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**Boston Theater
Marathon of
Ten-Minute Plays
Volume V**

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



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FOREWORD

On Sunday, April 13, 2003, the Boston Theater Marathon continued its sold-out annual run at the Boston Playwrights' Theatre—on BPT's two black box stages. Dozens of actors and directors moved from one theatre to the other (switching places from one hour to the next), performing 45 imaginative, distinctly different, hilarious, sad, inventive and wonderful ten-minute plays for our packed houses. And each one was supported by a different New England theater company. It doesn't get better than this! It was fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants theatre: the technical crew moved through the SRO crowds with couches, chairs, lamps, and boxes to arrange each new world every ten-minutes; the actors, waiting to enter on cue, stood in line next to audience members waiting for seats. The energy was indescribable—just like these challenging and worthy plays. You had to be there.

Once again, these works were culled from well over 300 submissions from playwrights all over New England. Wonderful gifts from theatre companies and theatre artists were raffled off during the day, culminating at 10 P.M. with a blast-out party containing the best schmoozing found in six states. Because of the ever-generous donation from The Humanities Foundation at Boston University, once again we were able to give all of our proceeds to the Theatre Community Benevolent Fund—a non-profit charity organization established to give emergency funds to theatre folk in need.

These plays are as different as the writers and the companies who produced them. They range from out-of-the-world farce to the tragic, from somber to silly, from meaningful to...well, they're always meaningful. I hope you will enjoy reading these tasty "snacks" as much as I did watching them.

With warmest regards,

Kate Snodgrass
Artistic Director
Boston Theater Marathon V

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**THE ORNITHOLOGIST'S
MOTHER**

By Jake Strautman

CHARACTERS

Tedesco

Ewing

Sutton

(TEDESCO stands centerstage looking stage right through a theodolite on a tripod. He has a clipboard and writes down his calculations. He refers to a second clip board several times. A bird chirps off right. He pulls out a pair of binoculars and scans the area off-right, nothing. EWING sneaks quietly on stage left. He puts down a pail he is carrying and carefully aims a shotgun at TEDESCO. TEDESCO squints again through the theodolite, takes out a pair of binoculars and observes the bird.)

TEDESCO. Hello, momma bird.

(EWING makes a birdcall. TEDESCO pans across the audience looking for the bird. EWING calls again. He is crouched down. TEDESCO pans until he is facing EWING but obviously looking in the trees for the bird. EWING calls again. TEDESCO slowly brings the binoculars down, brings them into focus, and drops his clipboard.)

TEDESCO. Don't shoot! I'm the surveyor.

EWING. You from the city?

TEDESCO. That's quite a convincing birdcall you have. I thought you were from the family Ictusiad, genus Oriolus, rare in these parts.

EWING. You from the courthouse?

TEDESCO. Yes – no – yes, I spend most of my days outdoors. Is this your land?

EWING. Yes, by God.

TEDESCO. A wonderful assortment of undergrowth, plenty of nest-making possibilities.

EWING. It's too dry.

TEDESCO. Droughts are very dry, but to the female burrowing brown-wing, paradise.

(EWING begins to lower the gun.)

Are you Mr. Ewing's son?

EWING. Don't know *Mr. Ewing*. It's just Momma and me.

TEDESCO. You're Mrs. Ewing's son.

EWING. *Miss Ewing*, yes. I'm Darren.

TEDESCO. Darren, I'm here to settle the dispute between the Ewing and the Sutton land. My name is –

EWING. (*raising the rifle*) Sutton land! You calling this Sutton land?

TEDESCO. No – yes – no. I'm here to make a fair and impartial assessment based on these most accurate measurements and the previous deeds' descriptions. Since Mr. Sutton is taking you and your momma to court over a border dispute, he's invited me on his, I mean *the* disputed land. When neither of you answered your doors, I left a notice in both your mailboxes.

EWING. (*lowering the rifle*) That's why I came down –

TEDESCO. I appreciate the company –

EWING. To see that you're making a "fair assessment," understand?

TEDESCO. Oh, you don't have to worry; I'm an elected official. You may have seen my name on the ballot...I'm Jeremy Tedesco –

EWING. Where were you born?

TEDESCO. In Pennsylvania, but my mother moved us to Marshall County when I was very small –

EWING. Just your mother?

TEDESCO. Yes.

EWING. Pleasure to meet you, Mr. Tedesco.

TEDESCO. You're welcome to watch, but I have to do these boring triangulations, work, work, work. I wish I could keep my same job but without all this measuring. You know? Daylight's a-wasting, and the topo map is off something awful.

