

# WHO'S GONNA SAVE THE WORLD?

A play by Chris Faith

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## CHARACTERS

6 Men, 2 Women

BITWIDDLE SIDESTEP QUADRILATERAL (BSQ)	27. Well dressed, smartest man in the world.
LUCY CURTIS	27 years old; love interest is BSQ.
GEN. HARRISON	58. Cunning and shrewd. Will do anything to accomplish his mission.
CAPT. FULLER	50, female. Does everything the Army way.
BILLY	27. Slightly developmentally challenged, but loved by all.
TOM	62, leader of the town. Respected by everyone, a father figure.
LEO	46, owns the Inkton Diner.
INK	45, Mayor and Police Chief.
PVT. BARNES	22. Does what he is told.
SUSAN	50, BSQ's mother.
NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS	25, first cousin to BSQ.
ED WEATHERFORD	31, from a wealthy family. Has excellent people skills.
UPS DRIVER	25, Dressed in brown, with a brown cap
BUSINESSMAN	50, well dressed, wearing a hat

ED, INK, PVT. BARNES and NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS are played by the same actor.

CAPT. FULLER and SUSAN are played by the same actress.

LUCY CURTIS and UPS DRIVER are played by the same actress

GEN. HARRISON and BUSINESSMAN are played by the same actor

### Scene 1

LEO, TOM, AND BILLY are looking out the window of the Inkton Diner. After a loud sound of tires screeching, they all run to their places and try to look casual. ED enters. BILLY starts swinging his bat in the rear of the restaurant.

ED

Good morning, Inkton, South Dakota! You got apple pancakes?

Leo

With five strips of bacon, wheat toast, and a large glass of orange juice.

ED

Now wait one minute. How did you know ...?

LEO

Every morning a few minutes after ten, someone from out of town comes in and orders a tall stack with bacon, toast and orange juice. This has happened five days a week for almost seventeen years.

(He goes to get the food.)

TOM

We know just about everything that goes on in our town. I even know what's in your shirt pocket on that folded yellow slip of paper.

ED

That's impossible.

TOM

How about maybe a speeding ticket? Signed by Police Chief Bob Ink. For two hundred and forty dollars.

ED

Incredible.

TOM

He's okay, Leo. Get to work on his order.

(To ED)

We get three visitors every day, Monday through Friday. Morning, afternoon, and evening. All headed to the third story of the Inkton Arms, just as soon as their food is ready.

ED

So all of you were pretty much waiting for me to arrive for your morning's entertainment.

BILLY

It sure beats all those talk shows on TV.

ED

Well, I'm glad I could brighten up your day. Lots of folks back home are counting on me bringing back the invention I'm here to buy. Without it we're facing major layoffs. I just don't know how I could face them if I missed my appointment.

TOM

Don't worry, only the people we don't like are late for their appointments. The other day, this gentleman from St. Louis started demanding that Leo cook his order immediately. He threatened to sue him and his whole family if his order was not started and completed exactly as he demanded. You remember that Mr. Long fellow, Leo?

LEO

Yeah, my productivity did not meet with his executive level approval. I guess all the stress he put on me had the opposite effect of what he was aiming for. Hopefully he'll remember that next time he starts ordering people around.

ED

So when in Rome, is what you're telling me?

BILLY

Three strikes, I'm out. (Loudly)

ED

Is he okay?

TOM

Well, Billy here is under the impression that he'll be trying out for the Major Leagues any day now, and we're, well, we're just not going to rain on his parade.

ED

Ohh, I completely understand. Good try there Billy, better luck next time.



BILLY

Hey you're not from the Yankees' are you. I know I could do better if you gave me another shot.

ED

No Billy, not from the Yankees', but I did play some ball back in High School. Try dropping your left shoulder just a little bit.

BILLY

(Runs to the rear of the stage and starts swinging again) A hit, this could be my very first home run.

LEO

Yea the left fielder is going way back.

TOM

I think you have the distance this time Billy.

BILLY

AWWWWW, foul ball, it's back to batting practice for me. (starts swinging again)

TOM

Y'know, Ed, you seem like a pretty decent fellow. How about if I give you the full rundown of our ground rules, just so everything goes real smooth for you today? Now first of all, besides being on time, did you remember to bring the check for \$1,211?

ED

I'm not even going to ask how you knew that.

TOM

And it's real important once you enter the third-floor office that you call him by his full name.

ED

Right. That's ...

(He takes a slip of paper from his pocket and reads it.  
... Bitwiddle Sidestep Quadrilateral. That's a very unusual ...

TOM

Just speak only when you're spoken to, and try not to act surprised over anything.

ED

I've done business with people from almost all fifty states; something tells me the town of Inkton will be the most challenging. Can you offer any insight that might help?

TOM

You'll have no trouble at all with Lucy; her family has lived in these parts for five generations. Everyone both knows and likes her whole family.

ED

So our young inventor will be the tough nut to crack.

TOM

I was best friends with his father, so I may be able to give you some helpful advice.

ED

I'd better take some notes.

TOM

There's no time for that—just pay attention. The biggest roadblock you'll have to face is his obsession with rules. Unless you follow each and every one—well, take my word for it.

ED

Does his family have a military background?

TOM

No. His obsession, I think, is based on the search for complete scientific efficiency. He got his GED at age ten. That's when he moved into the third floor of the Inkton Arms.

ED

His parents just let him ...

TOM

He left them when they tried to put his inventing on hold until after college.

ED

So he's been making his own rules for over ten years now.

TOM

Actually it's been seventeen years. We don't know if he's ever coming down.

BILLY

Wait, isn't that—

(TOWNSPEOPLE run to the window.)

LEO

It is. The UPS truck is here. I sure hope she's got 'em today.

TOM

Sounds like she's loading something real heavy on his hand truck. Here she comes. Are they—yes, they're here.

(TOWNSPEOPLE cheer.)

UPS DRIVER

(Enters stage left.)

Only in Inkton do I get such a warm welcome. Here you go, Leo, all four hundred copies of the Farmer's Almanac, hot off the presses.

TOM

Okay, get to yearly rainfall for the Mid-West region.

TOWNSPEOPLE

(Take copies and flip through the pages.)

Above average precipitation.

(They cheer and celebrate.)

UPS DRIVER

I'll see you all tomorrow.

(Leaves stage left)

TOM

Sorry 'bout that, Ed. Well, the weather is kind of important round here. Where were we, now?

LEO

Billy your breakfast is ready.

BILLY

Good, batting practice sure works up an appetite. Let's see I ordered Pheasant under glass and Baked Alaska just like this picture I cut out.

LEO

Well we're fresh out of Pheasant and the Fire Marshall won't let me cook the Baked Alaska. Instead I made what you order every morning. Two eggs scrambled with home fries and wheat toast.

BILLY

That's okay Leo, turns out I'm allergic to Pheasant under glass anyway.  
(Billy starts to eat and Leo returns to work)

ED

.Ah, yes, we were discussing Bitwiddle Sidestep Quadrilateral. The way I figure it, I'm about three years older than him. Maybe if I treat him like the younger brother I always wanted, we just might get along real well.

TOM

Y'know, Ed, you really just might get through this ordeal with a minimum of broken bones. I think your strategy just might do the trick. The last leg of your journey today will be the easiest. To leave town you have to first stop by the courthouse and visit with Judge Ink to pay your speeding fine. How much cash do you have on you?

ED

About two hundred dollars.

TOM

That won't be enough. Stop by the cash machine at the Mobile Station and get at least six hundred more. There are just a few extra business expenses that you'll have to deduct from your taxes on this trip.

ED

I kinda figured that there had to be some sort of catch. After all, I'll probably make back this additional expenditure within the first two hours of full production after I install the new technology.

TOM

That's the spirit, Ed. See, everyone, I told you he looked like a team player. Now, first the parking at the courthouse will be fifty dollars. Take the space closest to the door. It's what we call our first-class visitors space.

ED

Closest space, fifty dollars. Got it.

TOM

Next, there will be several local charities lining the walkway to the front door. Girl Scouts, church raffles and the like. If you miss even one of them, unexpectedly the judge will be called away and you'll have to spend the night in jail.



ED

Okay, I'll make sure they all get a generous donation. Is that all?

TOM

That's it. Just pay your fine, and drive out of town.

ED

Sounds like Inkton has been pretty inventive with their fund raising strategies. No matter—  
if I had been born here, I probably would have done the same.

LEO

(Handing him a bag)

Here's your order.

TOM

Now take it and run as fast as you can up to the third floor. He hates it when his breakfast  
is late.

ED

Thanks, everyone. Bye.

(He runs out.)

BILLY (at the window)

He's already at the front door, not bad.

LEO

Wow, he's fast. We might have a new record today. Just look at him climb those steps.

TOM

Wait a minute, did I tell him about the shoes? I sure hope I did, otherwise he's in for a heap  
of trouble.

BILLY

Tom, now how is it that the Farmers Almanac can predict the weather a year in advance?

