brechtian Alienation devices! Yeaaaaaa! Bertolt Brecht—!
CHEERLEADER #1. Who’s Bertolt Brecht?
CHEERLEADER #2. I have no idea! But I’ll bet he’ll make this play offensive!
BOTH. Yeaaaaaaaaa!
(They chest bump.)
CHEERLEADER #1. The management is not responsible for:
CHEERLEADER #2. Lost items!
CHEERLEADER #1. Misplaced tickets!
CHEERLEADER #2. Or any existential uncertainty or metaphysical isolation that may result!
CHEERLEADER #1. Let’s hear it for existential uncertainty!
BOTH. (prompting the audience to cheer) Yeaaaaaaaaaa!
CHEERLEADER #1. And metaphysical isolation!
BOTH. (shaking their pompoms) Yeaaaaaaaaa!
CHEERLEADER #2. This play contains over twenty characters!
CHEERLEADER #1. Which is a real problem because this theatre can’t afford to pay twenty actors!*
CHEERLEADER #2. Yeaaaaaaaaa actors!
CHEERLEADER #1. So all the roles will be played by only six actors!

*Program note: These lines may be altered to match the size of your cast.
BOTH. So deal with it!
CHEERLEADER #1. Are we done?
CHEERLEADER #2. Totally!
CHEERLEADER #1. Ready? Hit it! *(prompting the audience to cheer)* Give me an “E!”
AUDIENCE. E!
CHEERLEADER #2. Explicit content!
CHEERLEADER #1. Give me a “V!”
AUDIENCE. V!
CHEERLEADER #2. A whole bunch of violence!
CHEERLEADER #1. Give me an “L!”
AUDIENCE. L!
CHEERLEADER #2. Lutheranism!
CHEERLEADER #1. Give me an “A!”
AUDIENCE. A!
CHEERLEADER #2. Adult themes!
CHEERLEADER #1. Put it all together and what’s it spell?
BOTH. *(after the audience’s failed attempt)* Yeeeeececeea!
CHEERLEADER #1. Enjoy!
BOTH. *(shaking their pompoms)* Yeeeeececeea!

*(Pompom shaking exit. The GUNMAN quietly follows them off.)*

*(Transitions to new scenes are filled with rock and roll music and lights. The sign jumps to life. It reads:)*

**Last Day On The Job!**

*(Lights up on EUNICE, a dry, professional human resources administrator sitting at her desk. Her latest case is DICK, a young professorish-type. DICK sports a large cast on his leg/foot and crutches.)*

EUNICE. And how are we today?
DICK. Fine.
EUNICE. Can you believe all this rain?
DICK. *(uncomfortable with small talk)* Sure is rainy.
EUNICE. I heard we might have more.
DICK. I suppose.
EUNICE. (off his cast) Skiing accident?
DICK. No.
EUNICE. Auto?
DICK. It's complicated.
DICK. If I may be honest–.
EUNICE. We're all about honesty here.
DICK. I'm kinda not into small talk.
EUNICE. Small what?
DICK. You know – How's the weather? What did I do to my foot? I don't mean to be rude. I'm being pink-slipped because of budget cuts and talking about the weather isn't going to make me feel better.
EUNICE. When one is transitioning-and-broadening-their-field-of-endeavor there can be pain and deep resentment. Just remember when God closes a door he opens a skylight.
DICK. Question–.
EUNICE. Yes, free psychological counseling is available through our secure website. Shall we begin? You are Dick Fig. Correct?
DICK. Richard.
EUNICE. It's says you're a "Dick".
DICK. I go by Richard.
EUNICE. (writing on the form) Question number one: besides petty politics what did you find least satisfying about your job?
DICK. Besides petty politics?
EUNICE. You were a non-tenured instructor at a university; they just assume there was petty politics.
DICK. Besides petty politics, I'd have to say – the exit interview.
EUNICE. (un-amused) You’re being funny.
DICK. Just a little joke.
EUNICE. I’ve noticed that funny people are, more often than not, hiding their pain. Comedy comes from pain doesn’t it?
DICK. True. That’s why so many standup comedians come from Somalia.

(Beat. The stone-faced EUNICE writes a note on the form.)

EUNICE. Note: sense of humor.
DICK. What’re you...?
EUNICE. There’s a little side box here on the form and I’m noting that you have a sense of humor.
DICK. Why?
EUNICE. This way the higher ups get a sense for the personage. It helps them understand what transpired. For example if I noted “ruffled” they’d take that into account when they evaluate the results.
DICK. And what does “ruffled” mean?
EUNICE. Ruffled means that the interviewee more than likely has exaggerated complaints and feelings of inferiority.
DICK. And “sense of humor”?
EUNICE. Just a note.
DICK. But it must mean something—.
EUNICE. You’re taking this far too seriously.
DICK. Just wondering...
EUNICE. Fine – a notation of “sense of humor” means that the interviewee is less than serious and that his answers should be given little or no weight. Perhaps even discarded if the attempts at humor continue.
DICK. My answers won’t be taken seriously?
EUNICE. Let’s not get ruffled.

(CHLOE rushes in.)
THE EXIT INTERVIEW

(We hear the offstage CHEERLEADERS.*

OFFSTAGE CHEERLEADERS. (This cheer repeats as needed.) Hey, Hey, Hey! Be aggressive (clap clap clap) It’s not over! (clap) Till it’s over! (clap clap) It’s not over! (clap) Till it’s over!

EUNICE. Door!

(CHLOE closes the door. The CHEERLEADERS fade.)

CHLOE. There’s a student here--.

EUNICE. Appointment?

CHLOE. No, but he’s really insistent.

EUNICE. You know the rules, no appointment means--.

CHLOE. He doesn’t want to see you; says he has a meeting with Dick.

DICK. Richard.

CHLOE. You were supposed to’ve read his short story or something?

DICK. Oh. Forgot. Would you tell...ah...

CHLOE. Noah.

DICK. Would you tell Noah that I’m no longer employed by the university.

CHLOE. But this guy is really making me uncomfortable.

EUNICE. What did I say this morning? Be...

CHLOE. Aaaammnnmmmm...decisive?

EUNICE. There’re plenty of other students who’d kill to have this work/study job.

(Frustrated, CHLOE opens the door.)