(*EWING sits and watches him.*)

Beautiful country you've got here.

EWING. Land's nothing without water.

TEDESCO. (*looking through binoculars*) That is a beautiful waterfall, the rocks, each a bubbling bath, a tiny little ecosphere.

EWING. Are you looking at that goddamn fence Sutton strung across the run?

TEDESCO. No, I'm confirming the angle measurements.

EWING. Well.

TEDESCO. I'm looking. The new one right before the stream...with the section cut out.

EWING. Did that with a pair of shears. Sutton can't build a fence anyhow.

TEDESCO. It's rather straight, it looks like.

EWING. Yeah, straight across my momma's land. How is she supposed to do the wooshing, or take a bath if she wants to?

TEDESCO. Your well?

EWING. Dried up last week. Right here's the only water source this side of the ridge and it belonged to my Momma's side of the family long before Sutton bought up all that land he don't use.

TEDESCO. So it does belong to Sutton?

EWING. Watch it, surveyor. You'll make a fair assessment and soon, then git off my land, then I'll take my momma this bucket full of Ewing-water for her cookin'.

TEDESCO. I understand, Darren.

(He looks back into the theodolite. A different bird calls from stage-right. TEDESCO picks up binoculars and looks.)

Shhh! That's not a grey-breasted tweaking titty-mouse...Where is he? There there.

(SUTTON comes out from behind a tree with his gun aimed at EWING who raises his gun in return. They inch closer. TEDESCO continues talking, obliviously.)

EWING. Mr. Surveyor –

TEDESCO. (*whispering*) Shhh! Birds are amazing creatures. They have different songs for different times of day, ways of telling each other of danger.

(EWING and SUTTON begin a slow circling.)

EWING. Mr. Surveyor, sir –

TEDESCO. Whether it's coming in fast or stalking them nice and slow. Oh. Not even an adolescent male, never heard of one so far north, must be the climate change, and a young one at that – oh, my goodness, still has his face fuzz, all by his lonesome. Darren, do your bird call again. I bet you wouldn't believe it if I told you. I never really wanted to be a surveyor. My whole life I just wanted to draw birds. My mother made me study maths in school. He's beautiful. Tweak Tweak! Darren, Darren!

SUTTON. On a first name basis already. You Ewings don't know when to stop weasling away at my land. I call in the county and here you are all jovial-like. Makes me sick.

EWING. I ain't been here five minutes. You're the "truss-passer." Who strings a 100 feet of barb wire stretching across my path to the new swimming hole? There's your proof of wrong-doing. Mr. Tedesco is come to vindicate me and my Momma.

(SUTTON aims his gun at TEDESCO.)

TEDESCO. Mr. Sutton, I presume.

SUTTON. Just call me Sutton.

TEDESCO. Sutton. If you'll lower your weapons, both of you, for a moment, I can start to figure this border problem out, and I'm not taking either side. I'm just here to do the surveying, but I can't concentrate on triangulation looking down the barrels of two hunting rifles.

SUTTON. Ha! Hunting rifle, why this is just my bird pellet gun.

EWING. Yeah. My hunting rifle's double-barreled. This is my crow picker.

TEDESCO. Bird pellets? Crow picker?

SUTTON. Didn't know the size of the jailbird down here, guess I should have brought the heavy artillery.

TEDESCO. You two kill birds?

SUTTON. I'll take out anything that gits near my roses.
They's not easy to grow during a drought.

EWING. Same goes for me and Momma's corn.

SUTTON. Is that why you're down here muddying up my
pristine mountain spring? To water a useless row of
corn?

EWING. You don't have no use for your water, you don't
even have a real garden.

SUTTON. Spying on top of trespassing is it? You're my wit-
ness, and it's an award-winning rose garden. Twice it
was in the Tab.

EWING. Roses! You can't eat them. Who made you plant
those, your Momma?

SUTTON. (*wielding his gun*) Never speak ill of my Momma,
God rest her.

EWING. I'm sorry to hear she's passed on.

(*They circle again. The new bird repeats its call.*)

TEDESCO. Shhhh. Hello, little orphan boy. I didn't forget
about you. Tweak. Tweak. Don't mind the scary men.

SUTTON. What's he doing? You better get back to work. My
tax dollars are paying for this.

TEDESCO. I'm not doing any work until you both drop the
rifles, er bird guns. Can I have a moment for a quiet
sketch? This is very exciting.