TOM

Sunspot activity, you ask me the same question every year. Try to remember this time

BILLY

I'll try Tom, I'll try.

(Lights fade to :)

## Scene 2

LUCY sits at the front office, while BSQ waits at the entrance door for ED. BSQ's office is separated from the outer office by a second door. ED enters.

ED

Lucy Curtis asked me to bring ...

BSQ

Yes, the bag. Just slowly hand it to me. Everything else give to Lucy.

ED

Here.

(BSQ grabs the bag and runs into his office and closes door.)

I sure hope he won't be staying in there too long. I was hoping to go over the specific details of installing this revolutionary vinyl extrusion process.

LUCY

He'll be out in a few minutes, but don't worry. After you read this manual, I'm sure you won't have any questions.

(Hands manual to ED.)

ED

(Paging through the manual)

Let's see. Okay, well what about—no, that's covered. Well, the maintenance schedule—well, that's over here. Hmmm. Well, I'll be. That's the most thorough manual I've ever seen.

LUCY

If you had a complaint, it would be our first one.

ED

Very thorough. We'll be up to speed in no time! Now, on the phone you mentioned a contract I had to sign.

(LUCY hands him the copies of the contract.)

LUCY

On the bottom, press hard. There are three copies.



ED

I usually have my lawyer read everything before I sign it, but with your bargain prices—and everything is in real plain English like you said—well, here you are.

(Signs contract, then hands it to LUCY.)

LUCY

All this says is that you agree that you will never disclose where you purchased this patent. The penalties are quite severe.

ED

Mum's the word. I'll take it to my grave.

LUCY

If the general public knew what we did—well, let's just say we like things staying just the way they are.

(BSQ enters, first rubbing his belly, then putting his left foot on the table to make his shoes more noticeable.)

BSQ

Everything in order?

LUCY

Yes.

(Starts indicating BSQ's shoe to try to make ED say something about it.)

ED

There is just one little thing I would like to discuss before I leave. They told me at the diner you have three people a day come up here, five days a week. Is that correct?

BSQ

That is correct.

(He buffs his shoes very quickly. LUCY holds up a chalkboard that reads "Say something about his shoes!")

ED

I see you like to keep your shoes clean and polished.

BSQ

Well, the way I look at it, you can never get your shoes too shiny, can you?

ED

I'd do just about anything to get my shoes even half as shiny as yours.

BSQ

Well, it does take a lot of hard work, and I have modified some polishing equipment. Would you like me to show you?

ED

Oh yeah, would I ever.

BSQ

Take a look at this.

(Pulls out large buffing machine.)

I had a special 220 line put in just so I wouldn't throw a breaker every time.

ED

How about the polish? I'll bet you got something real special to get that high of a gloss.

BSQ

That's right, Ed, raw materials from every continent except Antarctica. I could sell the formula, but most people don't want to spend \$82.16 every time they polish their shoes.

ED

The philistines.

(ED and BSQ laugh.)

ED (cont.)

Well, let's see it in action.

(Points his foot forward.)

LUCY

Don't we have those three patent applications you wanted to complete this morning?

BSQ

Lucy, please don't interrupt me while I'm doing, ah—research. As soon as we're done this experiment we'll get those applications right out. Besides, no one ever wanted me to shine their shoes before. I only started polishing them so I had something to talk about that was on a simplified scientific enough level for the customers to understand. I really thought everyone would take an interest, but my buddy Ed here is the very first one.

(ED and BSQ in dark; spotlight on LUCY.)

LUCY

Ever since kindergarten, every time I wanted to play scientist, he was always ready with the perfect excuse. Don't worry; I'll let you know when we can work on a project in the near future. Newsflash: that day never came. I was hoping when he got his GED in fifth

grade, and moved out of his house and into this office; we would finally spend some time together. When I showed up with fresh-baked cookies to celebrate, he kept me waiting for Five hours. My parents had to pick me up after I fell asleep with my head collapsed onto the full plate. The next morning I found two chocolate chips in my right ear. Of course, I was forbidden to set foot in his office ever again. After college, I heard he had just fired his seventh secretary. I filled out my application. He would never get the best of me ever again. It took a few years, but I earned his trust with my work ethic. I'm still looking for some kind of opportunity, but if I even mention the subject of romance he'll deduct my pay for the wasted time. He has to give in eventually, doesn't he?

(Lights back up on ED and BSQ)

ED

Well, I gotta get back to my family and it's a long drive. The wife's cooking meatloaf. Plus I gotta take the dog out.

BSQ

See you later, Ed. Your shoes look great!

(ED exits, smiling and waving.)

Most of the people who visit us want to leave just as soon as they can. Start making two or three million dollars each year more than they were making before. Ed, on the other hand, believes in family values. Maybe I should start thinking about being a good family man like Ed. He gave me a picture of his whole family, and right up front is his dog muffin. Doesn't he have the greatest dog you ever saw?

LUCY

So you're saying you would get married and have children, only so you could have a dog?

BSQ

No, that's not it at all. It's just that a dog, to be really happy, well, he needs someone to look after him, and play with him, until I could get home from work. If I just left him tied up somewhere, well, that would be cruel.

LUCY

And marrying someone just to be your dog-sitter, do you consider that to be cruel?

BSQ

Well, I never said that would be the only reason for me to be married. My future bride would just have to understand that was the most important reason.

LUCY

Well, I wish you all the luck finding a woman to fit the bill. Should I make a payroll deduction for the wasted time we spent talking about marriage?

BSQ

No, not this time. This has been very stress-relieving for me. Just imagine me as a dog owner. And I'm sure I would be a helpful and loving husband. Yes, everyone would be very happy.

(Walks out, into his office.)

(Lights fade)

### Scene 3

Later. The office, with both doors closed. LUCY busy at work in the front office, and BSQ busy at work in the rear office, with his door closed. HARRISON, FULLER, and BARNES stand outside the front office door. FULLER enters and slowly opens door.

FULLER

Is anyone—Oh, there you are.

LUCY

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHH!

(Screams and then faints, sprawled on floor.)

HARRISON

(Entering)

What did you say to the poor girl?

FULLER

Nothing. I mean, I just said, "There you are," that's all.

HARRISON

Well, someone get her a glass of water and help her up.

LUCY

(Waking up)

Ooh, what happened? You don't have an appointment. You must leave, right now.

FULLER

There you go. Take this and sip slowly.

(Lifts her up and hands her water.)

HARRISON

Well, I apologize for not having an appointment. It is, however, of the utmost importance that I see Mr. Quadrilateral as soon as possible.



(LUCY holds her ears and acts as if he said a vile word, then hands him a piece  
Of paper.)

I'm sure we can dispense with a small breach in protocol. After all, I'm here on a matter of  
national security.

(LUCY shakes her head no, and points toward the paper.)

Well now, what do we have here? Captain Fuller?

FULLER

Yes, sir!

HARRISON

I seem to have left my reading glasses back at the base.

(Hands FULLER the paper.)

FULLER

Of course. Let's see. Let's see. Office rules. Rule number one: All appointments must be  
scheduled with Lucy Curtis. In the event of tardiness, your appointment will be canceled  
and you will be permanently forbidden future consideration. Not under any circumstances  
will appointments be scheduled after your arrival.

HARRISON

Well, you will just have to make an exception.

(LUCY shakes head quicker than before and points back to paper.)

FULLER

Okay, rule number two: Should anyone arrive at the office without an appointment, Lucy  
Curtis is required to faint for dramatic effect.(Both Fuller and Harrison stare at Lucy for  
three seconds)Now the last rule, rule number three. If after hearing the office rules,and not  
having an appointment, you must leave the office within ten seconds or you will never be  
granted an appointment even you were here on a matter of national security.

(LUCY pulls out a stop watch and clicks it on.)

LUCY

GO!

HARRISON

If you think you can intimidate a four-star general this way I'll have a whole division of  
tanks here in ...

LUCY

STOP! Leave the office and never return.

HARRISON

If you think, even for one minute, young lady, that your office rules will, in any way, sway me from my duty ... Let me explain one little thing about rules. I make them! It would only take me one ten-minute phone call to have you either deported or sent to federal prison for life as a traitor. Furthermore ...

FULLER

Ah, General, remember your blood pressure. Just a suggestion: Wouldn't it be a little more productive to just open the door on the other side of the room?

(Points to door.)

It's the only place he could be.

HARRISON

Ah yes, that's the spirit. I promise you have not heard the last of this matter, young lady.

(LUCY gets back to work, completely ignoring the threat.)

FULLER

Private Barnes, make sure Miss Curtis does not leave the building.

BARNES

Yes, sir!

(HARRISON enters office with FULLER, and then holds out his hand.)

HARRISON

Good morning, Mr. Quadrilateral. I have come here today on a matter of national security.

BSQ

(Completely ignoring his visitors)

I know if I can increase the RPMs on this commercial dryer, the efficiency would go through the roof.

HARRISON

Look here, sir, you will give me your full attention, and you will give it to me this very moment!

