

FOR WHOM THE TINKERBELL TOLLS

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By Ray Sheers

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(APPROXIMATELY 10 MEN, 15 WOMEN, VERY FLEXIBLE)

SNOOKS BEACON (M) Now a ghost, SNOOKS went down with the *Titanic* in 1912. He's moved into an abandoned theatre to rehearse with his troupe of performers (who also went down with the ship). He doesn't take his afterlife too seriously. He becomes a very unusual Grim Reaper. (249 lines)

SNOOKS' TROUPE (M/F) Musicians, actors, dancers, jugglers, etc. They are all dead performers. (NOTE: The TROUPE is easily eliminated if necessary. However, musicians and dancers are often willing to perform but don't want speaking parts.) (*Non-Speaking*)

THE ONE IN CHARGE (F).... An outspoken liberated woman in charge of SNOOKS' afterlife. She takes her title and everything else quite seriously. (167 lines)

SPUD (F)..... A homeless person; rather authoritative. She and BROCCOLI travel with all of their worldly belongings in a shopping cart. The outside of the cart is strewn with others' castoffs. NOTE: SPUD and BROCCOLI should be portrayed as eccentric, not pitiful. (63 lines)

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- BROCCOLI (F)..... SPUD's friend, another homeless person. She has delusions of grandeur and is quite gullible. BROCCOLI thinks she's very beautiful, but she's not. She's missing several teeth and dresses in layers of bizarre clothing. She might have artificial flowers pinned to her dress and hat. (72 lines)
- JEETER CHEEVER (M) A mild-mannered, rather naive husband whose wife is plotting his death. (141 lines)
- MAUREEN CHEEVER (F).... Not at all mild-mannered or naive. Two-faced, bossy, and trying to wipe out her husband. (26 lines)
- MEN (M)..... These two goons have been hired by MAUREEN to kill her husband. Neither is very bright. (MAN 1: 10 lines; MAN 2: 9 lines)
- MIME 1 (M)..... A traditional mime. He never speaks, so he must be able to communicate with body movements, gestures, and facial expressions. (Non-Speaking)
- MIMES (M/F) Optional extras. (Non-Speaking)
- MYRTLE MAE/IRIS (M/F).... Two older ladies who experience the extraordinary while taking an ordinary walk in the park. These parts could be adapted to suit either sex. (MYRTLE MAE: 3 lines; IRIS: 6 lines)
- POLICEMAN (M/F) This part can be adapted to suit either sex.
- LENNY PODOLSKI (M)..... A nerdy ventriloquist (no ventriloquism required) looking for romance. (67 lines)
- DORIS/CYNTHIA (F) Two young ladies planning a double date with LENNY and LONNY. (DORIS: 16 lines; CYNTHIA: 17 lines)

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LONNY (M/F) LENNY's dummy. Make no mistake about it, LONNY is in control of LENNY - and everyone else. Two people are required to play LONNY. (See PRODUCTION NOTES.) (84 lines)

ERNST KOOMQUAT (M)..... A business tycoon who values money over all else. (65 lines)

LILA (F)..... KOOMQUAT's secretary. (13 lines)

SECURITY GUARDS (M/F).. These parts can be played by either sex. (GUARD 1: 33 lines; GUARD 2: 6 lines)

MALCOLM (M) MAUREEN's new boyfriend. (26 lines)

THE ONE IN CHARGE OF THE ONE IN CHARGE (M) A take charge kind of guy. (20 lines)

HOMELESS PEOPLE (M/F).. Several needed. All are friends of SPUD and BROCCOLI.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE, SCENE 1: ABANDONED THEATRE (BARE STAGE)

ACT ONE, SCENE 2: JEETER CHEEVER'S LIVING ROOM

ACT ONE, SCENE 3: PARK SCENE WITH PARK BENCH
CENTER STAGE (PLAYED IN FRONT OF CURTAIN)

ACT TWO, SCENE 1: LENNY PODOLSKI'S LIVING ROOM

ACT TWO, SCENE 2: ALLEY SCENE WITH LARGE TRASH CAN
CENTER STAGE SURROUNDED BY SEVERAL PLASTIC BAGS AND/OR BOXES (PLAYED IN FRONT OF CURTAIN)

ACT THREE, SCENE 1: ABANDONED THEATRE (BARE STAGE)

ACT THREE, SCENE 2: ERNST KOOMQUAT'S OFFICE

ACT THREE, SCENE 3: ABANDONED THEATRE (BARE STAGE)

PRODUCTION NOTES

ALTERNATE OPENING (ACT ONE, SCENE 1)

IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO USE SNOOKS' TROUPE:

SNOOKS is on the floor of the theatre. He is wrapped in a blanket, asleep, and snoring. The ONE IN CHARGE enters carrying a garment bag and a large umbrella.

ONE IN CHARGE: (Poking SNOOKS with the umbrella.) Rise and shine, Snooky baby.

SNOOKS: (Turning over.) Leave me alone.

ONE IN CHARGE: Time to go to work, Snooks.

SNOOKS: (Looking up.) Work? Who the heck are you?

ONE IN CHARGE: You Snooks (Rhyming with "hooks.") ...uh, Bacon?

SNOOKS: (Rising.) It's Snooks! (Rhyming with "spooks.") Snooks Beacon! Now look, I don't know who you think you are, but...