(*He pulls out a sketch pad.*)

SUTTON. What's he drawin'?

EWING. Some bird. You heard him. His Momma wouldn't
let him be a bird painter or drawer.

SUTTON. Oh. Bird painter? What's that called in Latin?

EWING. What are you talking about?

SUTTON. There's a fancy city term for it. Bird-o-grapher or
something.

EWING. Bird-o-grapher! How about Wren-brandt!

(*EWING laughs heartily. SUTTON is dismayed.*)

SUTTON. Laugh you scrawny pigeon, but I bet my eyes are twice as good as you – and you half my age.

EWING. You want to prove it.

SUTTON. Yeah.

(They look around for something to shoot.)

SUTTON. Well, what are we shootin' at boy. Wait. I got it. See that little bird up there the fellow's drawing? I'll give you first shot. If after you miss, and I don't clip him neither, then I'll still call you the better man. Hell, I'll give you part of this run you're stealing from, but only 'cause of your momma.

EWING. You can't give what ain't yours.

SUTTON. Go ahead, I'm right behind you.

(They both aim at the bird.)

TEDESCO. Thank you, little orphan bird. Now back to work.... What the hell's going on? Mr. Sutton! Mr. Ewing! You can both stand guard if you wish, but if anyone, anyone shoots the grey-breasted titty-mouse, I might just find that my angles are off to the benefit of the non-bird killing party! Understand?

(They lower their guns and stand on either side.)

TEDESCO. Fifteen-point-five degrees Northeast toward the silver maple. I did that. Now, I've shot the Sutton line.

SUTTON. Shot what?

TEDESCO. That's what we call it, shooting the line. Do you mind? Eighty-four-point-five degrees from the Oak. And now I've got the Ewing line set. But for the two lines to match up...and here's what's stranger, the topo map is all haywire.

EWING. Topo?

TEDESCO. Topographical.

SUTTON. I knew that.

EWING. Is that like show you the hills and valleys?

TEDESCO. The elevation, yes.

SUTTON. Would you let the man work? He's about to prove you and your momma as liars.

EWING. You calling my momma a liar?

SUTTON. You Ewings are all the same, going way back to Eugene Ewing, making up stuff to gain new land.

EWING. Say it again! The new swimming hole is mine. I need it. I use it. You sprinkle it on your flower garden, what use is that? I don't care if your mother did plant it.

SUTTON. How dare you say that: that garden was the thing Momma was proudest of. In the final days, she would look up at me and say, "I look like the last rose o'summer." That's what she used to say. She was always thinking of her garden in the end. I go to give my roses their daily drink of mountain spring water, cool and fresh running down the hill from right chere spot, and it's filled with silt and muddier than the Ohio. So, I come to see what's going on. And there you are filling your bucket in the new swimming hole on my land!

TEDESCO. Did you say "new" swimming hole?

(He looks again at his chart.)

EWING. That's Ewing land you're claiming.

SUTTON. You want to throw down pigeon boy?

EWING. I'll throw down.

(They toss their guns and start to wrestle.)

TEDESCO. Fellows. Guys. Hey! Both of your deeds are completely wrong.

SUTTON. The county sure ain't taking my land.

EWING. You said it, Sutton. The state took my momma's coal from under her. We had to dig a second well.

SUTTON. Swindled! Swindled we were. Our well went dry as bark. Company bastards try to repay us with...

TEDESCO. Wait, wait! There's a coalmine under here?

EWING. Yep.

SUTTON. It's the county's fault.

(SUTTON and EWING stop wrestling and advance on TEDESCO.)

TEDESCO. Fellows, now, I think I figured it out.

(A baby bird squawks with intensity.)

TEDESCO. Uh – fellows – *(more squawks)*

(TEDESCO turns and looks through the binoculars.

EWING and SUTTON look at each other.)

Oh no, he's trying to fly. He's got no mother to help him. He's going to....

(All three follow the bird's fall from the nest.)

EWING. Is it okay?

SUTTON. I think I'm going to be sick.

TEDESCO. Quick, Sutton, give me your jacket. Ewing, I need something to hold the poor thing in.

(EWING hands him his pail. TEDESCO runs off stage.

SUTTON and EWING watch with frustration.)

EWING. *(calling to TEDESCO)* He's there. Beneath that silver maple.

SUTTON. No, it's the next one over. You got him.

TEDESCO. *(offstage)* He's still alive!

EWING. He'd be in much better shape if you hadn't shot his mamma.