BSQ

THAT'S IT!

(Pushes both military visitors out of the way and gets a small gear out of his Filing cabinet.)

It was so obvious. I can reduce the friction on the drive shaft to increase the speed. I did it again, Lucy!



(LUCY gets up and rings a loud bell.)

LUCY

Good job, boss!

HARRISON

Now, I am going to state my case calmly and quietly ...

(LUCY walks in from other office.)

LUCY

Here's your mail at exactly 11:45, and will you take me out for a romantic dinner this Friday night?

BSQ

Lucy, how many times do I have to remind you that pure science is my only passion? Deduct twelve dollars and forty-two cents from your paycheck for this inefficient waste of time.

LUCY

I can't help it. You're sitting in here with your freshly pressed suit and shiny shoes, with new ideas just jumping out of your head all the time. It makes me have a volatile increase in moisture level percentages. With everything you know, don't you know what to do with a woman with a volatile increase in moisture level percentages?

(As she exits to her office)

Doesn't anyone know what to do with a woman with a volatile increase in moisture level percentages?

BARNES

Well, ma'am, I get off at ...

LUCY

I meant *him*, you idiot. It was a rhetorical question.

BSQ

(Yelling after her)

Well, thank you for delivering the mail promptly, and increase your paycheck deduction to twenty dollars and two cents.

HARRISON

First of all, the EPA needs to do thorough testing of your water. We may be looking at the worst contamination in the industrial age. Secondly, I think we might have to mobilize an entire division of mental health professionals to aid in the recovery effort.

BSQ

Just look at my shoes. I'm ashamed to admit it's been almost a full two hours since their last high-speed buffing.

(Starts buffing.)

LUCY

Private, your boss could use some people skills.

BARNES

The stories I could tell you—that is, if they weren't classified.

LUCY

Besides not having an appointment, there's one thing that will make my boss ignore every word sent his way.

BARNES

And that would be?

LUCY

He absolutely insists on being addressed by his full name. Otherwise, actually it's almost like he turns his ears off.

BARNES

What's his full name?

LUCY

Bitwiddle Sidestep Quadrilateral

(BARNES quickly runs into the other office, and whispers into the General's ear.)

HARRISON

Well, Bitwiddle Sidestep Quadrilateral ...

(BSQ looks at him.)

... Let's try to put aside our egos for just one minute, and consider the greater good. Can we call a truce?

(Holds out hand again.)

After all, I'm sure if I attempt to manipulate you into helping us, you could probably easily counteract any such plan without much effort. So, could you see your way fit to bending your rules, just this once, please?

BSQ

Now, where did I put my shoe polish?

HARRISON

Okay, you want to play hardball. Trust me when I say you're looking at the world champion. There's a good reason that I was sent on this mission. Even though you've tried your best to stay hidden in this small hick town, we have a file on you four inches thick. That's right—you've been watched for a long time. Whatever the reason is for your seclusion, I really don't care. I'm here to enlist your full cooperation in a very time-sensitive project, by whatever means I deem necessary. Do you know what that means? Let's go down the long list of all the tactics at my disposal. (Starts to lose his voice)

(He turns to FULLER.)

Take over.

(He quickly walks toward exit.)

LUCY

Have a nice day, General Harrison.

(HARRISON leaves.)

FULLER

What you just did, to a man who has dedicated his whole life to the service of the community, is the obvious work of an immature, delusional self-centered child. It does not make me angry, though. As a matter of fact, I never get angry. I do, however, get even with people who piss me off. Sometimes a little more than even for people who almost get me angry, and right now you are in that category. So let's go over the list of difficulties you and the residents of Inkton will have to endure solely because of your actions here today. First, all electrical service will be terminated as of 12:00 midnight. Inkton will be placed under martial law. Any attempt to leave the city limits will be restricted to emergencies only. All deliveries will be turned away, and all modes of outside communication will be confiscated. The best I saved for last. In the morning there will be an invasion by sixty or so IRS agents. They will audit the entire town's population, for, let's say, the last six years. Trust me, they will find multiple breaches in the tax code. The delinquent taxes will be due immediately, or everyone will face stiff fines, imprisonment, or both. There is, however, one way to stop this onslaught against your peaceful existence. Give me and my team ten minutes of your time to discuss a matter that could save millions of lives. In other words, I'm making you an offer you can't refuse.

(Looks at her watch.)

You have ten seconds to accept. Your silence will mean that you will not comply. GO!

(After 10 seconds she gets up and leaves, followed by PVT. BARNES.)

BSQ

Lucy, we can go over those patent applications now.

LUCY

Okay, boss.



(Lights fade to :)

Scene 4

Inkton Diner. BILLY and LEO are taunting HARRISON, who is off-stage, sitting in his car, stage left. TOM is enjoying Billy's and Leo's antics.

LEO

(Calling out the window)

What's the matter, General Bigmouth? Couldn't even handle one hick inventor?

BILLY

Let me at him. Come on, Tom, help me find my bat.

TOM

Now boys, let's not kick a dog while he's down. Yes sir, Bitwiddle Sidestep Quadrilateral is still the undefeated champion. Wait, here comes the other two.

LEO

Well, they don't look so defeated, not at all.

TOM

They're coming this way. Billy. Get your bat.

BILLY

Here it is. Come on, I'll darling. We got some batting practice to do.

(FULLER enters. She stares at BILLY and his bat.)

FULLER

Well, well, well. What do we have here?

BILLY

(Drops bat and kicks it away.)

Like I said, I can't seem to find my bat.

FULLER

Good people of Inkton, this is your lucky day. I was on my way back to the base with every intention of reducing your little town to a pile of rubble. You see, that's what happens to people who rub me the wrong way, and that's exactly the way I was just rubbed up there. This day, however, I'm gonna give you a chance to convince your pig-headed inventor friend to be a little bit more cooperative. Can I count on your support?

(BILLY walks up to FULLER, stares her in the eye)

BILLY

SCREW YOU!

LEO

Yeah, screw you!

FULLER

Just remember, I gave you a chance to end this peaceably.

(Exits. Loud sound of a car peeling out. BSQ enters, followed by LUCY.)

LEO

Why, Bitwiddle Sidestep Quadrilateral, it's a real honor to have you in my diner. You're not upset over the way I've been cooking your food? Just give the word and I'll change it any way ...

BSQ

No, Leo, the food has been first-rate. Every day on schedule. I appreciate your consistent effort. Is Billy around here anywhere?

BILLY

Yeah, I'm here. Just tell me what I did wrong, and I'll lock myself up in jail for twenty years.

BSQ

No, Billy, that's not it at all. I just remember back in fifth grade, well, you were always playing the fool, the class clown, seven days a week. Today, however, I could have sworn I heard you give that military moron a piece of your mind. Was that really you?

BILLY

Y'mean I'm not in trouble?

BSQ

On the contrary, I think you're a hero. Now what was it again you told her?

BILLY

Screw you.

BSQ

Come on now; say it with some Inkton pride!

BILLY

SCREW YOU!

BSQ

Well, the reason I came down from my office for the first time in seventeen years was to shake the hand of my friend.

(Shakes his hand pretending it's broken.) .

BILLY

You're just kidding me, right?

BSQ

Now I might just call on you to help me out every now and then—I mean, on my most difficult projects.

BILLY

Anytime, rain or shine, I'll be there.

BSQ

Well, I have to get back to work now, but you never know, I just might come down again. I mean at least before the next seventeen years. Yes, today has been a good day.

TOM

Bitwiddle Sidestep Quadrilateral, could you give me a minute?

BSQ

Why sure, Tom. What's on your mind?

TOM

You know me and your dad were best friends.

BSQ

I hope this isn't going to turn into a history lesson.

TOM

I know you have your own ideas on how you want to live your life, but you have to understand—well, it's just impossible to know everything. There's something I swore to your dad that I would tell you—well, on the day you stop acting like such a horses' ass—and I'm thinking that today is that day. So now will you give me just a little bit of your time?

BSQ

Only because you were my dad's best friend. Okay, let's have it.

TOM

You never knew your grandfather George.



BSQ

Just by a few photos around the house.

TOM

Well if you ever want to meet him, just look in the mirror. There's a reason your dad never talked about him. Just full of ideas on how to start—what did he call it—the new renaissance? Yeah, that was it. He started taking more and more trips to New York, and Los Angeles, and all over. It just put the whole town in a spin keeping up with what he was doing next. Well, that's not what your dad asked me to tell you; that's just a history lesson. What Joe told me on his deathbed was that if you are ever lucky enough to find a good woman, and were blessed with children, Joe said to always put them first. Whatever you want to do for a profession is fine, as long as you put family first.

BSQ

Thanks, Tom.  
(Exits.)

TOM

Lucy, are they really gonna turn our whole town into a pile of rubble?

LUCY

We're not going to have bombs exploding on Route 10 anytime soon. She did make a few other threats, which I think we have to take real seriously. First of all, we have to make sure everyone has enough gasoline for their generators. As of midnight tonight, they'll be no electricity.