OFFSTAGE CHEERLEADERS. (This cheer repeats as needed.) We’re number one! Can’t be number two! And we’re going to beat the whoopsie out of you!

EUNICE. Door!

(CHLOE exits. The CHEERLEADERS fade.)

*The Cheerleaders will have to be recorded to keep within only six actors.
EUNICE. Question number two: do you have any broad-spectrum complaints?

DICK. Broad-spectrum?

EUNICE. (rapid fire) For example, the university, for no apparent reason, moved me to this office. A former storage room that smells of chlorine. But there’s little I can do ‘cause there’s no window. It’s been two weeks and it still says “storage room” on the door and the lock is broken. To top it off, they put me across the hall from the Cheerleader Captain’s office. If I hear him yell one more time, “Be authentic!” I might just never stop throwing up. If this were my exit interview, that’d be my broad-spectrum complaint.

DICK. I have no—.

(EUNICE checks a box on the form.)

EUNICE. Three: now that you are transitioning-and-broadening-your-field-of-endavor, who is your new employer?

DICK. None, I guess I’ll be self-employed.

EUNICE. (filling out the form) Unemployed.

DICK. No, self—. I’ve written a book. Coming out next month. Confidentially—.

EUNICE. Everything here is confidential.

DICK. I just happened to have a friend of a friend who works at The New York Times. He thinks they’re going to review it. My agent’s assistant — who’s probably wildly overestimating — says that it’s entirely possible that I’ll be in The Times top ten list within a matter of months.

EUNICE. Congratulations. I make it a habit to read every book on The Times top ten list.


EUNICE. Well, most...several...three—. What’s yours about?

DICK. It’s about the chaos of the human soul and the emptiness of the Copernican universe.

EUNICE. (counterfeit) That has bestseller written all over it.
**DICK.** Technically it's not about chaos or emptiness. It's more about Bertolt Brecht and how there's no divine presence in the universe, and that humans have little or no significant meaning in the vast cosmos.

**EUNICE.** Bertolt who?

**DICK.** (He can't help but sound PhD-ish.) Brecht — an influential playwright, director. Brecht felt the objective discernment that autonomous artworks presuppose in the viewer was inadequate while his didactic style reinforced his communist perspective. It's loosely based on my PhD thesis. It's called *No Religion, No Politics.*

**EUNICE.** I don’t get it.

**DICK.** Those are the two things you’re not allowed to talk about in polite society anymore. The title came from my girlfriend—. I should say, ex-girlfriend. When we used to go to her mother’s— just before she’d open the door— Mary would squeeze my hand and say, “No religion, no politics.” Two subjects we *should* be talking about but don’t because it’s considered impolite — even politically incorrect. So instead we engage in trivial small talk about things like the weather. Today she’d say, “No religion, no politics, no global warming—.”

(During this next section **EUNICE professionally checks off the answers on the form.**)

**EUNICE.** (cold) There’s that sense of humor again. *(She notes it.)* Next section. Rapid fire. “Yes.” “No.” Don’t think, don’t try to be funny, just answer. Ready. Go. Do you have any parking tickets?

**DICK.** No. Wait. No. Yes...no.

**EUNICE.** Do you have any overdue library books?

**DICK.** No.

**EUNICE.** Would you recommend this university to a friend?

**DICK.** No—. I mean, yes.

**EUNICE.** If you were a snowflake would you look forward to melting?
DICK. ...ah–?
EUNICE. You’re thinking.
DICK. What kind of–?
EUNICE. No think-think.
DICK. Maybe?
EUNICE. That’s not a box on the form.
DICK. Okay, yes, no, yes–.
EUNICE. Were you pleased with the parking situation on campus?
DICK. That’s a loaded question.
EUNICE. Excuse me?
DICK. That’s known as a loaded question. All the others were simple “Yes” or “No” but this one has the word “pleased” located within it. “Were you pleased with the parking situation...”

(Beat – EUNICE studies him.)

EUNICE. We’re feeling hostility aren’t we.
DICK. No. It’s just that the administration obviously wants a positive response. It’s known as a loaded question...an unloaded would be, “What do you think of the parking situation?” See, that’s unloaded.

(Beat. EUNICE blankly stares at him. He gives up.)

DICK. Yes, I was pleased with the parking.
EUNICE. If your bride said, “But my first love is the oboe,” would you still marry?
DICK. Wait–.
EUNICE. I don’t write the questions.
DICK. Obviously they’ve come up with some sort of peculiar psychological–. What do they hope to prove by asking if I’d marry an oboe player–?
EUNICE. You’re reading into the question. It doesn’t say she is an oboe player. It says she has deep affections for the oboe. More than she has for you.
DICK. No, if a woman loved her oboe more than me I wouldn’t—.
EUNICE. We’re positive?
DICK. Yes.
EUNICE. I’m not supposed to say this but...no one who has ever answered “no” to that question has ever been rehired—. Why don’t we come back to it.
DICK. No—. If a woman told me that she loved her oboe more than me I wouldn’t get married. Final answer!

(CHLOE enters with the student’s short story. As she opens and closes the door the CHEERLEADERS fade in and out.)

OFFSTAGE CHEERLEADERS. (This cheer repeats as needed.)
Trip’m, Kick’m, Smack’m in the head! Don’t let up till you know they’re—good—n—dead!

CHLOE. Problem—!
EUNICE. Door.
CHLOE. This student is rather insistent—!
EUNICE. Door!

(CHLOE closes the door.)

CHLOE. Couldn’t Dick just—.
DICK. Sure.
EUNICE. No. Classes are over.
CHLOE. But—.
DICK. It’s really okay.
EUNICE. A writer needs to read great writing – to be inspired. But student writing — year in and year out – must be like death by a thousand cuts! Am I right?
DICK. In the ballpark.
CHLOE. You want me to tell him that?
EUNICE. Word for word.

(Frustrated, CHLOE exits.)
OFFSTAGE CHEERLEADERS. Strawberry shortcake, banana split – We think your team plays like shi-shake it to the left, shake it to the right, sit down, stand up, Fight fight, fight!!

(The door closes and the CHEERLEADERS fade.)

DICK. Question--.

EUNICE. You’re not allowed to ask questions until page six--.

DICK. Just one--.

EUNICE. But you’re not--.

DICK. Hold on! (beat) How did you know my ex-girlfriend played the oboe?