SUTTON. I never shot his mamma. I don't think. Didn't you say you picked off a few birds yourself?

(TEDESCO enters with the bucket.)

EWING. Maybe I did.

TEDESCO. It's okay baby bird. I'm not going to hurt you.

(TEDESCO continues to coo to the bird, but EWING and

SUTTON take the pail and begin nurturing.)

EWING. We can walk him up to my place. My Momma will know what to do.

SUTTON. He fell on my land. At least you can accept that. Besides, I might owe it to his...family...Ya'll come down to my place. I got some milk and bread we can feed it.

EWING. Yeah. We might owe it that.

TEDESCO. Careful. Careful.

(SUTTON and EWING begin offstage with the bird.)

SUTTON. You coming County-man?

TEDESCO. Yes – no – yes, fellows, I haven't finished here yet. The coal mines must have shifted the elevation and the water table, but the property markers are gone and the topo map is...

EWING. Sutton, I've got to come down here for water on Mondays and Thursdays, for Momma, if you understand.

SUTTON. It's for your momma. Of course I understand. I'll water my momma's roses on Saturdays, Wednesdays, and ... uh...when the mountain stream is the clearest, now that I know your bathing schedule.

TEDESCO. Can you guys help me gather my equipment?

EWING/SUTTON. No problem. Here take my gun.

(TEDESCO is loaded down with guns. EWING and SUTTON begin to exit carrying bucket, theodolite and flags.)

SUTTON. So, tell me Mr., how did you get into this surveying business.

TEDESCO. My daddy left us across the Pennsylvania state line.

SUTTON. I'm sorry to hear that.

EWING. But why did your daddy leave?

TEDESCO. Oh, he was fond of the boops.

SUTTON. I'm sorry...what is a...?

TEDESCO. A fish. Mediterranean. But, like I was saying, my mother was a beautiful woman...

EWING/SUTTON. Uh-huh. Amen. Mine too. Eyes of Mary, etc..

(All exit. Lights out.)

ECKSTEIN & SONS

By Alan Brody

CHARACTERS

CARL ECKSTEIN – Late thirties.

MAURY ECKSTEIN – His grandfather, late seventies.

(**SETTING:** *The Showroom of Eckstein Quality Clothiers, around 1:30 p.m.*)

(**AT RISE:** *On stage there is rack of suits, a shelf of shirts and a counter. CARL ECKSTEIN is on his cell phone.*)

CARL. How much? I couldn't have heard you right...How could I have lost that much? Two weeks ago I had... Jesus, Hal. You're breaking my balls here...Yeah, yeah, yeah. Buy now when shares are cheap. I heard that before...Where am I going to get the money?...I tell you what...I tell you what, Hal. You show me a portfolio going up for a change and I'll throw my money into it...Don't jerk me off. It's hemorrhaging...You know something, Hal?...You know something?...I don't give a shit that it's happening to everybody else. It's happening to me. I tell you what...I tell you what, Hal...You show me some improvement in two weeks or I liquidate and turn it all into suits and shirts...I'm saying good-bye now...A customer just came in. I'm saying good-bye...Good-bye, Hal.

(**CARL** *punches off and calls offstage.*)

CARL. Grandpa! I need you!

MAURY. (*offstage*) I got a sleeve.

CARL. Take the pins out of your mouth.

MAURY. (*off*) When I'm finished.

CARL. I've got to get out of here.

MAURY. (*off*) Where's the girl?

CARL. Lunch.

MAURY. (*off*) All right. I'm finished.

(**MAURY ECKSTEIN** *enters from the back room. He has a tape measure around his neck and holds a suit jacket with pinned sleeves.*)

MAURY. These new fabrics. Look at this. It makes me ashamed to do alterations.

CARL. That's top of the line.

MAURY. The line is very low.

CARL. Sidney Rickoff loves that suit. He told me he's going to wear it to the World Trade Organization conference.

MAURY. What's he doing there?

CARL. As far as I'm concerned, he's wearing our clothes.

MAURY. You want me to embroider Eckstein Quality Clothiers on the back like a T-shirt?

CARL. I'll be back in an hour.

MAURY. Can I say something as a grandfather instead of as an employee who gave you the business in the first place?

CARL. You gave it to my father. He gave it to me.

MAURY. As a grandfather I have something to say.

CARL. All right.

MAURY. What I have to say is, where are you going?

CARL. Grandpa...

MAURY. A woman or a bar?

CARL. You wouldn't understand.

MAURY. I built this business from a pack on my back. You think I still live in the Garden of Eden?