BILLY

She's lucky I couldn't find my bat.

TOM

Now hush up, Billy! What else, Lucy?

LUCY

They'll be no delivery trucks allowed into town for a while. So spread the word to stock up on all essential supplies, enough for, let's say, a week.

LEO

A week!

LUCY

That's just to be sure. I'll be working on a plan to rid us of these invaders permanently, but it could take some time.

LEO

Is that all?

LUCY

No, in the morning a whole army of IRS inspectors will be auditing everyone's taxes for the last six years. The captain has promised us that they will find some reason for additional tax revenue, which will be due immediately, or we'll face heavy fines and jail time.

TOM

What are you waiting for, Billy? Go find that bat! (Loudly)

LUCY

Hold on there, Billy. Your bat can't help with this problem. But don't worry, I do have a plan.

LEO

What?

LUCY

We all have friends or relatives with large barns, just full of hay to sleep on. I think it's time we went and visited them for a spell. Once everyone is relocated, we'll kind of deconstruct the access roads so the auditors can't join the sleepover. I know the army will rebuild the roads in a few days, but hopefully my main plan will have done the trick before they can even start. I'm going to call this plan Operation Sleepover

LEO

Does that mean the town will be empty?

LUCY

No, but only people who are on Social Security and haven't filed taxes in the last six years will stay. Everyone else moves out. Leo, by the way, could you do the town a big favor?

LEO

Anything. What do you need?

LUCY

What do you have the most of—I mean, for a substantial meal?

LEO

I guess sausage and peppers.

LUCY

Heat up as much as you can. With all this moving around no one will have time to cook dinner. We'll all work better on a full stomach.

LEO

I'm on the job.

(Every one leaves except Leo, who start working very quickly)

BUSINESSMAN

(Enters stage left.)

Hey, I need this lunch order as fast.....

LEO

Listen buddy, I'm gonna give you this straight and fast, so pay attention. I already know what your order is and I've started it. Just as soon as your food is ready, run up to the third floor, call them by their full names, and don't forget to say something nice about their shoes. Oh, give me your speeding ticket.

(LEO takes it, and rips it up)

This is your lucky day. Do you have any questions?

BUSINESSMAN

(Very shaky voice)

Ahh, no, that all makes perfect sense to me

(Lights fade to :)

## ACT II Scene 1

Back yard of the Smith farm. Large picture of a red barn hung on rear wall. Back porch is visible stage right, and a picnic table and chairs are center stage. LUCY enters.

LUCY

Susan, are you home?

(Dog barks.)

SUSAN

Who is that, Bullet? Are you after that badger again?

(Peers through curtains.)

LUCY

I was wondering if you had a few minutes.

SUSAN

(Comes out.)

My neighbor Wilbur White is out tearing up our access road to town. He was told not to blab to me why you were coming but, well, we've been scratching out a living milking cows for over fifty years, and there are no secrets between us.

LUCY

Half my family makes their living the same way. Neighbors have to rely on each other, through thick and thin.

SUSAN

I'm glad you understand.

LUCY

Well, now that you know ...

SUSAN

Want some coffee?

LUCY

That would be lovely.

SUSAN

Would you join me for some toast and fresh butter?

LUCY

Thanks.

(SUSAN brings out a tray with coffee, bread and butter. She puts it on the Picnic table.)

SUSAN

If you could cut the bread, that would be a big help. My hands aren't as steady as they used to be.

LUCY

(Cutting bread)

When I was a kid every meal was like this, prepared by hand. Everything came from the farm.



SUSAN

When your dad first took on the mail delivery route, well, a lot of folks thought you might not be raised, well, old-fashioned.

LUCY

We didn't have a few hundred cows to milk twice a day, like most folks around here. There were always a few chickens and pigs to tend, and, of course, the garden in the back yard.

SUSAN

How is your dad dealing with his retirement?

LUCY

That's one good thing about being a farmer. The federal government isn't going to show up one morning and say you're too old to grow crops or raise livestock.

SUSAN

So, what brings you all the way out here?

LUCY

It's about BSQ.

SUSAN

Give it to me straight: What has my stubborn pig-headed son done?

LUCY

He's got some people real angry with him. Important people, people who know how to get their way. We're dealing with high-ranking army personnel. They drove into town like they were invading us, to begin with. BSQ took a real dislike to them from the start. They insisted we stop everything and start working on some secret project. I honestly don't know how he can, well, turn his ears off to what he doesn't want to hear, but that's what he

LUCY (cont.)

did. He made them real mad. Before they left some threats were made, threats that will affect everyone.

SUSAN

My Joe had the same hearing dysfunction. All the Smith men have it. Once their mind is made up, well, you would have more luck with a mule in a bad mood.

LUCY

The problem is that he has the whole town painted into a corner. I'm afraid someone will get hurt.

SUSAN

Well, Lucy, I just don't see what I can do to help. I mean, he left home at ten years old, with the help of some shyster lawyers. He moved into the top floor of the Inkton Arms, with every intention of never coming down. He didn't even come down when his father died. His secretary's excuse was it was because I asked him to come using his "old" name. I'm sorry. Even before Joe died, we said that we'd wait until he started showing signs of at least trying to get along with his fellow human beings before we'd attempt any sort of reconciliation, and from what you just told me, that day has not yet come.

LUCY

Susan, I can only imagine the pain you've been through. I'm not going to tell you that I know for sure what the date will be when you will begin a normal relationship with your son.

SUSAN

That's good, because I was more than a little worried that you were here to paint a crooked picture. Just like when big-city folk come around and tell us we have to change our old-fashioned ways for our own good.

LUCY

Tell you what: Let me tell you of a few breakthroughs that might give you some hope that that day is closer than you think.

SUSAN

I hope you're talking about an honest-to-goodness parting-of-the-Red-Sea miracle.

LUCY

Just yesterday he came down from his office.

SUSAN

Definite progress.

LUCY

He came down to shake Billy's hand.

SUSAN

What on earth could Billy have done to get my Jeffrey down those steps?

LUCY

This pompous woman army captain started threatening the whole town. Well, Billy stood toe-to-toe with her, and, well, told her that no one in Inkton will be helping her anytime soon.



SUSAN

You're talking about Billy, Valerie's boy?

LUCY

The whole town was shocked.

SUSAN

Well, I guess in a way that makes sense.

LUCY

What do you mean?

SUSAN

You know how they both were in grade school. Opposite ends of the intellectual spectrum. Neither of them really fit in.

LUCY

They both got a little bit more of their share of bullying.

SUSAN

Billy took it all in stride. In his own way, he found a way to fit in. Only one thing upset him.

LUCY

If anyone started picking on BSQ, well, they got a good close-up view of Billy's left fist soon afterwards.

SUSAN

Lucy, in this house please call him by his given name.

LUCY

Of course. Sorry. Well, Billy could tell Jeff couldn't defend himself. I really don't think Billy understood that Jeff was so advanced intellectually. He just knew they were both on the bottom rung of the ladder, so they should stick together.

SUSAN

Remember when Tim Hooper was in traction for three months? The story was that a car accident put him there. Only six people in town knew the real reason: It was payback from Billy for a childish prank done to my Jeffrey.

LUCY

I always wondered why everyone stopped bullying Jeff right around the time Tom was hospitalized.

SUSAN

Sheriff Ink warned the other boys to leave Jeff alone.

LUCY

Well, that does explain their special connection, and yesterday's breakthrough.

SUSAN

Did he look, well, happy?

LUCY

He did have a few rough moments after his talk with Tom.

SUSAN

Tom was never one to mince words. What did he say?

LUCY

Well, let's put it this way: After their talk, I could swear he was real close to coming back, and I mean all the way back. He might just need that little spark to push him over the edge.

SUSAN

I kind of get the feeling you're getting to the real meat and potatoes of why you're here, finally.

LUCY

I need you to go to him. All you have to do is ask him what he discussed with Tom. I just know that will do it. It has to be done now, while he's vulnerable.

SUSAN

All I want is the answer to one question.

LUCY

Okay, ask away.

SUSAN

It seems like only yesterday when you had the entire male population of our local high school going in and out of the hospital, recovering from wounds having to do with fighting over you.

LUCY

Oh my, Susan, if we're going to have to talk about why teenage boys compete to be king of the hill, well, I might need another cup of coffee with something stronger than sugar in it.

SUSAN

It just always made me curious that with all those fellas chasing you, why would you go for my Jeffrey?

LUCY

He's discouraged anything beyond a professional relationship. But the way I see it, well, the stronger the vault, the more valuable the treasure inside. It keeps me searching for the key to his door.

(LUCY and SUSAN laugh.)

SUSAN

Let's start heading toward town. We have to make one stop on the way.

LUCY

Of course. Where will we be stopping?

SUSAN

Lookout Falls, I need to soak my feet for a spell. After all, if I'm going to have any chance at all to change the mind of my mule-headed son, I'll need all the energy I can muster.

