

THE NEXT BIG THING

A Comedy One - Act Play

by
Pat Gabridge



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CHARACTERS

6 – 15 Characters. All roles can be played by either men or women.

(In order of appearance)

BECKMAN	A venture capitalist. An impatient skeptic.
MORTIMER	Beckman's partner in this venture. An optimist.
KELSEY	Assistant to Beckman & Mortimer and wrangler of inventors.
THE INVENTORS	
DR. MCGRUDESON	An old scientist who's been holed up in his lab for 25 years.
SHAPIRO	Partner with Brooks. Slick.
BROOKS	Partner with Shapiro. Almost as sharp as Shapiro.
DELTON	An inventor from the future. (Possibly.)
MULLEN	Partner with Flister. A sneezy mess.
FLISTER	Partner with Mullen. Plans to change the world.
SHANNON	Wears sweats (over a unitard) and has high hopes.
HERNANDEZ	Very confident in himself.
EUSTACE	(Secretly) Partner with Hernandez
DR. WASHINGTON	A doctor, suffering from many ailments. Twitches, sneezes, snoozes.
POLK	Partner with Futterman. Not tall.
FUTTERMAN	Partner with Polk. Both are young and casually dressed.

TIME: Now

PLACE: A big city in America.

SETTING: A conference room. The set is just an empty room with a simple table and chairs. There are a few devices that the inventors bring on stage, but you can create them out of readily available materials and it's okay if they look hacked together.

(Note: If you want, you can choose to have all the inventors played by a group of 3 actors (or any group between 3 and 12 actors). Also, I use gender specific pronouns in the stage directions (his/hers), but all the roles can be played by either men or women.)

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SETTING: A folding table with two chairs off to the side. The rest of the stage is bare and empty.

AT RISE: *BECKMAN and MORTIMER, two venture capitalists in business suits, sit in the chairs at the table. BECKMAN waits impatiently, lining up pencils and pens into neat little rows. MORTIMER writes furiously on a yellow legal pad.*

BECKMAN: How is this possibly going to work?

MORTIMER: Do you have a better idea?

BECKMAN: If I did, we wouldn't be sitting here.

MORTIMER: Exactly. We'll find something.

(KELSEY enters--SHE carries a small electronic device through the entire play--SHE reads a name off her device.)

KELSEY: Doctor J. McGrudeson is first up. Are you ready?

MORTIMER: Raring to go!

BECKMAN: Keep the coffee flowing. I have a feeling we're going to need it.

(KELSEY exits and returns with DR. J. McGRUDESON, an old scientist in a white lab coat, who wheels in a large device on a dolly, covered with a cloth.)

DR. McGRUDESON: Good morning. Thank you for making the time to see me.

MORTIMER: It's our pleasure. Where are you a professor?

DR. McGRUDESON: I used to teach at Harvard and MIT, joint appointment. But I left 25 years ago to start my own laboratory. I've been working non-stop on this invention ever since.

BECKMAN: But we've lured you out of hiding.

DR. McGRUDESON: My wife insisted it was finally time. Plus the ten million dollars you're planning to invest in the next big thing caught my interest.

BECKMAN: As well as the long line of other inventors reaching down the block.

DR. McGRUDESON: I'm sure you won't need to see them, once you've seen my device.

MORTIMER: Excellent. Why don't you show us?

DR. McGRUDESON: First, keep in mind an essential question that's come with the electronic age--we all want to use our telephones, and computers, cameras, and music players. But how do we integrate all of them to seamlessly operate together? This is a challenging engineering problem, one I've been hurling myself against in my basement lab every day for the past 25 years. But bit by bit, I've made progress. When the McGrudeson Device hits the shelves--

BECKMAN: Ah, so it has a name.

DR. McGRUDESON: Maybe you'll want something spiffier, I don't know. Like the McGrudeson Maximizer, or something sexy like that. Imagine having one device that will let you communicate, take photos, do computations, all in one unified package. Even sharpen pencils and open bottles.

MORTIMER: You've captured my attention. Let's see it.

(With a flourish, DR. McGRUDESON whips off the sheet to reveal a massive contraption that has an old telephone attached to an old computer, boom box, pencil sharpener, can opener, and 35 mm camera.)

DR. McGRUDESON: Voila! I used to run it off a car battery, but I've simplified it so that it only uses D batteries.

MORTIMER: How many?

DR. McGRUDESON: Thirty-six. Every element is fully linked to the next, so if you want to calculate a sum, you just push these buttons here. If you want to take a photo, just take off this lens cap, focus, and presto.

MORTIMER: That's quite an accomplishment.

BECKMAN: Kelsey!

DR. McGRUDESON: If you have a phone jack, I can hook this up and show you how I can place a call.

(DR. McGRUDESON unrolls a spool of phone wire from the device. KELSEY enters. BECKMAN flips open her cell phone and takes a picture.)

BECKMAN: You might have spent a little too long locked in the basement, Dr. McGrudeson.

KELSEY: Time to go, professor.

DR. McGRUDESON: Did she just take my photo? That's a very small camera.

KELSEY: I'll explain to you in the lobby.

(KELSEY and McGRUDESON roll his device offstage.)

BECKMAN: Next!

MORTIMER: Okay, but he was on the right track. And a bottle opener? Does yours open bottles?

BECKMAN: I can do it with my teeth. Next!

(KELSEY leads on a team of two very sharply dressed people--SHAPIRO and BROOKS. One might carry a set of large charts, while the other has a fancy leather bag.)