CARL. I'm going to the bank.

MAURY. A girl or a bar would be better.

CARL. You didn't talk like that five years ago when I was buying all the new locations.

MAURY. As a matter of fact, I did. You weren't listening.

CARL. I've made my money work for all of us.

MAURY. Why should money work for us? I always thought we were supposed to work for money.

(CARL goes to the rack.)

CARL. What's this?

MAURY. What?

CARL. This suit.

MAURY. A return.

CARL. This fabric looks ten years old.

MAURY. Twenty-five. Seymour Schiff. He came in this morning. He was upset the fabric wore out.

CARL. Twenty-five years.

MAURY. I always guaranteed my fabrics.

CARL. You gave him his money back?

MAURY. I exchanged.

CARL. What did you give him?

MAURY. The suit that was there.

CARL. That was mohair!

MAURY. It's a hard fabric to work on.

CARL. You altered it.

MAURY. Seymour's got a difficult build. Always did.

CARL. This has got to stop.

MAURY. What does?

CARL. This crazy business of...

MAURY. Honor. It's called honor, Carl. I gave the man my guarantee.

CARL. This is just why I keep you in the back. I can't trust you out here.

MAURY. You can trust the girl? She doesn't know synthetic from natural.

CARL. She's not going to wipe me out with integrity.

MAURY. What are you doing at the bank?

CARL. I'm taking out a loan.

MAURY. Another one.

CARL. I'm in control.

MAURY. This isn't the time for another location.

CARL. It's not for that.

MAURY. What, then? Not more stock.

CARL. Hal says it's a good time to buy.

MAURY. I'll tell you something, I think you've got a gambling problem.

CARL. Investment isn't gambling.

(MAURY shrugs.)

CARL. Don't shrug like that. You know it makes me crazy when you shrug like that.

MAURY. How much money did you lose last year?

CARL. None.

MAURY. None.

CARL. It's all on paper. I just have to hold on, I'll make an incredible profit.

MAURY. That'll be on paper, too. What does Rita think of all this?

CARL. She trusts me.

MAURY. She doesn't know.

CARL. Should I consult the kids, too?

MAURY. It wouldn't hurt. What's your collateral? You've already used the Perth Amboy.

(No answer.)

MAURY. This place?

CARL. It's not a big deal.

MAURY. This place?

CARL. I'm not going to default.

MAURY. You've paid off the Perth Amboy?

CARL. You never cared about the Perth Amboy, anyway.

MAURY. I care about this place.

CARL. I'm taking out a loan. I'm not trashing the store.

MAURY. Why don't you use Rita as collateral? Or the boys? Put them at risk.

CARL. Don't be unreasonable.

MAURY. This place is my child. As much as your father was, may he rest in peace. And you know there's a risk.

CARL. You have to take risks to win.

MAURY. What's winning?

CARL. Everything I do is good for the business.

MAURY. A spotless reputation is good for the business.

CARL. (*with too much sincerity*) I know. You've taught me that. It was an important lesson.

MAURY. Don't patronize me.

CARL. All right. It's the twentieth century. Get used to it.

MAURY. Something happened to decency when the number at the end of the century changed?

CARL. Everything I'm doing is decent.

MAURY. It's legal. Decent includes human feelings.

CARL. I have feelings. I care about Rita, the kids...

MAURY. And me?

CARL. Of course, you.

MAURY. I wondered. Because more and more lately, I've been feeling like an employee who might be downsized.

CARL. I've got twenty-five people in each of the other locations. There's just you, me, and the girl here. How could I downsize you?

MAURY. This place is why you have twenty-five people at the other ones. This is Eckstein's Quality Clothiers. The other places are trafe. Fast food shirts and suits. Even the people who never heard of me or your father, may he rest in peace, go to those other places because of this store. This is where honor and quality started.

CARL. What do you want from me?

MAURY. Stay here. I'll buy us lunch. We can sit here and talk over bagels and cream cheese. Maybe a white fish.

CARL. I don't have time.

MAURY. No, my precious grandson. I'm the one who doesn't have time. Sit down. We'll talk first and eat later. If we feel like it.

CARL. I can't...

MAURY. (*sharply now*) Sit down! (CARL *hesitates*) I'll report you to the union.

CARL. What union?

MAURY. Me. I just made myself a chapter. Sit! (*CARL sits*)

From the time you were pishing in your diapers, I couldn't make up my mind. I picked you up and held you in my arms and my blood turned to love flowing through my body. That didn't stop me from seeing the way you held your little fists tight like this.