(Rock and roll music and lights. The screen throbs to life. It reads:)

A Train Ran Over My Baby!

(A makeup room.)

(Beside MARY are a baby carriage and an oboe case. Her arm is in a sling. WALTER, a hurried handsome news-caster, enters. During this scene he is constantly texting.)

WALTER. (hurried) Wow, you look unremarkable, I mean after...

MARY. Thank you--.

WALTER. And the train never touched your...

MARY. A small scratch on his--.

WALTER. But your arm.

MARY. Oh. Unrelated.

WALTER. Ever done T.V. before?

MARY. First--.

WALTER. Few tips: stay calm, connect with me not the camera, don’t slouch, and keep your responses to eight seconds or less.

(The MAKEUP LADY enters. During the following she professionally touches up WALTER’s makeup and hair. She is constantly texting.)
WALTER. Cut to the chase – tell me a story.
MARY. Well...I was sorta preoccupied–.
WALTER. Aren’t we all.
MARY. Was rushing up to the metro station platform–.
WALTER. And before you knew it...
MARY. Was trying to hold his bottle in my right hand and my oboe in my left–.
WALTER. When suddenly...
MARY. The baby carriage just started rolling and–.
WALTER. Then all hell broke lose.
MARY. Didn’t know that the wheel-lock was–.
WALTER. Wow, great story, but let’s not talk about it on air. We’ve been looping the metro station security video from the incident for two days. I think our viewers’ll find it more entertaining if you talk about why this happened.
MARY. The lock was broken and my oboe–.
WALTER. No, I mean the bigger picture.
MARY. I had too many things in my hands and then the baby carriage started rolling and–.
WALTER. You suddenly you knew that God had a purpose for your son. Right?
MARY. I–.
WALTER. Few years ago, remember that Airbus that went down in Queens, or Brooklyn?
MARY. I guess–.
WALTER. Got an exclusive one-on-one with a man who missed the plane–. Ran up just as they were closing the door. Missed an all important job interview that would’ve changed his life. Was filling out a complaint form at the service desk when the news came that the flight, his flight, had gone in. Smoldering wreckage, total carnage – but great video – he said that he knew in his heart that he had been spared because God had a purpose for him.
MARY. So, you want me to—.

WALTER. You don’t have to know what that purpose is— that’d be presumptive on your part.

MARY. But what if I don’t—.

WALTER. You don’t thank God for saving your son?

MARY. Sure—.

WALTER. Let me tell you something about this medium— War is better than peace, violent protests better than nonviolent sit-ins, louder better than soft, emotion better than reason, L. Ron Hubbard better than Buddhists.

MARY. So you want me to—.

WALTER. Tell’em what you really think.

MARY. Which is—?

WALTER. God has a purpose for your son. Why else did he allow him to live?

MARY. I just thought it would be kinda cool to be on T.V.—.

WALTER. You thought it would be cool... (chuckling with the MAKEUP LADY) She thought it would be cool. (He pulls himself together.) I’ll introduce you and you’ll say...

MARY. But what about all those baby carriages that fall in front of commuter trains and the baby is killed. What’s God’s purpose—?

WALTER. We’d never put that on air. That’s what newspapers are for.

(The MAKEUP LADY holds a mirror in front of WALTER.)

Good. Now let’s help her a little. Maybe some rings around the eyes.

(WALTER pulls the tissue from his shirt collar.)

Wanta know the truth? That guy, the one I interviewed, the one who missed the plane — my brother.

MARY. You’re kidding.

WALTER. Three seconds late – slammed the door in his face.

MARY. Wow. And he...?

WALTER. Died six months later – pancreatic cancer.
MARY. So...God’s purpose for your brother was—.

WALTER. Apparently so.

MARY. But—.

WALTER. Who am I to question the higher ups.

MARY. By “higher ups” you mean—? (*She indicates the heavens.*)

WALTER. Yep, the management of Fox News.

*(WALTER takes MARY’s hand.)*

*(taking her into his confidence)* Look, just between us, I know why my brother died.

MARY. You do?

WALTER. We were twins. Inseparable. By taking my brother, God let me know that he wanted me to be strong—to be my own man. Now you gotta understand why God let this little bundle of joy survive. What’s its name?

MARY. Ben.

WALTER. He could’ve *(snaps his fingers)* with a blink...so why not?

MARY. I...

WALTER. You can do it.

MARY. *(guessing)* He...wanted me to go on TV and warn mothers about defective Chinese made baby carriages—?

WALTER. Nope. News Corp is trying to get a new cable link set up in Shanghai so we can’t mention China for three weeks.

*(WALTER flips out his cell and hits auto dial.)*

*(into cell phone)* It’s me. I think we should do the miracle baby story as a tape. We may want to edit this one...cause I’m detecting something...not much, but there is just a modicum of...that’s right. Doubt...what? ... Why didn’t you tell me? *(hangs up)* Pleasure, gotta run. There’s a gunman over at the campus. We’re going to break in live. If you can stay around we’ll try to tape you during a network break. *(to the MAKEUP LADY)* Better give me a once-over. Neck? I’m sure they’ll want to go national.
(The MAKEUP LADY checks him.)

WALTER. Showtime.

(WALTER exits. MARY sits dumbfounded.)

MAKEUP LADY. You okay?

MARY. (concerned) My ex-boyfriend teaches at the College.
Today was his last day.

MAKEUP LADY. Wow. Think he's there now? You should text him.

MARY. He doesn't believe in cell phones.

MAKEUP LADY. No cell, wow. What is he, like, really really old?

(Rock and roll music and lights. The sign jerks to life.
It reads:)

The Secret of the Secret

(And we are back in the exit interview.)

EUNICE. I'm sorry that your ex-girlfriend played the oboe -
that must've been very painful for you.

DICK. When you're in love you put up with a lot--.

EUNICE. You know what you need? The Secret.

DICK. What secret?

EUNICE. You're a writer and you haven't read The Secret by
Rhonda Byrne? - Was on The New York Times top ten
list. And it was featured on Oprah - twice. It's great.
You can master your destiny by just thinking--.

DICK. Please don't tell me that you believe--.

EUNICE. The Secret? It cured my cancer.

DICK. ...Cancer?

EUNICE. Terminal lung cancer. Been cancer free for two
years.