LUCY

We have plenty of time. The army won't be rebuilding the roads any time soon.

SUSAN

Let me get that apple pie I cooked yesterday.

(Lights fade to :)

## Scene 2

BSQ's office. PVT. BARNES is guarding him, as Susan walks out of the office and off stage.

BSQ

Ah, Private Barnes, could you come in here, please?

BARNES

Okay, but I don't think I'm supposed to be talking to you.

BSQ

I'd like you to get General Harrison on the phone for me.

BARNES

Now, you're not gonna tell him about any more of your rules, are you? That just gets him real mad.

BSQ

No, after consulting with my mother, I am ready to give General Harrison an appointment.

BARNES

Let me get him for you right away.

(Picks up phone and dials.)

Hello, headquarters? Yeah, that inventor guy, he wants to give an appointment to General Harrison. Get him right away. What, are you kidding me? Yes sir, yes sir.

(Salutes towards the phone.)

BSQ

Well, can I talk to General Harrison, or not?

BARNES

He's temporarily indisposed.

(Lights fade to :)



## Scene 6

GEN. HARRISON'S office. Simple office setting with desk, filing cabinet, and large American flag hung on wall.

(Fuller is listening on head phones to "Everyone Wants to Rule the World" while dancing wildly And singing off key. When she notices the General is watching, she takes off the Headphones, throws them in the trash, then Shoots them twice. Gen. Harrison sits down At his desk and starts typing on his laptop.)

HARRISON

Let's see, how to begin ... Effective as of seventeen hundred hours, I hereby tender my resignation from active duty. Captain Fuller!

FULLER

Yes, General?

HARRISON

Was I really like a deer in front of an oncoming train back there in Inkton?

FULLER

I can't say you were to blame, sir. It was just unfortunate that your mission required immediate and complete success, with no excuses under any circumstances. Any other inventor in any other town would have jumped at the chance to spearhead this mission. You just found that needle in a haystack. Just bad luck, that's all.

HARRISON

I guess you're right. I was just so close. I could almost feel it on my shoulder.

FULLER

That fifth star can be the most difficult one, I've heard. I felt you deserved it for the last five years. I mean, how many third-world countries do you have to secretly overthrow before they let you into their exclusive little club?

HARRISON

Now, if this little problem wasn't on American soil, boy, we would have had some real fun. I mean, I can't even send in a sniper to rile things up a little. Come on, what do they expect?

FULLER

Sometimes you bite the bear and sometimes it bites ...

(Phone rings. She picks up.)

General Harrison's office, can I help you? Yes, Sir.

(Covers phone mouthpiece.)

It's General Long, Sir.

HARRISON

Probably calling to gloat; we've been rivals since West Point ... Yes, General Long, I'm just putting the finishing touches it ... What? ... Well yes, I'll start tearing it up this very moment ... Of course ... Great! I've always wanted to see that hunting lodge of yours ... In two weeks, yes, that would be fine. I guess yesterday wasn't such a bust after all. It makes me feel good to be appreciated. Not quite as good as, let's say, a promotion, but it does make me feel good ... Why, Sir, I am just speechless. I will wear that fifth star with all the dignity my new responsibilities demand. Goodbye.

(He hangs up.)

There's been a breakthrough. They're ready to talk. Clear all airspace between here and South Dakota. The president wants a report of our negotiations within the hour.

(Lights fade to :)

### Scene 3

Inkton Diner. BSQ, LUCY, LEO, SUSAN, INK are sitting at the tables. BILLY is swinging his bat in the rear of the diner.

SUSAN

So Jeffrey, you're telling me for the last seventeen years you had the captains of industry running up those steps with your meals three times a day?

BSQ

They probably would have worn a clown outfit if I told them they had to.

SUSAN

It's amazing what some people will do for money.

(Sounds of vehicles outside.)

LEO

Here they come, kicking up all kinds of dust.

(HARRISON enters.)

HARRISON

Let's get right down ...

BSQ

Ah yes, but first some old business. Police Chief Ink?

INK

That's twice in as many days you've completely disregarded almost every safety statute on the books. You're looking at either two years of hard labor or a fine of, let's see, thirty-four thousand dollars.

HARRISON

I'll pay the fine. Just give me the ticket. I'll have my secretary cut you a check as soon as I get back to the base.

INK

I'm afraid, based solely on your erratic behavior, the payment is due immediately.

HARRISON

Fine. Here, use my Amex card.

(Hands him his card.)

Now can we proceed?

INK

Just a minute.

(Hums while he gets credit card approved on his cell phone, then gives thumbs-up.)

We're good. Thank you, and have a nice day.

(Returns card.)

BSQ

So General, what seems to be the problem?

HARRISON

You are our last hope. We have consulted with every elite engineer on the face of the globe. The problem is monumental in scope. This whole mess started about two years ago. Machinery all over the world became almost impossible to start. Even when it did start, it failed soon afterward. We got the problem narrowed down to the fuel. Not all of it—almost ninety percent, though. We transported what good fuel we could to keep up with the demand. Millions were spent on testing the fuel for the answer. It took a group of grad Students from UCLA to set us straight. For almost twenty years there has been an almost unnoticeable drop in the flammability of our petroleum supply. No one understands why, but we seemed to cross a threshold that made the majority of our fossil fuels completely



unusable. If we keep to our current usage, we're looking at about nine months left. If this leaks out, well, the panic could cost millions of lives. You are our last hope. Can you help us?

BSQ

Hmmm. Yes, I see. Well, yes. Yes, I can and will help you. After all, this reduction in available fossil fuels would put a real damper in my research schedule, so yes; I agree to solve this problem for you. There are a few things I will need you to do for me, though.

HARRISON

You mean you have an idea that could work? I mean, is there really some hope that it will work?

BSQ

Well, of course it will work. I couldn't stay in the inventing business very long if my inventions didn't work.

LUCY

You did it again, boss!  
(Rings bell.)

BILLY

It's a hit!

LEO

That's no foul ball Billy, you have a real good shot this time.

BILLY

Awwwww, caught on the warning track. (Goes back to swinging)

BSQ

Now, you must complete each item on my list.

HARRISON

I'll move the Rocky Mountains to Missouri, if that's on your list.

BSQ

Well, let's go over this one item at a time. First, you must bring a check for \$1,211 to pay my fee. The project will be complete six weeks from today. Now, usually I would have you run up the stairs with pancakes to complete my fee, but this time, well, I'm feeling a little festive. Only because I will have to work sixteen hours every day for the next six weeks, well, bring lunch for everyone.



HARRISON

That's it, that's all you want? One check for twelve hundred bucks, and dinner for the whole town?

BSQ

Just one more thing. I need you to locate someone for me. His cooperation during the presentation in six weeks is critical to its success.

HARRISON

Whoever it is, I guarantee his attendance and full cooperation.

BSQ

Don't underestimate the difficulty in tracking down this scoundrel. There are over eighty outstanding warrants for his arrest. If he has the slightest notion you're getting close, he will run, both fast and far. Even if you are lucky enough to capture him, getting him in a cooperative mood will be, well, challenging, to say the least.

HARRISON

What is his name?

BSQ

None of Your Business.

HARRISON

Excuse me?

BSQ

His name is None of Your Business.

HARRISON

Well, how do you expect me to find him if ...

BSQ

No, his name actually *is* None of Your Business. He's my first cousin. When I got my GED at ten years old, he had to try to get his. After many unsuccessful tries, he graduated at age seventeen. Just as soon as he turned eighteen, he changed his name. He watches the patent office like a hawk. As soon as he sees one of my inventions, he copies it with a slight modification and tries to sell it, while his patent application is still pending. I beat him every time in court, but his petty jealousy has been a real thorn in my side for years.

HARRISON

Private Barnes!

(BARNES runs in.)

BARNES

Yes, Sir!

HARRISON

You heard the man. Call the FBI, CIA, and every other government agency. We need to find a guy.

BARNES

Who?

HARRISON

None of your business.

(HARRISON and BARNES exit.)

LUCY

We have a lot of work to do.

BSQ

I have to pick up some equipment from the office first. I think we'll get more done if we relocate to the farm. We're going to need more room than the third floor can accommodate. Is it okay with you, Mom, if we move in for a while?

SUSAN

I think that I could stand having you around. That is, as long as you take out the trash after dinner.

BSQ

You've got a deal.

(Lights fade to :)

#### SCENE 4

Smith Farm, with LCF Prototype, which looks like a phone booth with large LCD display on top. BARNES is talking to BSQ, while LUCY is working on the LCF machine.

BARNES

This new form is to document that you have not yet signed any of the other forms. Press hard. There are three copies.

BSQ

Throw it over by the fire. I'll burn it later.

BARNES

I'm only trying to do my job. Captain Fuller will ship me off to Antarctica if I don't start getting these forms signed. What should I tell her?

BSQ

Tell her you take an extra-large parka.

(BARNES exits.)

Now, I really need to get back to work.