(MAURY looks down at CARL's fists that are balled up as described. CARL realizes, opens them, but too late.)

MAURY. And that's how it's been for thirty-eight years. I let your father, may he rest in peace, deal with it when he was alive. It left me free to love you. He could slap you down when you said rude things to your grandmother, may she rest in peace, and me. He could go down to the police station when your school complained you were selling marijuana in the halls— and he could be the one who could believe you when you said it was oregano.

CARL. It was.

MAURY. It wasn't. And if it was? There you were, already selling shoddy goods. No, when he died, I had to give up my grandparent's privilege of unconditional love. And by then it was too late. No way to reach you. Loyalty? Old-fashioned. Ethics? Sentimental. Personal honor? A frill. And frankly I shudder for my great grandchildren.

CARL. I keep them in the best clothes. I feed them the best food.

MAURY. And you'll do anything to keep it that way. They're growing up thinking the most important thing in the world is the best clothes and the best food. Soon they're going to be connoisseurs of the best drugs.

CARL. Kevin is ten years old, for Chrissake.

MAURY. I knew you were going to be a heartless, self-interested little putz when you were eight.

CARL. Why are you doing this?

MAURY. I got no power, Carl. I gave my life to your father and he gave it to you. I'm telling you that whether or

not you downsize me, you've shut me out of my own life. You should know that.

CARL. Dad and I made sure you had a good pension.

MAURY. And that took care of everything.

CARL. I don't know what you want from me!

MAURY. Wait for me to die before you go to the bank again.

CARL. You're manipulating me.

MAURY. No, Carl. I'm begging.

CARL. It's a question of timing, Grandpa.

MAURY. And that's all you can say.

CARL. I never know how to talk to you.

(MAURY nods in agreement.)

CARL. I'm going.

(CARL starts out. Stops.)

CARL. Aren't you going to stop me?

MAURY. With what?

(CARL leaves. MAURY goes to the old suit and examines it expertly.)

MAURY. Maybe I could still get something out of this.

(HE starts to snip the seams...)

END

AIRPORT HELL

by Robert Brustein

CHARACTERS

Eurydice
Airport Attendant

The Boston Theatre Marathon production of *AIRPORT HELL* was directed by David Wheeler and included:

EURYDICE Paula Plum
AIRPORT ATTENDANT Karen Macdonald

(A check-in desk in an airport terminal. A desk sign with the motto "Delta is Ready When You Are." A pleasant female ATTENDANT is busy on the phone. EURYDICE WATSON, carrying a large bag and a carry-on, comes up to sign in.)

EURYDICE. Miss?

ATTENDANT. I'll be with you in a moment. *(to the phone)*
Well, why wouldn't she leave him? This is the fifth time he's cheated on her in a month. *(to EURYDICE)* This won't take a moment.

EURYDICE. *(pleasant)* My plane is leaving in forty minutes. I have to check in. And there are long lines at security.

ATTENDANT. What plane is that?

EURYDICE. Flight 5802 to Tampa.

ATTENDANT. Oh, that flight's been cancelled. They didn't phone you?

EURYDICE. Cancelled? Why?

ATTENDANT. They never tell us. Could be weather. Could be equipment.

EURYDICE. But I have to get to Tampa today. My daughter is having a baby.

ATTENDANT. Really? Boy or girl?

EURYDICE. They think it's a baby girl.

ATTENDANT. Isn't that precious? What are they going to name her?

EURYDICE. I'm sorry. I'm in a hurry.

ATTENDANT. Of course you are. Listen, I can't help you, but I suggest you take the airport shuttle over to United at Terminal C. They have dozens of flights to Tampa.

EURYDICE. Thank you. You've been very kind.

ATTENDANT. *(The ATTENDANT goes back to her phone call).* So

tell her to chuck the bum out of the house, and find herself another guy.

(EURYDICE wanders in circles with her luggage as the ATTENDANT changes her desk card to “Fly the Friendly Skies of United.”)

EURYDICE. I have a flight to Tampa today and the woman at Delta said...

ATTENDANT. (*not friendly*) Wait a minute. Please go to the back of the line.

EURYDICE. What line? I’m the only passenger here.

ATTENDANT. You jumped the queue. There are hundreds of other passengers waiting to check in, unless you are a First Class passenger, a Silver Wings Plus, or can fake a disability.

EURYDICE. I do have a disability. (*She pretends to limp.*) I sprained my ankle.