DICK. C'mon, they did something else...radiation--?

EUNICE. I prayed.

DICK. And your cancer...completely and totally--.

EUNICE. Had a spot on my lung and when I went in for
further tests--.
DICK. Wait, you make it sound like you had full blown malignancy. You had--.

EUNICE. Cancer and I used *The Secret*’s laws of attraction to--.

DICK. You’re doing it! Exactly what my book is about. You don’t know if the spot was cancerous. It may have been a normal biological occurrence--.

EUNICE. I’m cured. Two years!

DICK. You’re telling me with the help of a book you aligned the forces of the universe--.

EUNICE. It wasn’t that easy. I had to make a collage.

DICK. A what?

EUNICE. You cut out of magazines the type of life you want, and then you paste it to poster board, although I found that foam board works better, and then you look at it each day and imagine yourself living that life.

DICK. ...I don’t follow.

EUNICE. I have mine right here.

(EUNICE takes out a large collage on which she has pasted her hopes and dreams. During the following she points at the various dreams she has cut out of magazines.)

EUNICE. Here is the chlorine-free office I’ll have some day. Here is my future Porsche. Here is where I’ll travel once I become fluent in French and Italian. And this little blob down here represents the weight I’m going to lose, after which I will write a bestselling memoir, which is represented by this book right here. It’s going to be about forgiveness.

DICK. (not able to get his head around this) You...you think you can make a collage, and think about it, and--.

EUNICE. I won an award for this collage. I was even interviewed on Fox News--.

(a far off gunshot)

DICK. What the hell...
EUNICE. *(doubting)* Thunder?
DICK. Don’t think so.
EUNICE. Backfire?
DICK. Doubt it.

(another gunshot)

EUNICE. That’s it. Car. Trust me. Happens all the time. The Cheerleader Captain has a crappy car. Back to work, next question. *(reading)* If you were going to be trapped on a desert island and you could take on one book. What book would you take?

DICK. Ah...

EUNICE. *(hopeful)* Yes?
DICK. …I’d take a book on how to survive on a desert island.

*(Loud Rock and Roll, the lights shift. The sign springs to life. It reads:)*

No Religion, No Politics

*(MARY walks into a special light — this time her arm is not in a sling, nor does she have the baby carriage.)*

MARY. You knew it was a gunshot. You weren’t being honest with yourself, but you knew it.

DICK. Yes. I knew it.

MARY. And what were you doing, talking about a spot on her lung. People want to believe what they believe—.

DICK. At least I can—.

MARY. That’s why we failed.

DICK. Because I—?

MARY. No, because you can’t keep your mouth shut.

DICK. I admit it; it wasn’t my finest hour—.

*(In this reality, DICK pops off his foot cast and joins MARY.)*

MARY. My poor mother. All she wanted—.

DICK. I was young—.

MARY. It was eighteen months ago!
(A doorbell. Lights up on MRS. MEREDITH, Mary's mother — if anyone owns an Emily Post Etiquette book it's her. She enters wearing an apron and carrying a fancy tea set.)

MARY. Look at her, she even polished grandma's silver.

DICK. Everything would've gone fine if you hadn't given me the manuscript.

MARY. Of course it's my fault.

(a doorbell)

MRS. MEREDITH. Coming!

(MARY and DICK hold hands, and join the scene. It is eighteen months earlier.)

(MRS. MEREDITH runs out taking off her apron.)

MARY. Relax. (squeezing his hand) She's a little set in her ways so be nice—. Oh, I forgot. They sent back the manuscript and your editor called. She wants a few changes. (She takes his book manuscript from her purse. DICK inspects it.)

DICK. Changes. What changes?

MARY. Nothing major, she just wants you to cut out the part about small talk.

DICK. That's half the book.

MARY. Don't over react.

DICK. (looking at the manuscript) It's all red marks.

(Doorbell. MRS. MEREDITH re-enters primping.)

MARY. It's Thanksgiving — promise — no religion, no politics.

(MRS. MEREDITH walks up and hugs her daughter.)

MRS. MEREDITH. My sweet little—. This must be Mr. Dick.

DICK. Richard Fig. Hello, Mrs. Meredith.

MRS. MEREDITH. Call me "Mom". (to MARY) Am I right? (to DICK) Come. Sit. Mary has said so many wonderful—. Can I get you something? Coffee?

MARY. Richard doesn't drink coffee, Mom.
MRS. MEREDITH. Probably best – stains your teeth and you have such nice—. How about a glass of milk?

MARY. He doesn’t drink milk either. The pasteurization process overstresses the pancreas.

MRS. MEREDITH. I don’t want you to have an overstressed pancreas.

MARY. He’d love a little carrot juice.

MRS. MEREDITH. Ah...I don’t think we—.

MARY. Got carrots?

MRS. MEREDITH. I guess—.

MARY. Still got that old juicer?

MRS. MEREDITH. Haven’t used it in—.

MARY. Then you got carrot juice. Right back. You two. You know...

(MARY exits. Awkward pause.)

MRS. MEREDITH. Can you believe all this rain?

DICK. Excuse me?

MRS. MEREDITH. We’re having a lot of rain.

DICK. ...Yes.

MRS. MEREDITH. I heard we might have more. Rain is...

(beat) ...good.

DICK. Yes.

MRS. MEREDITH. Oh! And Merry Christmas.

DICK. ...Thanks.

MRS. MEREDITH. What’re you doing for Christmas?

DICK. ...Ah, nothing...

MRS. MEREDITH. Heard it might rain this Christmas season. What’ve you heard?

DICK. Mrs. Meredith—.

MRS. MEREDITH. Mom.

DICK. Mom...I think it’s important to let you know that—.

MRS. MEREDITH. Mary told me. You detest idle chat. I disagree. I find it a useful talent. I mean to be able to speak and not really say anything is an art. Am I right?

DICK. ...No.
MRS. MEREDITH. (not listening) I even read a book on the subject. Grace and Diplomacy – The Art of Small Talk.

DICK. …Mrs. Meredith—.

MRS. MEREDITH. Mom.

DICK. About Christmas—.

MRS. MEREDITH. I agree, we’re going to have a rainy Christmas—.

DICK. No. …What I wanted to say is that I don’t celebrate Christmas

MRS. MEREDITH. Pardon?

DICK. I’m not Christian.