ONE IN CHARGE: You're right, you don't know who I am, but I'm going to tell you, Snooky baby. I'm the One In Charge.

THE REST OF THE SHOW REMAINS THE SAME.

COSTUMES

SPUD/BROCCOLI

They should be dressed in bizarre clothes. Pinning artificial flowers all over BROCCOLI's clothes is a great idea. The sides of their shopping cart needs to be built up with cardboard to conceal BROCCOLI and later LONNY. Heavy cardboard works well. From that you can hang all kinds of strange and colorful items, the more the better. The cart should look like it contains a lifetime's accumulation of others' castoffs.

SNOOKS' TINKERBELL COSTUME

A fairy's suit with wings and brightly colored tights. A tutu also works well.

LENNY

Lenny thinks he's a good dresser, but he's not. He should wear bright, gaudy clothes.

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LONNY (VENTRILOQUIST'S DOLL)

Two people are required to play LONNY. Neither is seen. One needs to be small enough to be concealed in a large plastic trash can in order to manipulate the dummy while the voice comes from the shopping cart. Sometimes the voice comes from behind a screen or off stage at others. The person who plays the voice of LONNY needs a powerful voice. Incidentally, LONNY's voice doesn't need to be high. A reversal has a humorous effect - make LONNY have a deep voice and LENNY a high one. Anyone manipulating the dummy must also know LONNY's lines so that the voice matches mouth movements. Make sure LONNY's body moves as well as his mouth: this makes him seem more life-like and less doll-like. LONNY will be a favorite with all audiences, but the young children are especially mesmerized by him.

Groucho Marx or Howdy-Doody dummies can be rented from Heuer Publishing for 45 days. Please contact us for rental fees and terms 1-800-950-7529. Make sure you ask around, it's amazing what people have in their attics and basements. A puppet with a movable mouth could be substituted.

NOTE: Keep Lonny a well-kept secret until opening night and don't reveal how you make him talk! Also, dummies do break, so limit the number of people who have access to him.

MIME(S)

Traditional black and white costumes. Use white and black face makeup for MIME(S). Face makeup is readily available at Halloween; other times, you have to go to theatre/costume shops for it. (Always apply white makeup heavily.)

SET

Though there are several different sets in this play, they are very simple. For example, the theatre scene is nothing more than a bare stage with an optional piano and stool. JEETER's house needs nothing more than a chair, table with lamp, desk, and a large potted plant. The park scene (played in front of the curtain) can be reduced to a park bench. LENNY's house can be sparsely furnished, but a screen is helpful to conceal the actor playing LONNY. For the alley scene, some plastic garbage bags full of paper or rags and a large plastic trash can are sufficient. It might be helpful to wire the lid to the can

so that it never crashes to the floor. KOOMQUAT's office really only needs a desk and chair. Other office furniture is optional. For set changes, try entertaining the audience with several mime skits. There will never any "down time" because the audience always had something to watch. Old-time piano music lends a sense of an old-time silent movie. Even the noise of moving furniture will be covered by the music. Check your public library for books on miming with ideas for skits and pictures for make-up application. Adolescents love to mime and become incredibly proficient in a short time. (This gives those who prefer not to speak or learn lines an opportunity to perform.) Audiences (young and old) will thoroughly enjoy the mime skits. While this certainly isn't necessary to produce the play, it adds a wonderful new dimension to your production. Another idea is to use SNOOK's performers during set changes.

HELPFUL TIPS:

Use a large golf umbrella for the UMBRELLA OF INVISIBILITY. Cover each panel with bright shiny fabric or spray paint it. Alternating colors looks great. Leftover fabric from the Tinkerbell costume works well. "Umbrella of Invisibility" could be written on the umbrella with fabric paint.

Just before SNOOKS and JEETER hit the two hired killers with the plant and lamp, have one of the killers cough. This serves as a signal for the strike and for a gong to sound. Position either SNOOKS or JEETER in front of them, so the hit isn't actually seen by the audience. If the killers throw their legs into the air when the gong strikes, it looks very funny.

For LILA's air freshener, a can of silly string is funny. When she finally opens it, she can spray it up in the air (away from other actors' faces). It dries quickly and is easy to pick up afterwards.

For SPUD and BROCCOLI's cart, you might try contacting a local food store. Many stores are willing to lend one, especially if you give them credit in your program. If you can't get a cart, a very large wagon or cart with the sides built up will suffice.

The lamp in JEETER's house should be wood, if possible, because it has to be knocked off the table repeatedly and shouldn't break. Any large, unbreakable object would work as long as it makes noise as it falls off the table.

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An old sheet stitched up to create a large bag can be used to throw over the two security guards.

In the last scene, frightening MAUREEN should be eerie, yet fun. Sound effects and lighting are important. If a fog machine is available, let it run during the scene change. It creates a wonderful and eerie effect, especially if used with black lights. Try borrowing or renting a fog machine from a local disc jockey.

It's very effective to announce the entrance of the ONE IN CHARGE OF THE ONE IN CHARGE with music. If possible, he should enter from the rear of the auditorium or somewhere unexpected. Make this a flashy entrance!

SUGGESTED MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS

MUSIC

Tinkerbelle music: Every time someone says "Tinkerbelle," you might play a little music. This can be done simply with wind chimes, a xylophone, or an instrumentalist playing a trill. Only SNOOKS seems to hear it.