ATTENDANT. All right. I’ll take you then. You’re going to Tampa you say? How many bags to check?

EURYDICE. Just this one.

(*The ATTENDANT takes it and puts it on the roller.*)

ATTENDANT. Yes, United does have a flight to Tampa, leaving at 2:15 PM. Give me your Delta ticket. (*She rips it up.*)

EURYDICE. That’s great.

ATTENDANT. But it only flies on alternate Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, except for Thanksgiving weekend, Gay Pride Week, and Shevouth, when it flies on alternate Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Unfortunately, today is Sunday, when there is no flight to Tampa. I suggest you try American in Terminal B. I believe they have a flight to Tampa this afternoon.

EURYDICE. But you’ve ripped up my ticket.

ATTENDANT. Not to worry. The ticket is in the computer.

EURYDICE. And you’ve checked my luggage.

ATTENDANT. Yes, to Tampa. Aren’t you going there?

EURYDICE. On another plane.

ATTENDANT. Well, the bag would have been lost anyway.
(*proudly*) We misplace 10,000 pieces of baggage every day. Isn't that impressive? Here, fill out a claim check.

EURYDICE. Never mind. It's just a lot of baby things, and presents. I kept all my personal items in my carry-on.

ATTENDANT. Very smart. I never check bags myself.

(*EURYDICE rolls her carry-on around in ever-widening circles, as the ATTENDANT changes the desk card to "American Airlines: Getting There is Half the Fun."*)

EURYDICE. I was told that you might have a ticket for me on a flight to Tampa. I was on Delta Flight 5456 but the plane got cancelled.

ATTENDANT. We are flying to Tampa today, at 2:45 PM, Flight 376.

EURYDICE. Thank God.

ATTENDANT. But the plane is presently full.

EURYDICE. Oh, no.

ATTENDANT. I'd be happy to put you on a waiting list. We often get cancellations.

EURYDICE. Oh, all right.

ATTENDANT. Your best bet is to call the airline directly. They sometimes put seats aside. Here's the number. Do you have a cell phone?

EURYDICE. Yes.

(*She dials it. The same ATTENDANT answers the phone.*)

PHONE VOICE. Welcome to American Airlines, where getting there is half the fun. For English, press one. Para hablar en Espanol, numero dos. (*EURYDICE presses "one."*) For bankruptcy claims, press one. For over-sold flights, press two. For sexual harrassment by the steward, press three. For trashed, drenched, and mutilated luggage, press four. For all other miseries, press five. (*EURYDICE quickly presses "five."*) We're sorry. All of our representatives are currently busy with other

customers. Please stay on the line. Your call is very important to us. (*Bad music plays. EURYDICE shakes the phone in frustration*).

EURYDICE. If it's so damned important, then answer the goddamned phone.

PHONE VOICE. Did you swear at me?

EURYDICE. No, just talking to myself.

PHONE VOICE. Then how can I help you?

EURYDICE. I'm told you have a plane leaving for Tampa in a few hours, Flight 376. But it's full.

PHONE VOICE. Let me see. Yes, we do have a single seat on Flight 376. Do you want it?

EURYDICE. Please!!!

PHONE VOICE. Name?

EURYDICE. Eurydice Watson.

PHONE VOICE. Credit card number?

EURYDICE. Yes, it's American Express 55603-80589-3012890

PHONE VOICE. Expires?

EURYDICE. 05/21/06.

PHONE VOICE. You expire today.

EURYDICE. Today?!!!

PHONE VOICE. Let me read this back to you.

EURYDICE. Please don't bother. Just ticket me. I'm going to be late.

PHONE VOICE. All right, you have one seat on Flight 346 to Tampa, Florida, leaving at 2:45 PM this afternoon and arriving at 1:45 PM.

EURYDICE. Wait a minute. How can the plane arrive before it leaves?

PHONE VOICE. That's just what it says here.

EURYDICE. That it leaves at 2:45 PM and arrives at 1:45 PM?

PHONE VOICE. Maybe there's a time change?

EURYDICE. (*beginning to lose it*) The plane is going to Florida for Christ sake and leaving from Boston. How can there be a time change?

PHONE VOICE. Oh, I see the problem. That plane has been diverted to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It arrives at 1:45 PM the next day. I knew there was a time change.

EURYDICE. What about Tampa.

PHONE VOICE. All our Tampa flights have been temporarily rerouted today to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

EURYDICE. What do I have to do to get to Florida today? Please help me? My daughter is having a baby!