LUCY

We could all use a break. Dealing with all these interruptions is going to make meeting our deadline almost impossible.

BSQ

It's not just the military. Those pesky reporters are worse than mosquitoes.

LUCY

I could really use a little help over here. Calibrating this converter is a little bit more difficult than my usual duties.

BSQ

Of course.

(He goes to the machine.)

Let's see, just a little bit more—there. Now she'll purr like a kitten.

LUCY

Thanks.

(Holds up paper.)

That's number twenty-three on my check list, all complete as ordered. What's next?

(SUSAN enters with tarpaulin.)

BSQ

Just loading up. Mom, are you ready with the tarpaulin?

SUSAN

Just put the last stitch in the lettering.

(Shows him.)

Does it meet with your approval?

BSQ

Perfect. All the letters four inches high, in candy red. This will do just fine.

LUCY

This will really get their attention.

BSQ

At least it will give everyone something to talk about while we set up.

SUSAN

As long as what's under the cover works, it will work.

BSQ

Well, I'm not saying it's mathematically impossible for this to be my first failed invention. But just in case, I have a Plan B.

LUCY

You mean to tell me there's more than one way to avert this disaster?

BSQ

Well, actually, no, there isn't; but if my plan doesn't work, and the world winds up completely depleted of all petroleum reserves, I am fully ready to refund their one thousand, two hundred and eleven dollars. After all, I have to watch out for my reputation.

SUSAN

Well, that's nice. Now drink your milk. Did you say we were finished? There's still two days left before our deadline.

BSQ

Well, the mechanical construction is complete. We now just have to work on the presentation. I've planned a few surprises that will make sure everyone is paying attention.

LUCY

For the last four years, I have followed your orders to the letter. This is the first time I'm truly concerned that you're up to something sneaky.

SUSAN

I agree, Lucy. The last time I saw that look on his face--well, his early science experiments were the cause of more than a few homeowner insurance claims.

BSQ

Was it my fault that we only kept three fire extinguishers in the house? Anyway, back to the plan. Lucy, get General Harrison out here this afternoon.

LUCY

That'll make his day. Wilbur White told me he's about ready to have a stroke over being kept in the dark for almost six weeks.



SUSAN

Well, it's not our fault he has control issues.

BSQ

Now Mom, when he gets here play nice. Without his help, my master plan has no chance for success.

LUCY

I already know the answer, but I'm going to ask the question anyway. Is there any chance of letting us in on your plan before the general arrives?

BSQ

Now that would be a very inefficient waste of time. I will give you my unconditional personal guarantee, however.

SUSAN

Okay, but this had better be good.

BSQ

I unconditionally guarantee that both of you will recall this day as one of the happiest days of your entire lives.

SUSAN

Start dialing that phone, Lucy. I don't know how longer my ticker can take all this excitement.

(Lights fade to :)

## Scene 5

Staged presentation with chairs stage left and microphone stage right. TOM and BSQ are by the microphone. SUSAN is off stage left.

HARRISON

Everyone lift. Be careful, now. Okay, perfect.

(BILLY and LEO set LCF machine center stage with bright red tarp, with White letters spelling out "No peeking".)

BILLY

You mean to tell me that what's under this tarp will save the whole world?

BSQ

Now Billy, have I ever let the town down before?

TOM

Where's your mom? She really should be here for this.

BSQ

She'll be joining us in just a few minutes. Trust me, her entrance will be memorable. Now, let's get started. I can smell what's cooking, and you know how grumpy I get when I'm hungry.

TOM

Well then, here we go. First, I'd like to thank everyone for all your help and patience. Once we get over this little speed bump here, I'm sure things will get back to normal, just the way we like it.

(Cheers from the audience.)

TOM (cont.)

Now, for all our temporary visitors—well, most of you have been real considerate of the way we live in these parts. Just remember that the five-thousand-dollar littering and use-of-vulgarity fines are still in effect. So just keep treating Inkton like it were your own hometown, and we'll part good friends. Now, I'm sure everyone is anxious to hear how the end of the industrial age will be averted, so without any further ado, let's hear it for Inkton's favorite son, Bitwiddle Sidestep Quadrilateral!

(Wild applause.)

BSQ

Thanks, Tom. Well, let's get this over with as quickly as possible, because I don't think I'm the only one who can't wait much longer for lunch. So, we're out of fossil fuels a little bit sooner than expected. This day has been on a collision course with us ever since Henry Ford started building all those Model Ts. I have confirmed my original hypothesis that reconstituting our petroleum is completely impossible. Whatever combination of variables caused our current combustion problems, well, it is irreversible. Every other traditional energy option would be a short-term solution at best. Luckily, I had predicted a need for an inexhaustible energy source several years ago, and also an energy source that would not pollute the planet. That's why I was able to finish in six weeks; the prototype was already seventy percent complete. This inexhaustible source has been right in front of us the whole time. The location of it, as a matter of fact, is directly above our shoulders.

ALL

What?

HARRISON

I hope this great invention of yours doesn't have us burning our heads to generate power.

TOM

Now everyone, let's give him a chance to finish. Okay, now, you were saying ...

BSQ

Most of you have heard that we only use a small portion of our brains. Only occasionally do a few individuals achieve a much higher level of mental productivity. Some call it being in the zone. Others call it being lucky. I have always referred to it as a lack of confusion. The simpler our lives are, the clearer we can think. Look at animals. Their brains are much smaller than ours, but look at their attitude: completely undistracted by the modern world. It's all because they are focused on an individual task. All confusion is eliminated.

HARRISON

So how does being less confused replace millions of barrels of crude oil?

BSQ

If I just gave you the answer, you wouldn't understand how it could work. We're getting close. If you could just give me five uninterrupted minutes more. Where was I now? Ah yes, the solution. Turns out the majority of our brains have been working all along. Some of the impulses have just been moving in such an erratic fashion that until now, their activity could not be measured. There just isn't a way to fully describe this new energy flow. All my research shows that the flow is increased whenever extremely negative emotions are active, as well as a notable decrease in flow when the subject is happy. My understanding is that when the conscious brain is telling us to be practical, or suspicious, or any other negative emotion, it comes into conflict with the sub-conscience brain that is, well, telling us to be kind and trusting. To bring this all to a head, the turmoil that takes place in our brains, which I refer to as confusion, generates a tremendous amount of energy. This energy is normally wasted by making us tired or ill, but it also can be harvested. Maybe a demonstration would help. It's time to uncover my LCF booth. The LCF stands for Love Confusion Factor, or basically how much you are fighting against yourself. The scale goes from 1 to 999. The higher the number, the more confused you are. Who wants to be our first volunteer?

TOM

I'll do it.

BSQ

Just step into the LCF Booth, and we'll see exactly how confused your brain is.

TOM

This isn't going to hurt, is it?

(He goes into the booth.)



BSQ

(Looking at screen)

Let's see, 237. You really aren't very confused, are you Tom?

BSQ

Now, who would make the ideal candidate? I know – General Harrison.

HARRISON

What?

BSQ

I asked you to bring my illustrious cousin for this part of the demonstration. So because of your failure to do so, if you please.

(He does. BSQ reads the screen.)

991.

(Oohs and ahhs from audience.)

Now, with the LCF system, even antisocial people can help their country. Now we're ready for the big finale. Private Barnes, to the stage.

BARNES

Should I get into the booth?

BSQ

No, just stand right there. With General Harrison in the LCF Booth, I'm going to see how fast I can get the fan up to. To reach top speed it would take over 4,000 watts. This fan is designed to simulate hurricane-force winds. Are you ready, Private Barnes?

BARNES

Just tell my mom I love her. Okay, I'm ready.

BSQ

Turn on the fan!

(Fan blows BARNES off stage left. Everyone cheers.)

This power source can be generated where ever people are—at work, while shopping. My mobile booth design will keep up with the demand of any large city. The collection batteries can store ten thousand times more current than the best conventional batteries, With eliminating the line losses, and most of the transportation expenses. I think our problems are solved. General Harrison, you can come out now.

(HARRISON comes out of the booth.)



BILLY

Three cheers for Bitwiddle! Hip-hip-hooray!

(Everyone is quiet.)

TOM

Billy, you forgot to call him by his full name!

BSQ

Now Tom, don't be so hard on him. After all, this is a big day, and I guess its okay to bend the rules a little bit sometimes. That reminds me, there are a few announcements. First of all, the LCF booths will be manufactured in several locations around the world. The converters, though, will have to be manufactured under my direct supervision. That will require me to close my office temporarily. I'm afraid, Lucy, that I must, at least temporarily, terminate our employment agreement. But you know what? Let's get married.

LUCY (astonished)

Is that a proposal?

BSQ

Okay, the next announcement will affect the whole town. It's commonly known that Inkton has thrived for years from making the most out of each and every outside visitor to our town. With my office closing, many may be facing hard times. So, with this construction permit, signed by Mayor Ink, I'd like to announce the future home of the LCF Converter Factory will be right here in Inkton.