SOUND EFFECTS

Thunder claps

Rain (*Optional, for opening*)

Xylophone or electronic sound for "Abracadabra, you're dead"

Doorbell

Car horn

Toilet flushing

Door slam

PROPS

- 1) Large golf umbrella (See PRODUCTION NOTES)
- 2) Note pad or clipboard, pens, paper, newspapers
- 3) Large garment bag (Not transparent)
- 4) Large grocery cart
- 5) Large hand mirror
- 6) Headphones

- 7) Coffee pot and mug
- 8) Necklace
- 9) Book
- 10) Gaudy bathrobe and shower cap
- 11) Telephone (One or two)
- 12) Bag for Death Dust
- 13) Death Dust (Shiny confetti)
- 14) Large lamp (Preferably wood)
- 15) Eye masks for MEN
- 16) Large potted plant (Artificial)
- 17) Note
- 18) Several sheets of legal paper for KOOMQUAT's contract
- 19) Handcuffs or shackles (Slip-ons are easier to use)
- 20) Wand (Optional)
- 21) Large folding city map
- 22) Purses (Two)
- 23) Large bowl
- 24) Potato chips (Enough for each performance)
- 25) Radio or CD player (Doesn't need to work)
- 26) Screen (Several panels, large enough to conceal the actor playing LONNY)
- 27) Candles (For LENNY, optional)
- 28) Head of lettuce (One for each performance)
- 29) Afghan or blanket
- 30) Ventriloquist's dummy (See PRODUCTION NOTES)
- 31) Large trash can (Large enough to hold the person manipulating LONNY)
- 32) Large plastic trash bags, boxes of junk, etc.
- 33) Strange hat (For SPUD)
- 34) Aerosol can or can of silly string (Available at toy stores and supermarkets. One for each performance)
- 35) Large cloth bag (See PRODUCTION NOTES)
- 36) Rope
- 37) Black lights, fog machine (ALL optional)
- 38) Keys

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

SETTING:

Abandoned theatre, bare stage.

AT RISE:

SEE PRODUCTION NOTES FOR ALTERNATE BEGINNING. SNOOKS is rehearsing with his troupe in an abandoned theatre. This could be a group of musicians, jugglers, actors, dancers, etc., or SNOOKS could simply be at a piano "playing." He could go through the motions of playing to the accompaniment of recorded music. SNOOKS should be dressed in rather flashy clothes (silver vest and top hat, bright shirt), very theatrical or showman-like. Suddenly, the ONE IN CHARGE enters with a large umbrella in one hand and a garment bag in the other.

ONE IN CHARGE: What lousy weather! When's it ever going to stop raining in this crazy city? All it does is rain.

SNOOKS: Hey, who the heck are you?

ONE IN CHARGE: *(Looks at paper.)* You Snooks *(Rhyming with "hooks.")* ...uh, Bacon?

SNOOKS: *(Spins around.)* It's Snooks! *(Rhyming with "spooks.")* Snooks Beacon! Who are you? Can't you see we're rehearsing?

ONE IN CHARGE: Rehearsal's over, pal.

SNOOKS: Over? What are you talking about? Who are you?

ONE IN CHARGE: You wouldn't know me.

SNOOKS: Well, get out of here. We got a show to rehearse.

ONE IN CHARGE: Show's been canceled.

SNOOKS: Canceled? What are you talking about?

ONE IN CHARGE: I canceled it. *(To performers.)* Go on, get out of here. We got business to discuss. Shoo! *(Puzzled, they leave.)*

SNOOKS: You canceled it? Now just a minute... Look, I don't know who you are but...

ONE IN CHARGE: You're right, you don't know who I am, but I'm going to tell you, Snooksy baby. I'm the One in Charge.

SNOOKS: What do you mean, "the One in Charge"?

ONE IN CHARGE: You heard me. Sit down, we have to talk. *(SNOOKS hesitates. She puts her umbrella on SNOOKS' shoulder, pushing him down.)* Sit, Snooksy.

SNOOKS: It's Snooks, just Snooks!

ONE IN CHARGE: Snooksy, what are you doing here? According to my records, you were assigned to haunt...uh, 214 Blue Ash, the Nuthatch Residence. This isn't 214 Blue Ash. This is the Asbury Theatre.

SNOOKS: (*Tries to stand, ONE IN CHARGE pushes him down.*)

Yeah, well, we were kind of cramped over there. There was a couple already haunting that house. This place was abandoned; a theatre seemed just right for me and my performers. What do you mean, you're the One in Charge? In charge of what?

ONE IN CHARGE: Most everything. Your afterlife, for one.

SNOOKS: My afterlife?

ONE IN CHARGE: You heard me. I'm in charge of your afterlife.

SNOOKS: A woman is in charge of my afterlife?!

ONE IN CHARGE: You got a problem with that, pal?

SNOOKS: A woman?!

ONE IN CHARGE: Refresh my memory. You went down with the *Titanic*, didn't you?

SNOOKS: That's right. Me and my performers were supposed to do our show the night she went down. It was supposed to be our big break. Then BANG! We hit that stupid iceberg! Some break, huh?

ONE IN CHARGE: You know, they made a movie about it.

SNOOKS: Yeah, but we're not in it.

ONE IN CHARGE: Tough break. The *Titanic* sank in what, 1912?