PHONE VOICE. Go to the reservation desk. *(And she hangs up.)*

(EURYDICE wanders back to the American Airlines ATTENDANT.)

ATTENDANT. Any luck?

EURYDICE. No, all the flights to Tampa have been temporarily rerouted to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

ATTENDANT. Listen, I've been looking at the schedules, and your best bet is this new low fare airline at Terminal X called Limbo Airlines. They have regular flights to all the southern cities.

EURYDICE. I didn't know there was a Terminal X.

ATTENDANT. At the very extreme end of the airport.

EURYDICE. *(at the end of her rope)* You've been very kind.

ATTENDANT. No problem.

(EURYDICE wheels her carry-on round and round in circles until the ATTENDANT changes the name tag to "Limbo Airlines: It's Worth the Wait.")

ATTENDANT. Hello, we've been waiting for you. Welcome to Limbo Airlines: Home of the Limboliner.

EURYDICE. Do you have a goddamn seat on a goddamn flight to goddamn Tampa.

ATTENDANT. Yes, we do happen to have a seat, on the all-new luxury 787 Limboliner.

EURYDICE. Thank God.

ATTENDANT. But that flight has been delayed indefinitely due to turbulence and flatulence.

EURYDICE. Oh, this is hell.

ATTENDANT. No, this is Limbo. For Hell, you must go to Pluto Airlines at Terminal Z, and board the River Styx Puddle Jumper. The equipment is very old, and the airline is experiencing interminable delays. But Captain Charon and the capable Styx flight crew will eventually get you safely to Hell, or wherever your final destination may be. Until your flight is called, however, feel free to wait as long as necessary in Limbo's comfortable departure lounge, where time, we assure you, will pass very very slowly.

(Slow fade on EURYDICE in total despair, crying "Help!!!")

A CLOSET FLUNG WIDE OPE'

By Shawn Sturnick

CHARACTERS

Son
Mom
Dad

TIME AND PLACE

Today. A suburban kitchen.

A NOTE ABOUT PERFORMANCE

Initially, the text should be spoken so as to conceal the meter and rhyme.
Its form should be revealed only gradually.

(**MOM** *irons.* **SON** *enters.*)

SON. Mom, I need to tell you. I'm sure you know it.

This isn't easy. Mom, I'm – I'm a poet.

MOM. You're what?

SON. I'm a poet. There I said it.

MOM. You're not a poet.

SON. Mom, give me credit

For knowing what I am and what I'm not.

I'm a poet. And for a while I thought

I could keep it from you. I was afraid

You wouldn't understand. So I delayed

In saying what I know I should have said.

I'm a poet. What's going through your head?

MOM. It's a phase.

SON. It's not a phase. It's my life.

MOM. Why would you choose –

SON. You think I'd choose this strife?

Growing up a poet wasn't easy.

I felt alone, depressed and sleazy.

I didn't even know there was a name

For that which, as a child, was my shame.

Oh, how those cruel children would tease and shout

If I ever let a simile slip out.

I was never comfortable among those

Who moved so fluidly in this world of prose.

I thought I suffered from a curse

And tried to speak, like others, in blank verse;

Since people thought that same poetry degenerate

That I would so secretly venerate.

I felt like some sort of refugee,

And hid myself away in the library.
 I'd sneak into the poetry aisle
 With an eager but embarrassed smile
 And a desire I thought unique to me;
 Hoping that no one I knew would see.
 Until one rainy Saturday, I met
 A man whose impact I shall ne'er forget.
 I'd slunk into the stacks to get a fix.
 I needed something quick, some limericks.
 Instead I found a man whose steady bearing
 Demonstrated he was beyond caring
 What those other straightforward "Proser" thought.
 Without concern to who was in earshot
 He began a dialogue, asking me
 Whom I preferred in this realm of poetry.
 I couldn't speak, my hands were trembling.
 The pieces of my past were reassembling
 Themselves into a startling, new world-view.
 Oh, could it be that there were others who
 Shared my secret and reviled passion,
 Yet carried themselves in the same fashion
 Akin to this proud and upstanding fellow!
 At once I felt a great desire to bellow
 "I'm a poet too!" Not caring who heard,
 I longed to shout my passion for the word.
 But it was a library, so I restrained
 From singing of the joy my heart contained.
 We spoke of Chaucer –

MOM. Please!

SON. No, you need to hear
 And understand that there is naught to fear
 From these men. Chaucer, Spencer, Milton, Pope!
 I rushed headlong down that slippery slope!
 We'd barely started Wordsworth when a chime

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