(Applause)

We'll need to fill 241 full-time positions immediately. The pay will be \$35.72 per hour. Plus benefits, Major Medical, retirement, the works.

BSQ

So does anyone want to apply?

BILLY

Is there a job for me?

BSQ

Of course there is, I'll be needing a good right hand man for Assistant Plant Manager. You would have to retire from your baseball career though.

BILLY

Well, okay, I don't think I was ever going to hit a home run anyway. I'll be your new Assistant Plant Manager.

BSQ

(ALL cheer.)

Now, next on the agenda—Mom, could you bring me that letter?

SUSAN

Here you go dear, and drink this glass of milk; I'm afraid all these lights will get you dehydrated. And congratulations. She's a lovely girl.

BSQ

You're the best, Mom.

(Drinks whole glass, then wipes big milk mustache from his face.)

Now, the letter. As it turns out the federal government's employment application forms do not currently have enough room for me to enter my entire name. So strictly in the interest of maximum efficiency, this document will void both my emancipation and name change applications, effective today. From now on everyone will address me as Jeff Smith.

(Lights fade to :)

## Scene 6

Smith Farm. JEFF [BSQ] enters stage right in slippers and a long robe. LUCY is sitting at the picnic table.

JEFF

Just look at the time. Now, where did I put my things-to-do list?

LUCY

I put your incomplete, poorly designed list on the refrigerator.

JEFF

Did you say poorly designed?

LUCY

That's right. It's the worst piece of work you ever put out.

JEFF

Let me look at that list again. Well, it's perfect. Just one thing, give me just one little flaw that could justify your slanderous remarks.

LUCY

It's right here, as big as the noon sun, in the beginning. You didn't allow a single minute to enjoy a long, leisurely breakfast with your wife.

JEFF

Well, Lucy, y'got me there. I guess it might take me a little while adjusting to being a good family man.

LUCY

Do I detect just an ounce or two of humility in your voice?

JEFF

You're just not gonna be happy until you've stripped me of every last shred of dignity, are you? Now, where is my newspaper?

LUCY

Jeffrey, you're starting to sound like that old windbag General Harrison! If you can't muster the self-control to address me in a—a more husband-like manner, I'll throw these pancakes in the trash.

JEFF

You made me pancakes? With bacon, too?

LUCY

Yeah, five strips, just like Leo taught me.

JEFF

You're the best. Maybe after breakfast we could ...  
(Makes head notion upwards.)

LUCY

There are just a few things I wish to discuss with you, though.

JEFF

I know it would have been nice to get away for a few weeks ...

LUCY

No, that's not it. I'm talking about things that I've been aching to know for years. Now that we're married, I have the right to know, without any payroll deductions.

JEFF

So you want to play Truth or Dare, without any dares?

LUCY

Just answer the questions.

JEFF

Sounds like I really don't have a choice. Okay, fire away.

LUCY

Just two little questions, and then we're off to the factory. Okay, first, how did you ever come up with the name Bitwiddle? The whole town has made so many guesses. I just want to see who was the closest to the truth.

JEFF

When I was nine years old, and really started hitting my stride with my inventions, I was having quite a hard time falling asleep. The only thing that helped was when I twiddled my thumbs and big toes at the same time.

LUCY

No one was even close.

JEFF

That was easy. Only one more to go.

LUCY

This one might be a little tougher. There weren't too many Inktonians who even attempted to guess this one. Everyone in town knows that you charge \$1,211 for each of your inventions.

JEFF

Plus the pancakes.

LUCY

Ah, yes, but let's just stick to the money for now. For seventeen years your price has stayed the same. Hundreds of inventions, worth millions of dollars, sold for a bargain-basement price. Please enlighten me why you seem to be ignoring the basic economic principal of supply and demand.

JEFF

Okay, you know I've been a private person for quite some time now. I was hoping that your second question would be anything other than what you just asked.

LUCY

Just start slowly; it'll get easier as you go along. Regular people talk like this every day, and it hasn't killed anyone yet.



JEFF

It's no secret that my first invention was sold for \$1,211. Even at ten years old, I knew it was a low ball offer. Put yourself in my shoes just for one minute. Over the previous three weeks, I had just about all the rejection a ten-year-old boy genius could stand. Over seventy groundbreaking inventions that the powers-that-be wouldn't even consider because of my age. Looking back, I would have accepted a substantially lower amount of cash. Making money has never been my goal.

LUCY

It's just hard to imagine that you're not doing all that you do for the big money.

JEFF

Well, I must admit, there were a few months there I did consider a substantial rate increase.

LUCY

That's what no one can figure out. Lord knows the clients would have paid just about anything you would ask.

JEFF

About six months after I opened up my office, I had my lawyer's do some research on the full ramifications of charging whatever the market would bear. Royalty contracts, international licensing, even possibly manufacturing. The list went on and on. All so my bank account could have a few more zeros on it. I would need at least eight new assistants, and would spend most of my days talking with my lawyers. Something very frightening happened while all this research was going on. My constant flow of new inventions completely seized up.

LUCY

Completely?

JEFF

For almost two weeks. My gift had been returned to the store. Just the mere thought of greed and power really gummed up the works.

LUCY

What did your lawyers say?

JEFF

They wanted to groom me for corporate America. They would bring in the best scientific minds in the country to run research and development. No one really had to know that I was no longer actively doing my own research.

LUCY

I had no idea.

JEFF

I fired them all. "You'll need us; you'll never make it on your own," they whined as they left.

LUCY

Well, I know the end of the story. Your ability did return.

JEFF

Better than ever. Must have been standing up to those vultures the way I did. It felt real good. So that's why I never raised my price. After all, I bring in almost two million a year, and live in one of the most beautiful little valleys in the world. Why change anything?

(Lights fade to :)

### Scene 7

Inkton Diner. LEO is cooking and BILLY and HARRISON are sitting at a table. JEFF enters.

JEFF

It's been four weeks since our last delivery. Do you have those LCF donation reports, Billy?

BILLY

Yeah, but you're not going to like what I have to tell you. Every sector down, an average of 35 percent. All the declines follow the trail of you-know-who.

JEFF

We built the equipment on time, delivered it right on schedule. Now None of Your Business will be the end of us all. I thought after he lost his lawsuit against me that he would stop and admit defeat.

HARRISON

That scoundrel. Don't worry, we'll get him. Just concentrate on the factory and leave him to me.

(LUCY enters, very pregnant.)

LUCY

Actually, if you could start filling a few more equipment requisitions, instead of playing police chief, we could all get back on schedule.

HARRISON (to JEFF)

You tell her.

LUCY

Well Jeffrey, what have you been hiding from me?

JEFF

It's worse off than I led you to believe. I just didn't want you to worry.

LUCY

Just how worse off are we talking here?

JEFF

The delivery schedule we keep posting is sort of made up.

LUCY

Give it to me straight. How did all this happen?

JEFF

The first six months were fine—production, donations, everything on schedule. That little light at the end of the tunnel was getting bigger every day.

LUCY

Let's just stick to the facts for now.

JEFF

Of, course dear. Then the lawsuit hit us hard. Wild accusations. Every lawyer from around the globe wanted a piece of us. We were facing years of delays, while our usable fossil fuels were almost completely depleted.

HARRISON

Good old Uncle Sam stepped in and declared all the lawsuits dismissed, as a matter of national security.

JEFF

We started getting back on track. Without any motivation for financial gain, all the resistance went away, except for ...

LUCY

None of Your Business. So that's why you've been mumbling his name every night.

JEFF

The man is relentless. Wherever he goes, donations all but dry up. We've offered huge sums of money for any information on his location, to no avail.

LUCY

So what you're telling me is he has convinced the entire population that your LCF system is a bad idea. Now Jeff, don't take this the wrong way, but is there anything to what he is saying?

HARRISON

It's greed, that's all ...

LUCY

Ah, General, I'm referring to his scientific reasons. Jeff, does anything he say have any truth to it?

JEFF

Well, actually, specifically, I'm not even sure if there's anything to what he has been saying, or not.

HARRISON

Just as soon as Captain Fuller returns with our fugitive in tow we'll clear up all these little details before he gets what he so richly deserves.

(NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS enters with CAPT. FULLER in handcuffs.)

NONE

I need to talk with you, Jeff. (He uncuffs Captain Fuller)

LEO

Who's he?

JEFF

None of Your Business.

NONE

You need to know something rather important about your new project.

JEFF

How do you know about my new project?

NONE

Capt. Fuller told me about it.

HARRISON

I can see you two have a lot of catching up to do; we'll be on our way.  
(Leaves quickly with FULLER.)



JEFF

What's got into those two? Billy, follow them and see what they're up to.

BILLY

You got it, boss.  
(Exits.)

JEFF

Now, what's this important information you brought us today?

NONE

You didn't do your homework.

JEFF

What are you talking about?

NONE

On paper, your design works. The energy depletion crisis is averted, and everything gets back to normal. In the real world, with real people, with real hopes and dreams, even the best designs can fail horribly.