SNOOKS: Right.

ONE IN CHARGE: Let me tell you something, Snooksy. Things have changed around here since 1912. For one thing, women got the right to vote in 1920.

SNOOKS: What?! You're kidding. They can vote?

ONE IN CHARGE: And that's not all. We got equal rights now - the same rights as men. Maybe you haven't heard, but during the sixties we had a Women's Liberation Movement—

SNOOKS: Women's Liberation? Look, this is all very enlightening and...depressing, but I've got a show to rehearse, so if you'll just—

ONE IN CHARGE: I told you. Show's been canceled. What do you mean depressing? You want to hear something really depressing? There's a ship called the *Aphrodite* that's going to sink in the very near future. I can book you on the *Aphrodite*, Snooksy baby.

SNOOKS: The *Aphrodite*?

ONE IN CHARGE: Right. The *Aphrodite* is a cruise ship that's going to sink in... (*Looks at watch.*) about a week.

SNOOKS: It's going to sink?

ONE IN CHARGE: Just like the *Titanic*. Strange coincidence, huh? How'd you like to spend the next fifty years or so at the bottom of the Caribbean? Just like old times, huh?

SNOOKS: Now, look...

ONE IN CHARGE: No, you look. We got rules, Snooksy, and you broke them.

SNOOKS: What rules? I'm dead.

ONE IN CHARGE: One, you left your appointed haunting place. Two, sources reported that you also interfered with the living.

SNOOKS: I can explain that...

ONE IN CHARGE: I'm not interested. Three, you're trespassing.

SNOOKS: Trespassing?

ONE IN CHARGE: Trespassing! You got no business being here. So what you have now is a little problem.

SNOOKS: Problem? What kind of problem?

ONE IN CHARGE: You can't go around breaking the rules. What kind of an afterlife would this be if everyone went around breaking all the rules?

SNOOKS: Rules? Hello, I'm dead, for Pete's sake!

ONE IN CHARGE: Oh, so you think you have special privileges just because you're dead? Wrong! Dead wrong! Yeah. *(Laughs.)* You've got to be punished, Snooksy.

SNOOKS: Will you stop calling me that?

ONE IN CHARGE: As it so happens, Mr. Bacon, sir, I have another purpose in mind for this theatre, and it's got nothing to do with you or your dumb show. So you're being reassigned.

SNOOKS: Reassigned? We have to leave?

ONE IN CHARGE: Actually, no. Your pals can stay, but you...you have a new job.

SNOOKS: What do you mean, a new job? I don't have a job. I'm dead, remember?

ONE IN CHARGE: You do now. I'm giving you a special assignment.

SNOOKS: What kind of special assignment?

ONE IN CHARGE: I want you to visit a few people.

SNOOKS: Visit a few people?

ONE IN CHARGE: And bring them back here.

SNOOKS: Here?

ONE IN CHARGE: You've got a new position.

SNOOKS: What kind of new position?

ONE IN CHARGE: Soul Collector.

SNOOKS: Soul Collector? What are you talking about?

ONE IN CHARGE: *(Touches him with her umbrella as if knighting him.)* I'm appointing you the Grim Reaper for the Southeast *(Insert region of your city/town.)* region.

SNOOKS: What?!

ONE IN CHARGE: It's only a temporary position, you understand.

SNOOKS: This is some kind of joke, right?

ONE IN CHARGE: A joke? A joke! Are you nuts? You think this is a joke? *(Takes out a list.)* I've got a list of the people you have to visit. It's very simple. These people have all been randomly selected by computer.

SNOOKS: Computer?

ONE IN CHARGE: Yeah, you ever hear of a computer?

SNOOKS: Yeah, I heard of them.

ONE IN CHARGE: This is the twenty-first century, Snooks, a new millennium. We've got cutting-edge technology. You just go to these people, you tell them you're Death, that their number is up and they're checking out, and you bring them back here to me. What could be simpler?

SNOOKS: Let me get this straight. You want me to be the Grim Reaper and bring these...uh...

ONE IN CHARGE: Souls. We call them souls. You collect their souls and bring them here.

SNOOKS: To an abandoned theatre.

ONE IN CHARGE: Right. This place is kind of a holding area until their paperwork is processed. Don't worry, I'll take it from there. You just get them here.

SNOOKS: What if they don't want to come?

ONE IN CHARGE: They don't have a choice, Snooksy. You're the Grim Reaper. No one argues with the Grim Reaper. Besides, everything you need is in this bag. Your manual, your outfit, everything you need is in the bag.

SNOOKS: My outfit?

ONE IN CHARGE: Well, of course. You don't expect to show up dressed like that, do you? In this business, appearance is everything, Snooks. Why don't you try it on? Go on, try it on.

SNOOKS: *(Looks into the bag.)* Wait a minute, wait a minute. This ain't no Grim Reaper outfit.

ONE IN CHARGE: What do you mean? Of course, it is.

SNOOKS: What about the black robe? The hood? This looks like somebody's stupid Halloween costume. I can't wear this.

ONE IN CHARGE: What are you talking about? Let me see that. *(Looks into the bag.)* Oh no, not again.

SNOOKS: What do you mean, "not again"?

ONE IN CHARGE: The dry cleaners screwed up again. Third time this month. People just don't take pride in their work anymore.