MRS. MEREDITH. (concerned) …Mary failed to inform me… Happy Hanukkah.

DICK. I’m not Jewish either.

MRS. MEREDITH. I don’t suppose “Happy Kwanzaa” is called for?

DICK. I’m not anything.

MRS. MEREDITH. Oh. You have my condolences.

DICK. Truth is, I’m in the theatre.

MRS. MEREDITH. Yes, Mary mentioned you recently finished your PhD on Berky?

DICK. Brecht.

MRS. MEREDITH. (She has no idea who he is.) Brecht, right.

DICK. Brecht felt the objective discernment that autonomous artworks presuppose—. (He stops and reconsiders.) What I’m trying to say is that he eliminated the vicarious experience from the theatre by using various staging techniques to remind the audience that they were in a theatre.

MRS. MEREDITH. (lost) Okay.

DICK. He felt that theatre shouldn’t be magical, i.e., it shouldn’t just help us escape reality, but make us think. He did this sometimes by stopping a play in the middle and putting on a completely different play, or by having the characters break in to song for no reason.
MRS. MEREDITH. (pouring tea) That’s so interesting...so, do you think we’ll have more rain?

DICK. Look, Mrs. Meredith, Mom, I just want you to know that I don’t celebrate Christmas because when Christians took power at the end of the Roman Empire they cancelled the theatre for nearly four hundred years.

MRS. MEREDITH. Did they now.

DICK. I must also tell you that we are not that into Thanksgiving.

MRS. MEREDITH. We?

DICK. Mary and I.

MRS. MEREDITH. Because...

DICK. We don’t think pilgrims are anything to celebrate.

Before they came to America they were called Puritans in England. It was the Puritans who tore Shakespeare’s Globe to the ground.

MRS. MEREDITH. Is there anything you do celebrate?

DICK. The Winter Solstice.

MRS. MEREDITH. (still trying to be nice) And how do we celebrate – Human sacrifice?

DICK. We light candles, read poems to each other, and then Mary plays her oboe.

MRS. MEREDITH. I don’t mean to be apathetic but you do know that my daughter was raised Presbyterian.

(A loud whine – it’s the old juicer. They wait. It stops.)

And Presbyterians are “into” Thanksgiving, not to mention the birthday of our Lord and Savior.

(A louder whine, higher pitched this time – It’s really straining. They wait. It scrapes to a stop.)

And not so much into carrot juice.

DICK. My intention is not to offend.

MRS. MEREDITH. Of course not.

DICK. I just thought it would be best to talk about this right away rather than years from now after we’ve had children.
MRS. MEREDITH. And how do you intend to raise the little heathens?

DICK. We’re going to teach them about all faiths and alternatives.

MRS. MEREDITH. Alternatives?

DICK. Atheism, agnosticism, humanism, deism. Now isn’t this better than talking about the weather? I mean we live in this age where religion is a conversation stopper. But I can tell that you’re open to real talk.

MRS. MEREDITH. (holding back) You’re telling me that at my daughter’s wedding there will be no...God.

DICK. No. I’m saying there will be no wedding. Mary and I are protesting the institution of marriage. As long as gays and lesbians can’t we won’t—.

(A loud whine— it’s the juicer. They wait. Bang! The juicer self-destructs—it sounds like a gunshot.)

MRS. MEREDITH. What the hell!

(MARY enters. She has carrot juice on her face.)

MARY. Not a problem—. The juicer kind of—. Need—. Right back.

(MARY runs into the kitchen.)

MRS. MEREDITH. Dick—.

DICK. Please, Richard.

MRS. MEREDITH. (fake peasantries) I want to inform you, Dick, that although I’ve only known you for what? Two minutes. I find you to be a most egregious young man and the thought of you having intercourse with my daughter, your, what would she be? Your common-law wife? Makes me want to—.

DICK. I just—.

MRS. MEREDITH. Please don’t talk.

DICK. But—.

MRS. MEREDITH. I will now pray for your eternal soul, Dick.

(MRS. MEREDITH bows her head in deep prayer. Pause. DICK waits.)
DICK. I was just trying to...

(MRS. MEREDITH moves her lips when she prays. Beat. DICK begins to sing.)

DICK. (singing)
MRS. MEREDITH, YOU DO KNOW THAT PRAYER DOESN'T WORK
SEVERAL STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT PRAYER HAS NO PERKS
DUKE UNIVERSITY WORKED WITH CHRISTIANS, MUSLIMS,
AND BUDDHISTS TOO
TO MAKE SURE THE STUDY WAS UNBIASED THEY THREW IN
A JEW
THE STUDY CONCLUDED THAT THEIR PRAYERS HAVE ZERO EFFECT
ON THE PATIENT'S OUTCOME, THEY TOOK TIME TO TRIPLE CHECK

(MRS. MEREDITH prays harder.)

DICK. (singing)
ANOTHER STUDY DONE BY SIX MEDICAL CENTERS
ALSO CONCLUDED THAT PRAYER HAD NO EFFECT WHATSOEVER
IN FACT THE PATIENTS WHO WERE PRAYED FOR HAD MORE
COMPICATIONS
THAN THOSE WHO RECEIVED NO PRAYERS OR VENERATIONS

(MRS. MEREDITH redoubles her efforts.)

DICK. (With jazz hands he finishes the song.)
BOTH STUDIES WERE DOUBLE BLIND-
MRS. MEREDITH. Get out!
DICK. I'm just trying-
MRS. MEREDITH. Get out of my house you atheist bastard!
DICK. Actually I'm an agnostic who occasionally leans towards deism-
MRS. MEREDITH. Get out, Dick!

(MARY enters holding half a glass of carrot juice.)
MARY. What’s going—!

MRS. MEREDITH. Oh my God!

MARY. Mom, what?

MRS. MEREDITH. My daughter is dating a communist!

MARY. He’s not a communist; he’s a freethinker.

MRS. MEREDITH. That’s even worse!

(MRS. MEREDITH exits.)

MARY. What the hell—?

DICK. I was trying to have an honest—!

MARY. I warned you about being honest!

DICK. What should I talk about?

MARY. The weather! The weather is a wonderful thing to talk about!

DICK. You mean small—.

MARY. Yes! Polite, inane, meaningless small talk! That’s what you do when you meet your future mother-in-law for the first time on Thanksgiving!