JEFF

What variable did I not account for?

NONE

The human factor. If everyone had donated as you had originally designed, it would have worked. With food shortages everywhere, it was easy for the wealthy minority to have the common people donate for them.

JEFF

There were federal regulations set down ...

NONE

Everyone looked the other way. Once over-donating was a daily occurrence, it turned into a commodity. If you need more food to feed your family, you'll over-donate. The more people who were willing to over- donate, led to their compensation being reduced to near starvation levels.

JEFF

It wasn't supposed to end up like this.

NONE

I haven't even got to the worst part. Once all the bad emotional energy is harvested, and you continue to donate, well, more and more emotional areas of the brain became affected.

LUCY

What do you mean, became affected?

NONE

We're talking total emotionless drones. Some of them even have to be hospitalized. The result can be total disability.

JEFF

I didn't know about any of this.

LUCY

We have to find General Harrison to find out why we've been kept in the dark.

NONE

I was hoping that was what you would say. The rest of the world thinks you're working on a new machine that will make everything right again.

JEFF

Thanks for telling me. I owe you one.

(SUSAN enters.)

SUSAN

Oh Jeffrey, we have to dismantle your machines of yours immediately. If you saw what it has done to those poor people, your cousin Eugene took me to Moose Town so I could see first hand.

NONE

(Whispering loudly) I told you Aunt Susan, my name is None of your Business now.

SUSAN

Well, I'm not going to keep playing this name change game like you were a bunch of eight year olds. Your name is Eugene Fields so you might as well get used to people calling you by it. Now Jeffery what are we gonna do about those poor people?

JEFF

I know, Mom, we'll make everything right, I promise you.

SUSAN

There's no fuel left that works. There's no food or basic services. Trash is everywhere and people are starting to get sick. Lots of people.

JEFF

What about the government? There has to be something left to help the people.

SUSAN

It all shut down. It's every man for himself out there. We have to figure a way to get through the barricade. Turns out we're completely surrounded. The general has seen fit to make sure no one lets us know just how bad it is outside Inkton.

LUCY

Just wait till I get my hands on that two-faced ...

(BILLY, breathing hard, enters.)

BILLY

The General, he's not the General any more. The government has collapsed. Without gasoline, it just died. General Harrison is now President Harrison.

JEFF

*What?*

BILLY

He's moving to Inkton with his army to set up the new government tomorrow morning. Oh, and our town isn't going to be Inkton anymore.

SUSAN

I never trusted that man.

NONE

What does he plan to call Inkton?

BILLY

Harrisonville.

JEFF

Who can honestly say that out-thinking President Harrison seems like a very difficult problem?

LUCY

You're absolutely right, Jeff. We almost got pulled into fighting this battle on his terms. When it comes to a battle of wits, he's almost completely defenseless.

JEFF

We need to make our adversary feel safe. If he feels threatened in any way, well, someone will get hurt. Now, I've got an idea that will work if we work all night to get ready for our invasion. Leo, how much coffee you got?

LEO

I'll put four pots on, and keep 'em coming.

JEFF

Well then, we can't lose. Gather 'round. Everyone is included in this plan, even Eugene, I mean None of Your Business.

(Lights fade, then come up again.)

### Scene 8

Inkton Diner. It's empty. FULLER enters. She is now a General.

FULLER

Okay, all clear.

(HARRISON enters. He is now wearing a suit.)

HARRISON

Well, this is the first time the Inkton Diner has been empty for my arrival.

(JEFF enters with TOM.)

JEFF

Why, General Harrison, you seem to be out of uniform.

FULLER

As of eighteen hundred hours last night, and by direct orders from Washington, you may refer to our new commander-in-chief as President Harrison.

TOM

So, Mr. unelected President, what plans do you have for our country?

HARRISON

I think I detect a note of sarcasm in your voice, which in these troubled times we can ill afford.

TOM

Last time I checked, I have my Freedom of Speech guaranteed to me by the Constitution. So I think I'll be just as sarcastic as I please.



HARRISON

Actually, in a state of martial law, any acts of insubordination, whether from the military or civilian population, can be dealt with in any manner I deem appropriate.

FULLER

Mr. Henry, you are under arrest.

(NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS runs in.)

NONE

Death to all tyrants!

FULLER

Looks like we have another threat to national security. What's your name, soldier?

NONE

None of Your Business.

(FULLER cuffs him and Tom and drags them out the door.)

HARRISON

Now, unless we have anyone else who wishes to join them ... Good, then let's proceed. I have here a list of all the able-bodied men of Harrisonville.

JEFF

You're not worthy to be our local dogcatcher, let alone rebuild our entire country. And This is, was, and always will be Inkton.

HARRISON

I am trying my best to avoid bloodshed, but if you force my hand ...

JEFF

My mom will take on any and all of your boy scouts, one at a time, until she has either licked them all, or no one else has the courage to fight.

HARRISON

Your mother?!? You must be joking.

JEFF

Hardly. She was the women's state boxing champion when she was young – and she's still pretty tough.

HARRISON

Just to be perfectly clear on what you're proposing, if any of my soldiers can beat your mother in hand-to-hand combat, you will comply with all my demands without any resistance?

JEFF

Absolutely correct, with only three conditions. First, should my mom kill any of your boys, she will not be prosecuted.

HARRISON

Done. You have my word.

JEFF

Sometimes she doesn't know her own strength, and she might get carried away.

HARRISON

All right, name your second condition.

JEFF

Oh yeah, when she does win the fight, you agree to be our head dogcatcher, with your two subordinates assigned as your trainees. Like I said before, you're not qualified for the position, but you might grow into it within a few years

HARRISON

I should have you shot for that disrespectful slur, but instead, after your mother suffers a severe concussion, you will be put on lifelong kitchen patrol. Peeling potatoes for the rest of your life.

HARRISON

And your last condition?

JEFF

You to accept my check for \$1,211 as a full refund of my fee. The LCF system was a complete failure.

(Hands him check.)

HARRISON

If you insist. Now, can we finally proceed?

JEFF

(Yelling to the back)

Mom!

(SUSAN enters dressed in boxing suit with lettering: "Killing Machine.")  
Let's get it on, then. Who's the first victim?

SUSAN

Let me at 'em, let me at 'em!

HARRISON

Private Barnes, front and center!

(BARNES enters.)

Private Barnes, you are under direct orders to hit Mrs. Smith until she gives up. Can you do it?

BARNES

I don't know ...

JEFF

It might be for the best if I were the ref; once Mom gets a taste of blood, I'm the only one who can calm her down.

HARRISON

Let's just get this over with.

SUSAN (to BARNES)

I sure hope you made out your will.

JEFF

Now wait for the bell, Ma.

(He hits the bell on the counter. DING!)

SUSAN

Grrrrr!

(Brings arm back to hit BARNES.)

BARNES

I give up!

HARRISON

What? Are you a coward? Get back in there and follow your orders.

BARNES

I can't. She might hurt me.

HARRISON

Well, I'll have you shot at dawn if you don't! Never mind—you said we could select as many challengers as we wanted, right?

JEFF

That's right. Who's next?

HARRISON

(Goes to door and yells out.)

Okay, which one of you enlisted men back there wants to become an officer? Come on now; show a little backbone. She's an old lady, for goodness sake.

JEFF

President Harrison, can I ask you a question?

HARRISON

Why, of course Jeffery. (acting very passive and friendly)

JEFF

Instead of being a dictator, how would you like a nice safe job, like maybe being our dogcatcher?

(HARRISON thinks this over.)

HARRISON

Yeah, that sounds like a good idea. To tell you the truth, I can't really think why I wanted to be a dictator anyway.

JEFF

Well, maybe if you knew that while the factory was shut down, I had everyone working on a hand-held model of the LCF Machine—one that had a safety shut-off, and could extract only negative emotional energy. Yeah, if you knew that, then everything would make perfect sense. Bob, you can come out now.

INK

(Entering)

I kept the beam on them until the green light came on, just like you said, Jeff.

JEFF

You did real good, Bob. Without you to pull the trigger that brought them into a completely passive state, the whole plan would not have worked.

( Loud sound of dogs howling.)



INK

Mr. Dogcatcher, do your duty.

HARRISON

I sure hope they're nice doggies.

(He exits with BARNES skipping.)

JEFF

All right, everyone can come out now. Where's Lucy?

(LUCY enters, carrying baby.)

LUCY

Here I am. It's a girl!

JEFF

She's beautiful. What should we name her, Lucy?

LUCY

I thought it would be obvious. I mean, after all, you are a genius.

JEFF

I'm sure glad we're on the same page. After everything we've been through, her name should represent what made it possible for Inkton to survive.

SUSAN

My thoughts exactly.

JEFF

I am proud to introduce to my friends and family Bitwiddla Smith.

LUCY

Forget it. Her name's going to be Susan.

SUSAN

How sweet!

(Lights fade)

END OF PLAY