SNOOKS: The dry cleaners? You send the Grim Reaper's clothes to a dry cleaners?

ONE IN CHARGE: Well, they've got to be cleaned, don't they? Death is a dirty business, you know. Well, I tell you, somebody's going to pay for this. And I do mean pay.

SNOOKS: *(Relieved.)* I guess I'll have to wait till you get the right uniform.

ONE IN CHARGE: No time, Snooks. We'll have to make do with what we got.

SNOOKS: I can't wear this thing.

ONE IN CHARGE: Sure, you can.

SNOOKS: I thought appearance was everything. I'll look like...Tinkerbell in this thing.

ONE IN CHARGE: Just tell them you're the...Death Fairy. *(Laughs.)*

SNOOKS: Very funny.

ONE IN CHARGE: How would you like to wear this thing on the sinking ship I'm going to book you on, the *Aphrodite*? What you don't understand is that you don't have a choice here, Snooky baby. You interfered with the living, you flew the coop, and now you're trespassing. You've got no one to blame but yourself. And you want to complain about the outfit? I don't think so.

SNOOKS: Look, I don't think I'm cut out for this sort of thing. Maybe you could find somebody else.

ONE IN CHARGE: You're wasting my time - and yours. Did I mention you've only got 48 hours to get the job done?

SNOOKS: Forty-eight hours?

ONE IN CHARGE: Right. So you'd better get dressed.

SNOOKS: What happens after forty-eight hours?

ONE IN CHARGE: We'll see. If you're successful, maybe I'll arrange it so you can haunt his place permanently. No promises, you understand, but I'll see what I can do.

SNOOKS: And if I'm not successful?

ONE IN CHARGE: Stop selling yourself short. Have a little faith in yourself.

SNOOKS: This is a bad dream.

ONE IN CHARGE: Lighten up, Snooks. Things could be a lot worse. Besides, I'll come along to help you get started. I can see you're feeling kind of insecure and inadequate.

SNOOKS: Insecure? Me? What do you mean - inadequate?

ONE IN CHARGE: Oh, sorry, I didn't mean to step on your manly toes. I just meant, you know, it being a new job and all. (*Checks watch.*) The clock's ticking, Snooky. Don't you think you should be (*Lifts up bag.*) getting dressed for work?

SNOOKS grabs the bag angrily and they leave.

Brief BLACKOUT.

SPUD enters theatre, pushing shopping cart filled with her worldly belongings.

SPUD: Whoa! Look at this place! It's huge! Broccoli! Broccoli! Wake up! Look what I found! Wake up, Broccoli!

BROCCOLI: (*Emerges from inside the shopping cart.*) What? This better be important. What do you want?

SPUD: Look what I found while you were asleep.

BROCCOLI: I wasn't asleep. I was flossing my teeth. (*Smiling to show missing teeth.*)

SPUD: You were asleep. All you do is sleep.

BROCCOLI: No! I wasn't asleep! You were asleep.

SPUD: How could I be asleep? I was pushing the cart.

BROCCOLI: You were sleepwalking. You were talking in your sleep, too, I heard you.

SPUD: You're crazy, that's what you are, Broccoli.

BROCCOLI: I may be crazy, *(Holds up mirror.)* but I'm pretty.

SPUD: Pretty, ha!

BROCCOLI: You're jealous, that's what you are! Jealous! Help me out. *(Climbs out of the cart.)* Oh, my foot's asleep. *(Starts shaking her foot.)* What is this place?

SPUD: It's an old theatre. It's been closed for years, and there's nobody here. Look how big this place is. Broccoli, we could all fit in here.

BROCCOLI: What do you mean?

SPUD: You know how the cops are always arresting us and putting all of us in jail?

BROCCOLI: How do you know these things? Who tells you these things?

SPUD: *(Sarcastically.)* Fairies.

BROCCOLI: Fairies?

SPUD: Right. Little fairies with shimmery wings come and whisper things in my ear.

BROCCOLI: They do?

SPUD: It's in the newspaper, Broccoli, the newspaper! *(Picks up paper from the cart and hits BROCCOLI with it.)* I read the newspaper!

BROCCOLI: When did you learn how to read?

SPUD: The mayor's arresting street people for vagrancy.

BROCCOLI: Vagrancy? What's vagrancy?

SPUD: Vagrancy is having no home and no job.

BROCCOLI: *(Thinking.)* Like us! Why didn't you say so?

SPUD: The police arrested Bluejay last night.

BROCCOLI: What? They got Bluejay? *(Pause.)* Who's Bluejay?

SPUD: You know, he's the one who always played the harmonica.

BROCCOLI: Him? They got him?

SPUD: They arrested him and nobody knows where they took him. They're going to arrest all of us.

BROCCOLI: They arrested Bluejay? No more music? Oh, that's too bad! Bluejay had a crush on me. He wanted to marry me.

SPUD: He didn't have a crush on you.

BROCCOLI: He did so. He said I was pretty, and he played songs on his harmonica for me. Love songs.

SPUD: You didn't even know who Bluejay was!

BROCCOLI: You're just jealous of all my boyfriends.

SPUD: Broccoli, we've got to find a place to hide before the police find us and arrest us, too. This place is huge.

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BROCCOLI: (*Looking up.*) And it's got a ceiling! (*Jumps up.*) Look how high that is! (*Jumping.*) And there's no wind in here.