DICK. But that’s all we ever do! No one really says anything substantive.

(A far off gunshot — that stops them.)

MARY. This is goodbye.

DICK. We can make this work.

MARY. There’s a gunman on campus. And this is how you’re going to spend your last minutes. Haranguing some poor pawn in human resources about the spot on her lung?

DICK. Brecht was right! People live in these little worlds. Watching meaningless romantic melodramas, and the corporate evening news. We need to wake up to reality!

(She starts to leave.)

DICK. Wait! I can do it. Small talk.

MARY. You’re incapable.

DICK. One hundred percent small talk.
MARY. Prove it.

(Beat. He pulls himself together.)

DICK. ...It’s...

MARY. Yes?

DICK. Raining.

MARY. ...Yes.

DICK. ...I heard it’s going to rain tomorrow.

MARY. Really, cause I heard it’s going to stop. I get regular weather updates on my iPhone.

DICK. You like your iPhone?

MARY. My whole life is in the palm of my hand.

DICK. Can you update your Facebook page from your iPhone— I can’t!

MARY. I knew it!

(She starts out.)

DICK. Mary wait!

(She pauses.)

Look...I’m about to be blown away in a meaningless act of violence. I just need you to know that I love you.

(Beat. MARY walks up and gives him a tender kiss on the cheek.)

MARY. I have to practice.

(She exits. Loud Rock and Roll — the lights back to the exit interview. DICK puts on his leg cast. The sign dances to life. It reads:)

An Agnostic In A Foxhole

(DICK sits back with his eyes closed. EUNICE sits on her desk with her collage.)

EUNICE. (dreamy) Now imagine your own personal collage. What do you have pasted on it?

(CHLOE runs in.)
THE EXIT INTERVIEW

OFFSTAGE CHEERLEADERS. *(This cheer repeats as needed.)*

Peanut Butter Reese’s Cup mess with us I kick your butt!

EUNICE. Door!

CHLOE. The university’s emergency alert system just—! A gunman was sighted in the Ronald Reagan Cafeteria! That’s right next-door!

EUNICE. Where did you hear this?

CHLOE. The Campus Alert System on my iPhone.

EUNICE. Let me confirm.

*(EUNICE professionally types on her laptop.)*

DICK. A gunman?

CHLOE. *(nervous)* There may be more than one.

EUNICE. *(looking at her computer screen)* She is in fact correct. The police are on site. But, it says we should *(reading)* “stay where we are and take cover.” Chloe, go to your office, get under your desk—.

CHLOE. Can’t I stay here with—?

EUNICE. You have your own storage room.

CHLOE. But—.

EUNICE. And close the—.

CHLOE. But we got no locks.

EUNICE. Door!

CHLOE. Should I tell the cheerleader captain?

EUNICE. He’ll figure it out. Save yourself.

*(She exits.)*

OFFSTAGE CHEERLEADERS. We’re sexy and we’re cute! We’re feminine ta-boot! We’re angry and we’re tough! And we haven’t had enough!

EUNICE. Door!

*(CHLOE runs back and closes the door. The CHEERLEADERS fade.)*

*(nervous but professional)* Shall we continue?
(EUNICE calmly climbs under her desk.)

DICK. But—.

EUNICE. (from under her desk) Next question—

DICK. You're going to interview me from under—.

EUNICE. Were you pleased with the university's health benefit plan?

DICK. Perhaps we should—.

EUNICE. The warning reads that we should stay put.

They're worried that if we run some may end up a victim of friendly fire.

DICK. But—.

EUNICE. Do you want to be a victim of friendly fire?

DICK. Well no, but—.

EUNICE. Trust me, I had a workshop on exactly what to do in this situation. Were you pleased with the university's health benefit plan?

DICK. ...That's a loaded question—.

(rock and roll. The sign boogies to life. It reads:)

Gravity Is Not Mad At You

(Outside the Ronald Reagan Cafeteria WALTER starts to interview a Dean.)

ACTOR #2 (WALTER). This is Walter Kendell, Fox News. And we are live nationwide. I'm here with Dean—.

STAGE MANAGER'S VOICE. Hold Please!

ACTOR #1. What?

STAGE MANAGER'S VOICE. The playwright has re-writes.

(From above, a silver platter is lowered from the fly system. On it are new pages. The actors take them. The platter flies back up.)

ACTOR #2. Are you kidding me?

ACTOR #1. What is this?

*If your theatre doesn't have a fly system then perhaps the playwright's (or stage manager's) arm comes in from the side of the curtain, or proscenium arch, or perhaps the playwright runs out to the audience. Be creative.
STAGE MANAGER'S VOICE. Replacement scene. And he wants you to do it with German accents.

(The actors study the new lines for a moment.)

Go.

(The actors read the following scene, as they have not had time to rehearse it.)

(The sign boogies to life. It reads:)

The Alienation Effect

(The actors add thick German accents — they occasionally slip into German.)

ACTOR #1. (reading to the audience) Poet, playwright, and director Bertolt Brecht was born in Berlin on February 10th 1898 and died August 14th 1956.

ACTOR #2. Brecht thought that a theater should not be a place of Amusement but a political lecture hall. Rather than sympathizing with the characters he encouraged his audience to be conscious thinking observers.

ACTOR #1. Brecht felt that the shattering of the theatrical illusion was critical.

ACTOR #2. Because when an audience loses themselves in a play they are not thinking.

ACTOR #2. If you become absorbed or untertauchen** in the entertainment then the theatre is nothing more than preparation for similar untertauchen in words and fantasies of theatrical leadership: like Herr Hitler.

ACTOR #1. Brecht deliberately set out to wake up his audience.

ACTOR #2. He called this "Verfremdungseffekt."

ACTOR #1. Sometimes called "The Alienation Effect."

ACTOR #2. And so in the interest of breaking the theatrical illusion we will now halt this play entitled Die Ausgang Interviewen and enact a totally different play.


*amusement
**immersed
ACTOR #2. Location:
ACTOR #1. A park bench. Not far from the University.
ACTOR #2. Characters:
ACTOR #1. Two Mutters.*
ACTOR #2. Time:
ACTOR #1. The Present.

(The sign lights up. It reads:)

Wenig Gespräch
(Underneath is the English translation:)

Small Talk
(Lights up on BETH and SAMANTHA, two mothers with baby carriages. They sit on a park bench on a wonderful sunny day — sounds of birds chirping and children playing. They rock their carriages.)