SPUD: Come on, jumping bean, let's go get the others and bring them back here.

BROCCOLI: Wait!

SPUD: Now what?

BROCCOLI: (*Looking around.*) How do we know this place ain't haunted?

SPUD: Don't be stupid, Broccoli. There ain't no such thing as ghosts.

BROCCOLI: How do you know? Huh? How do you know? The fairies? Maybe this place is crawling with ghosts. I'm not sleeping with ghosts.

SPUD: Did you ever see a ghost?

BROCCOLI: No.

SPUD: Did you ever hear a ghost?

BROCCOLI: No.

Loud crash off stage.

BROCCOLI: (*Frightened, runs off.*) LET'S GO GET THE OTHERS!

SPUD: (*Looks at the audience.*) I think that's probably a good idea!

SPUD follows BROCCOLI off. BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

SETTING:

JEETER CHEEVER'S living room with an easy chair, coffee table, and plant.

AT RISE:

JEETER CHEEVER is sitting in an easy chair with headphones dangling around his ears. He is reading the newspaper and drinking a cup of coffee. His body moves in time with the music. His wife, MAUREEN, enters combing her hair; she is dressed to go out.

MAUREEN: Now, Jeeter, you sure you don't care if I go out with the girls tonight? (*With his headphones on, he can't hear her. She goes over to him and pulls off the headphones.*) I said, are you sure you don't mind if I go out tonight?

JEETER: No, sweetie pie, I don't mind a bit. I'm really tired. It's been a long week.

MAUREEN: Oh, I know. (*Pinching his cheek.*) My little pumpkin has been working so hard lately. (*Goes back to combing her hair.*)

JEETER: Did you see this?

MAUREEN: (*Preoccupied with her appearance.*) What?

JEETER: Says here the mayor is arresting homeless people for vagrancy.

MAUREEN: That's nice.

JEETER: He says having no job and no home is a crime, and he's not going to put up with it in his city! Can you imagine? Says it's bad for tourism. So he's arresting them. He's up for reelection this year. Probably thinks this will get him some votes.

MAUREEN: Well, they are just...bums, you know. And who wants a bunch of bums all over the city?

JEETER: They're people, Maureen, people.

MAUREEN: Yeah, dirty, smelly people. Is there a picture of Mayor Demming?

JEETER: Yeah.

MAUREEN: *(Taking paper.)* Let me see. I think he's the cutest mayor we've ever had.

JEETER: Well, he's not getting my vote.

MAUREEN: *(Setting down paper.)* What are you going to do tonight, Jeeter?

JEETER: Oh, I think I'll just take an early shower and watch some TV, read a little. I got a good murder mystery I'm just dying to read.

MAUREEN: Well, don't you have nightmares, pumpkin. Last night you were tossing and turning all night long. *(Looks at necklace she's wearing.)* I don't think this necklace goes with this outfit at all. I think I'll wear another one. What do you think, Jeeter? *(JEETER doesn't look.)* Jeeter!

JEETER: Pearls! It needs pearls!

MAUREEN: Of course, *(Turning on him.)* but it would be nice if I had some real pearls! *(Pulling him up in the chair.)* And will you sit up? Your posture's getting terrible! *(Exits to bedroom.)*

JEETER: Yeah, yeah... *(Puts headphones back on and moves to the music.)*

ONE IN CHARGE enters under open umbrella from street.

ONE IN CHARGE: *(Looks to see if SNOOKS is behind her. He isn't.)* Will you get in here?

SNOOKS: *(From off stage.)* No!

ONE IN CHARGE: Get in here!

SNOOKS: No! I look ridiculous!

ONE IN CHARGE: I'm going to count to three. If you aren't in here by the count of three, all bets are off and you're on a sinking ship first thing in the morning. *(Slowly.)* One...two...three!

SNOOKS: *(Enters in a fairy costume, carrying a wand.)* This is so embarrassing!

ONE IN CHARGE: *(Pulls him over, trying to suppress her amusement.)* Will you stay under the umbrella?

SNOOKS: Why, you expecting rain?

ONE IN CHARGE: I told you, as long as we're under the umbrella, we're invisible and nobody can hear us.

SNOOKS: I didn't need an umbrella when I was haunting the theatre.

ONE IN CHARGE: Trespassing, you were trespassing. Anyway, this is a special situation. Here, take this. *(Hands him the bag of death dust.)*

SNOOKS: What's this?

ONE IN CHARGE: That's your standard death dust. *(He drops it.)*
Pick it up. *(He does, very gingerly.)*

SNOOKS: What do I do with this? *(Opens it and carefully sniffs it.)*

ONE IN CHARGE: Keep your nose out of it. You sprinkle a little over the people on your list - and I do mean a little, a little goes a long way in this business. Guard this stuff with your life. *(Laughs.)*

SNOOKS: What's so funny?

ONE IN CHARGE: I told you to guard it with your life, and you're already dead. Anyway, you don't want the death dust to get in the wrong hands, Snooksy. That would be a major disaster.

SNOOKS: Is this our victim?

ONE IN CHARGE: Right. *(Takes out paper.)* This is... eeter Cheever.

SNOOKS: Jeeter Cheever?

ONE IN CHARGE: An easy case, really. His wife's been slowly poisoning him for years.