SAMANTHA. Looks like rain.
BETH. Yes, it does.
SAMANTHA. They say it’s the rainiest December in ten years.
BETH. I believe it.

(BETH takes out a baby bottle.)

SAMANTHA. Wait. You’re not going to feed that to your child.
BETH. What?
SAMANTHA. Formula.
BETH. So?
SAMANTHA. It causes immune system shortfall and cell-culture contamination.
BETH. Does not.
SAMANTHA. Heard it on Fox and Friends.
BETH. I heard breastfeeding is the real problem.
SAMANTHA. No.
BETH. Breastfeeding causes thinning in the membranes of your vagina.

*mother
SAMANTHA. How do you know that?

BETH. *The View.*

SAMANTHA. Strange, I heard the problem was beef hormones – it also causes men's hair to fall out and teenage girls to grow abnormally large breasts.

BETH. How do you know–?

SAMANTHA. Oprah network.

BETH. Did you watch her “It’s a New You” no-diet-diet show last week?

SAMANTHA. Missed it. What's the secret?

BETH. Salmon – At least three times a week.

SAMANTHA. I heard salmon has unacceptably high PCB contaminant levels.

BETH. Where?

SAMANTHA. CNN...or was it CNBC?

BETH. What difference does it make – Who can afford salmon today? Not in this economy.

SAMANTHA. Don’t worry, things are going to get better next year.

BETH. How do you know?

SAMANTHA. ABC.

BETH. Cause Fox Business said there’ll be another big downturn right after the holidays.

SAMANTHA. Oh, did you hear that our national debt is out of control – Every man, woman and child in America owes almost fifty thousand dollars to foreign countries?

BETH. I heard that debt isn’t as important as debt-to-income ratio. Which, according to the experts, is just fine.

SAMANTHA. How do you–?

BETH. Rush Limbaugh prayed to God and got an answer.

SAMANTHA. PBS said there was no factual evidence proving the existence of God.

BETH. Really, cause I heard that science has now proven that God is really out there.

SAMANTHA. Where did you hear that?
BETH. Science Friday, maybe, or was it _______ (fill in name of a popular sitcom).

SAMANTHA. That’s not what they said on NPR. They say there’s no way to prove God.

BETH. No, that’s evolution. I watched a special the other night that said evolution was a hoax made up by homosexual scientists who hate God.

SAMANTHA. Dr. Laura told me that most scientists are religious.

BETH. God’s Country Radio Network told me that science and religion have kissed and made up. They’re all in agreement that the world is six thousand years old.

SAMANTHA. I heard it was billions and billions of years old.

BETH. No. The creation was created in only six days.

SAMANTHA. How do you know that?

BETH. I heard it on a Billy Graham special—. (thinking) Or might’ve been the Republican National Convention.

SAMANTHA. Strange cause I heard that it was all created in a single afternoon.

BETH. Huh.

SAMANTHA. Yeah. I heard that the great Father of All Spirit woke up the Sun Mother, who ventured into the dark caves where her internal heat melted the ice creating rivers, and streams, and the world as we know it.

BETH. How do you know that?

SAMANTHA. Not sure, might’ve been the Public Access Channel.


SAMANTHA. Huh. How do you know that?
BETH. Wheel of Fortune. (beat) Oh, I forgot to tell you. My little Sarah said the cutest thing. She said, Mommy did you know that a cheetah can run faster than any other animal on earth.

SAMANTHA. Huh. How does she know that?

BETH. Her teacher.

SAMANTHA. Cause my sweet little Sandy told me that there were new doubts about the cheetahs speed – they now think that antelopes may be faster for short distances.

BETH. How does she—?

SAMANTHA. Animal Planet.

BETH. That’s not what my little Sarah said. Cheetahs are faster.

SAMANTHA. Huh.

BETH. Huh. Wonder who’s right?

SAMANTHA. Yeah, wonder.

(Beat – they think.)

Suppose we could find out for ourselves?

BETH. How would we...?

SAMANTHA. Don’t know.

(Beat – they think.)

BETH. I guess we’d have to go to Africa.

SAMANTHA. Probably so.

(Beat. They continue the following in deep thought.)

BETH. And find a healthy cheetah.

SAMANTHA. Right.

BETH. And an antelope.

SAMANTHA. And a car.

BETH. And then we’d have to get the cheetah and the antelope running.

SAMANTHA. Really, really fast.

BETH. It would be best not to get them running at the same time cause the cheetah would most likely get distracted and eat the antelope.
SAMANTHA. Right, separate tests would be best. And then once they’re running we’d have to follow them in the car.

BETH. And we’d have to test to make sure the speedometer was properly calibrated.

SAMANTHA. Right.

SAMANTHA. And we’d have to get someone else to verify our results. You know, some sort of peer-review process.

SAMANTHA. Yes, peer-review would be important. (beat)

And then we’d know.

BETH. You’re right, then we’d know.

SAMANTHA. Huh.

BETH. Huh. What do ya know?

SAMANTHA. What do ya know?

(They sit there rocking their baby carriages as the lights fade.)

(Rock and Roll—the screen sputters to life. It reads:)

God Found Me A Parking Space

(EUNICE hides under her desk. DICK beside it.)

EUNICE. (anxious) It’s quiet. I think we’re going to be okay. We’re safe. I know it.

DICK. How do you—?

EUNICE. God has blessed me with all these annoying little complications cause it’s all in his plan.

DICK. You mean like day-to-day...

EUNICE. Yes, a plan for everything. When I arrived at work this morning, it was pouring, and a parking spot opened up right in front of the building. And I said thank you Jesus.

DICK. Does a parking spot open up for you every time it rains?

EUNICE. No, sometimes I have to park in the student lot.

DICK. That’s at least a twenty-minute--.

EUNICE. And on those days I say, thank you Jesus.
DICK. But it's a twenty-minute—
EUNICE. And that's okay cause I know that by making me walk in the rain, my Lord is trying to teach me patience.

DICK. How do you—?
EUNICE. Why else would he make me walk so far?

DICK. Perhaps he thinks you need a little exercise.
EUNICE. Patience and exercise.