SNOOKS: Women! *(MAUREEN enters wearing a scarf, ONE IN CHARGE nods.)*

MAUREEN: How does this look, Jeeter? *(He can't hear her with the headphones, so she goes over and rips them off again.)* I said how does this look, Jeeter?

JEETER: *(Still absorbed in his newspaper.)* That looks great, sweetie pie. Just great. Told you it needed pearls. Is there any more of this terrific coffee? I always say my little Maureen makes the best coffee in the whole world.

MAUREEN: I made a fresh pot just for you. It's in the kitchen.

JEETER: I wish I knew your secret for making coffee.

ONE IN CHARGE: The poison's in the coffee.

SNOOKS: No!

JEETER: I'll have some more right after my shower.

MAUREEN: Well, I'll just bring in the pot so you won't have to get up and get it. *(She exits to kitchen, and he puts headphones back on.)*

ONE IN CHARGE: She's using rat poison.

SNOOKS: Rat poison? Shouldn't we do something? We're not going to let her get away with this, are we? *(Car horn. MAUREEN enters with pot of coffee, sets it on the table.)*

MAUREEN: Oh, there's Liz now. Good night, pumpkin. *(Kisses him on cheek.)*

JEETER: How about a real kiss? *(She ignores him.)*

MAUREEN: Don't forget to lock the door. I wouldn't want any bad men to get in and hurt my little Jeeter.

SNOOKS: How disgusting!

JEETER: Don't you worry, dear. I'll be fine. *(After she leaves, he goes to bedroom.)*

ONE IN CHARGE: Here's your chance. Go after him.

SNOOKS: What do I do?

ONE IN CHARGE: Tell him you're the Grim Reaper and that his number's up. Use the death dust. Sprinkle a little of it on him and that's it.

SNOOKS: Are you sure this is going to work?

ONE IN CHARGE: Just do it. *(Reluctantly he goes off stage to bedroom. ONE IN CHARGE sets down umbrella and looks at newspaper. Very quickly, SNOOKS returns.)* Now what?

SNOOKS: He's in the bathroom.

ONE IN CHARGE: So?

SNOOKS: I can't go in there.

ONE IN CHARGE: Oh, for Pete's sake, come on. *(Starts to exit.)*

SNOOKS: You can't go in there either!

ONE IN CHARGE: Why not?

SNOOKS: He's...taking a shower.

ONE IN CHARGE: So? What's your point?

SNOOKS: He...you know...he...he doesn't have any clothes on. *(Gesturing, he knocks over lamp. Tries to right it.)*

ONE IN CHARGE: Now look what you've done.

SNOOKS: Well, you try wearing this thing! I can't believe I'm doing this. *(She picks up the umbrella and stands under it. JEETER comes in, wearing a gaudy bathrobe and shower cap.)*

JEETER: Is that you, sweetie pie? *(Sees SNOOKS.)* Oh my god.

SNOOKS: *(Flustered, he looks to ONE IN CHARGE for advice.)* No, no, I'm...not...God...

JEETER: Well, that's pretty obvious. Who are you?

ONE IN CHARGE: Death! Tell him you're Death.

SNOOKS: I'm, uh, D...D...Doc-tor Beacon.

ONE IN CHARGE: *(Exasperated.)* Oh, great!

JEETER: *(Backs away.)* You're a doctor? I didn't call any doctor! What are you doing here? And why are you dressed like that? How the heck did you get in here?

SNOOKS: There's a simple explanation.

JEETER: Yeah, well, what is it?

SNOOKS: I, uh...

JEETER: I'm calling the police.

SNOOKS: No, don't do that! I, uh...I was...uh, *(Nervously fiddling with his costume.)* ...I was on my way to a costume party.

JEETER: A costume party?

FOR WHOM THE TINKERBELL TOLLS

SNOOKS: Yeah, and I...got lost. I thought this was where the party was, but...I see it's...not...so I guess I'll be leaving.

Two men enter wearing masks over their eyes. SNOOKS picks up a large plant and tries to hide, but it doesn't really conceal him.

MAN 1: Jeeter Cheever?

ONE IN CHARGE: Oh no! Snooks, get under the umbrella! *(He motions that he can't, because one of the masked men is blocking his way. SNOOKS tries walking behind the masked man with the plant as a cover.)*

JEETER: Are you guys on your way to the costume party, too?

MAN 2: Costume party?

JEETER: Yeah, the doctor's lost too.

MAN 1: Doctor? What doctor? *(JEETER motions toward SNOOKS. SNOOKS backs away still holding plant in front of him. MAN 1 grabs SNOOKS and laughs.)* Hey, Jake, get a load of this guy!

MAN 2: Now I understand why she wants to knock off her husband.

JEETER: What?

MAN 1: It's...who's that little guy from *Peter Pan*, the one that lights up?

MAN 2: It wasn't a guy. It was...uh, what's her name, something Hook.

MAN 1: Nah, it wasn't Hook. That was the captain...the one with the wooden leg. *(Lifts one leg to imitate a one-legged man.)*

MAN 2: He didn't have a wooden leg, he had a hook.

MAN 1: It was Tinkle...Tinkle-something.

MAN 2: Noooo.

MAN 1: Twinkle!

JEETER: Tinkerbell.

MAN 2: Shut up, let me think. I got it! Tinkerbell!

MAN 1: That's it! Tinkerbell!