DICK. My car wouldn't start this morning, what does that—?
EUNICE. When my car doesn't start it's because Jesus wants to remind me about the importance of maintenance.

DICK. And when it runs well?
EUNICE. He wants me to enjoy the smooth road to heaven.

DICK. How about a flat tire?
EUNICE. Jesus wants to tell me not to take things for granted.

DICK. Oil change?
EUNICE. We must renew our vows and throw out the dark part of our soul.

DICK. You believe that. You actually—.
EUNICE. Absolutely.

DICK. You might be the one to answer a question for me.
EUNICE. If I can.

DICK. My girlfriend, ex-girlfriend, was an aspiring oboist.
EUNICE. So you mentioned.

DICK. She practiced sometimes eight-ten hours a day. Within weeks after we started dating she developed O.S. – Overuse Syndrome – a pain in her third and fourth fingers making it impossible to practice. What does that mean?

EUNICE. It's God's way of telling her that she needs to stop obsessing and give the glory of her music to him.

DICK. Not playing kind of depressed her and so doctors prescribed a series of anti-depressants, which brought on suicidal thoughts. What does—
EUNICE. God wants you to know that only he can heal.
DICK. So I took her on vacation to Yellowstone, which brought on even greater depression. Helping her up, she tried to jump to her death, I twisted a testicle. The ambulance taking both of us to hospital collided with a moose—im not making up—this massive moose, which untwisted my tes but then a small lump was discovered during a sc ultrasound. After surgery it was called benign.

EUNICE. God is letting you know that you need to sit 1 and reevaluate your life.

DICK. By giving me a twisted—?

EUNICE. He wants to teach you that sometimes love hurts.

DICK. The doctors ordered me to abstain from sex threee months. During the hiatus my girlfriend ge pregnant, i.e. not mine.

EUNICE. God is questioning your impropriety.

DICK. We broke up. After giving birth to little Ben, I Overuse Syndrome clears up and she wants to get back together. I forgive her fling with her Gestalt Therap But the next day she gets a call inviting her to audit for the National Symphony Orchestra in Washing DC, and so she breaks up with me again because she convinced that her fingers will stop working if she has anything to do with me. What was God’s plan in that?

EUNICE. He wants you to abstain from sex—.

DICK. Couldn’t he just tell me that! Couldn’t he just wr in the clouds, “Hi, Dick, I just twisted and untwisted your balls so that you will abstain until you marry Signed God.” Wouldn’t that be more effective?

EUNICE. God doesn’t work that way. Writing in clouds lacks sophistication.

DICK. And twisting testicles does?

EUNICE. You can’t see the big picture. If you could you know that everything will work out for the best in the end.

DICK. Not for the moose. It didn’t die quietly. They had take us out of the damaged ambulance and wait fo another. While we’re laying there on the gurneys, j
a few feet away, this big moose is moaning and flopping around. So the ambulance driver decides to put it out of its misery – he takes a tire iron from the ambulance and begins beating the moose! Do you realize how long it takes to beat a moose to death!

EUNICE. God wants you to know that what he gives he can take away.

DICK. The driver was so preoccupied with whacking the moose that he forgot to put the ambulance in park. It rolls back over us. Breaking my girlfriend’s arm and severing my foot. Doctors reattach it in a fifteen-hour operation. What does that--.

EUNICE. He has a bigger plan! You just don’t see it!

DICK. How do you know that you’re correctly reading the mind of God?

EUNICE. I’m confident in what God has assigned me.

DICK. But what if the overuse syndrome means that God finds the sound of oboes annoying? And what about the dead moose – the fact that it took so long to die – Does it mean that moose are evil beings in God’s eyes? And the topper has got to be the broken arm and severed foot. Why is it that people pray for miracles all the time and they, according to you, come true? The spot on your lung. But that same God never answers the prayers of amputees? Their limbs never grow back.

EUNICE. Yours--.

DICK. Because of Science! For thousands of years amputees’ prayers went unanswered! What does that mean? Does God hate amputees?!

(A gunshot - closer. They are quiet - scared.)

EUNICE. Oh my God, I think that was in the building.

DICK. (whispering) And what is God’s purpose now?

EUNICE. God wants us to realize how precious life is.

DICK. By killing us?

EUNICE. I don’t believe I’m going to be killed!

DICK. But if we are?
EUNICE. Then God must need me up in heaven for some reason!

DICK. If God needs us in heaven—.

EUNICE. I didn’t say us, I said me!

DICK. If God needs you in heaven why doesn’t he just have you die peacefully in your sleep? Why make a big show of it! Why do it in such a way that someone might doubt—?

EUNICE. I’m not a religious expert!

DICK. You came up with a pretty good reason for the bludgeoning of a moose; I think that qualifies you as an expert!

EUNICE. All I know is that God is testing me.

(a gunshot)

DICK. Shit. That one was closer.

EUNICE. (terrified) God is testing me.

(another gunshot a little closer)

(ailing) God is testing me.

(another gunshot a little closer)

(starting to panic) God is testing me. God is testing me. God is testing me.

(Gunshot. Blackout. Silence.)

(In the darkness the screen fades up. It reads:)

Intermission
ACT TWO

(The sign twinkles to life – It reads:)
Towards A Poor Theatre
(The effervescent CHEERLEADERS run center – they are once again followed by the ski-masked GUNMAN who stands quietly in the background.)

CHEERLEADER #1. (spirited) Welllll–come back!
CHEERLEADER #2. (bubbly) Yeeaaa!

('They chest bump.)

CHEERLEADER #1. We hope you had a fantastic intermission! Before we begin act two–!
CHEERLEADER #2. Yea, Act Two!
CHEERLEADER #1. Brief announcements!
CHEERLEADER #2. Did you know the theatre is poor?
CHEERLEADER #1. Currently your typical non-profit theatre receives only fifty percent of its operating budget from ticket sales!
CHEERLEADER #2. Yea, ticket sales!
CHEERLEADER #1. The rest comes from grants!
CHEERLEADER #2. Donations!
CHEERLEADER #1. Local businesses!
CHEERLEADER #2. Yea! Local businesses!
CHEERLEADER #1. And patrons like you!
CHEERLEADER #2. Gooooooo patrons!
CHEERLEADER #1. If you don’t help your local theatre you could lose it!
CHEERLEADER #2. Just a few bucks really makes a difference!

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