JEETER: Told you.

SNOOKS: *(To ONE IN CHARGE.)* Didn't I tell you they'd think I was Tinkerbell in this stupid thing?

MAN 2: Gee, I used to love that movie.

MAN 1: So, which one of you is Jeeter Cheever?

JEETER: I am. Do I know you?

MAN 2: Well, it's like this, Jeeter. *(Grinning.)* You're number's up.

SNOOKS: *(To ONE IN CHARGE.)* Is he one of us?

MAN 1: *(To MAN 2.)* What does he mean "one of us"?

JEETER: My number's up? What are you talking about?

MAN 2: Yeah, what do you mean, "one of us," Tinkerbell? I should twist your head right out of that stupid costume. *(Grabs and shakes him.)*

ONE IN CHARGE: The wings! Be careful with those wings!

SNOOKS: *(To ONE IN CHARGE.)* The wings? What about my life?!

ONE IN CHARGE: You're dead.

SNOOKS: Pain! I still feel pain!

ONE IN CHARGE: Oh, be a man!

MAN 1: *(To MAN 2.)* Who's he talking to? *(MAN 2 looks around and shrugs.)*

ONE IN CHARGE: You think I want to end up paying for a damaged costume? *(She holds the umbrella against MAN 2's back; he lets go of SNOOKS. SNOOKS drops to the floor.)* Police! Nobody move! Hands up! *(SNOOKS gets up as the others put their hands in the air.)* Slowly, and I do mean slowly, get on the floor, face down. *(All three do. She keeps umbrella planted on MAN 2 and her foot on MAN 1.)* Not you, Cheever! Get over here. *(JEETER stands and runs over to ONE IN CHARGE. To MAN 1/MAN 2.)* You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. Cuff 'em, Snooks!

SNOOKS: What?

ONE IN CHARGE: I said cuff 'em! On your belt. Look on your belt! *(He takes them off his belt and handcuffs the two.)*

JEETER: What's going on? Who are these guys?

ONE IN CHARGE: These two men were hired by your wife to kill you.

JEETER: What? *(He picks up a pillow from sofa and starts hitting them with it.)*

SNOOKS: I thought she was killing him with rat poison.

JEETER: *(He stops hitting them suddenly.)* Rat poison?

SNOOKS: It was in the coffee.

JEETER: The coffee? She was killing me with coffee?

SNOOKS: That's right, Jeeter. I'm sorry you had to find out this way.

JEETER: You must be mistaken. My little Maureen wouldn't... Are you sure? These guys were *(Kicking one of the men.)* going to kill me?

ONE IN CHARGE: You got the picture.

JEETER: How did you find out?

ONE IN CHARGE: We've got our ways. They were going to shove you out the window, make it look like you jumped off the ledge. If you look in the desk, you'll find the suicide note your wife composed. *(SNOOKS goes to desk and hands JEETER the note.)*

SNOOKS: You knew all this was going to happen?

JEETER: This is crazy! I don't believe it.

ONE IN CHARGE: Go ahead, look for yourself. *(He reads note.)*

JEETER: I just don't believe it. Maureen? My little Maureen hired someone to kill me?

ONE IN CHARGE: The rat poison just wasn't working fast enough for your little Maureen.

JEETER: I just can't believe I was so close to death.

ONE IN CHARGE: Believe it, Jeeter.

SNOOKS: Yeah, things ain't always what they seem.

FOR WHOM THE TINKERBELL TOLLS

ONE IN CHARGE: Tell him the rest, Snooks.

SNOOKS: Do we have to? *(She nods.)* Sit down, Jeeter. *(He does.)*
Coffee?

ONE IN CHARGE: Snooks!

SNOOKS: Oh, sorry. Listen, Jeeter, your number's up.

JEETER: Not again.

SNOOKS: I'm not really a doctor or a cop...and...I'm not on my way to a masquerade party.

JEETER: You're not?

SNOOKS: Not exactly.

ONE IN CHARGE: Tell him, Snooks.

SNOOKS: I'm the Grim Reaper.

JEETER: *(Confused.)* The Grim Reaper? *(Laughing.)* Oh, I get it! The Grim Reaper! *(Laughing.)* This is all a joke, right? Maureen put you up to this, didn't she? What a sense of humor that little woman has! Is she videotaping this? *(Looks around for her.)* You can come out now, Maureen! Come on out! *(To SNOOKS.)* You should have come in a Bugs Bunny costume.

SNOOKS: Who?

JEETER: Then you could have been the Gwim Weeper! Get it? The Gwim Weeper! *(Still laughing.)*

ONE IN CHARGE: *(Laughs.)* Yeah, I get it! The Gwim Weeper!

JEETER: Maureen! *(Looking around.)* Get out here, you little "wascal," you! Maureen! Mau...reen?

SNOOKS: Jeeter, Maureen's not here. This ain't no joke. I am the Grim Reaper, and your number's up.

JEETER: What do you mean, my number's up?

ONE IN CHARGE: We're not cops, Jeeter. And this ain't no joke. It's time to turn in your chips. Game over.

SNOOKS: *(Sprinkles the death dust over him.)* Abracadabra. Jeeter Cheever, you're dead. *(He collapses.)*

ONE IN CHARGE: Abracadabra, you're dead?

SNOOKS shrugs. BLACKOUT.

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