KELSEY: The development team of Shapiro and Brooks.

(KELSEY stands off to one side, while SHAPIRO and BROOKS begin their presentation--THEY have a great amount of presence.)

SHAPIRO: As successful business people, you're well aware that in today's market, the success of a product depends on much more than the actual product itself. More than just an exchange of money for a physical object, purchasers of an item want a relationship with the product in question, and not just with the product, but with the creators. They want to feel that by buying this item, they're in alignment with the core values of the company behind it.

BROOKS: Exactly. We want to get in business with you to sell a product that is about honesty, integrity, and value, while at the same time being environmentally conscious and fashionable.

SHAPIRO: As you know, platform is everything. There's no point in having a product if no one knows about it.

BROOKS: Exactly. We're online constantly making friends, writing blogs, e-mails, tweets. You name it, we're doing it. We have thousands of personal contacts every day with people who are just waiting to buy our product.

SHAPIRO: And we have a media presence on cable television, guest spots planned for NPR, ABC, CBS, NBC, you name it. Once you've invested with us, you'll have a team who can get the word out there.

BROOKS: Exactly. We've developed personal stories that will resonate. Shapiro here grew up in the projects, worked hard in school, supporting an ancient grandmother, seven sisters, and a small village in Siberia.

SHAPIRO: Plus, Brooks here has learned to speak seventeen languages, two of which are spoken only by one other person. He belongs to one hundred and twenty seven different organizations and societies, which is a new world record. Every one of them will be interested in purchasing the product that we create.

BROOKS: Exactly. We will create a tidal wave of demand--

SHAPIRO: A tsunami--

BROOKS: More powerful than gravity--

SHAPIRO: Or a supernova--

BROOKS: Faster than the speed of--

BECKMAN: What is it?

SHAPIRO: What's what?

MORTIMER: Your product. What have you created?

SHAPIRO: As we were saying, what we have is more than an actual product.

BROOKS: Exactly. It's a juggernaut.

BECKMAN: Let's see it. Not one more word.

SHAPIRO: If--

BECKMAN: Stop. Show.

(BROOKS reaches into the bag and produces a plain block of wood.)

MORTIMER: What is it?

SHAPIRO: Potential.

BROOKS: Exactly.

BECKMAN: Kelsey!

MORTIMER: It's a piece of wood, isn't it?

SHAPIRO: That's only the most limited way to see this.

BROOKS: Exactly. We haven't had as much time to work on the actual--

(KELSEY enters and points her device at them.)

SHAPIRO: What's that?

KELSEY: You don't want to find out. But do the words "pepper spray" mean anything to you?

SHAPIRO: We're on our way.

BROOKS: Exactly.

(THEY exit, followed by KELSEY.)

BECKMAN: If we don't find something that could actually make money--

MORTIMER: We will.

BECKMAN: That's what you said about the clam shell remover.

MORTIMER: I believe you were the one who invested in the spark plug recycler for diesel engines.

BECKMAN: How was I supposed to know that diesels don't have spark plugs?

(KELSEY brings on a person wearing a metallic, silver shimmering outfit and unusual sunglasses.)

KELSEY: Next we have Delton Regulous Sigma.

MORTIMER: Don't go far, Kelsey.

BECKMAN: Maybe just stay right there.

DELTON: Can she be trusted?

MORTIMER: Absolutely.

BECKMAN: What's your invention, Delton?

DELTON: I've created a time travel device.

BECKMAN: Will it make my day go faster, because if so, I'll buy it right now.

DELTON: It allows a person to travel back in time.

MORTIMER: You don't say. So the outfit is because--

DELTON: I come from the future. The year 2097, to be precise.

BECKMAN: He's a time traveler.

MORTIMER: Isn't that kind of dangerous? What if you accidentally change something?

DELTON: It's unclear whether that is actually possible or not. But I am extremely careful not to reveal too much.

MORTIMER: Do the Cubs ever win the World Series?

(DELTON just laughs.)

BECKMAN: A little investment advice?

DELTON: That might unbalance the future. But if you're buying beach front property, make sure it's at least 20 feet above the current sea level. Consider investing in companies that manufacture air conditioners. I hope I haven't said too much. I feel a little queasy.

MORTIMER: So you want to sell us your machine? Let's have a look.

DELTON: There's been a complication.

BECKMAN: Shocking.

DELTON: The machine did not travel back in time with me.

BECKMAN: I see.

MORTIMER: So you're stranded.

DELTON: But with your ten million dollars, I can reconstruct this machine, and together we can journey back to the future. You will learn which investments to make and guarantee yourselves a fortune beyond imagination.

BECKMAN: Why don't you go away, and come back with drawings and a materials list.

MORTIMER: And a few juicy tidbits.

BECKMAN: Just give your specs to Kelsey.

(As KELSEY leads DELTON offstage:)

KELSEY: This way, Delton. So you'll be needing a flux capacitor, right?

DELTON: Exactly. And dilithium crystals.

(KELSEY holds up her device for DELTON to see.)

KELSEY: Just follow the colored lights, Delton.

DELTON: Ooh. Pretty.

(THEY exit.)

BECKMAN: I don't need a time traveler to see the future. Bankruptcy. Ruin. If we don't find something, our little nest egg will evaporate faster than dry ice in the Sahara.

MORTIMER: Maybe I should find a house that's not quite so close to the water.

BECKMAN: Where are our options? Real estate is collapsing, manufacturing stinks, the banks are teetering. We need something big and something real, Mortimer.

(KELSEY enters.)

KELSEY: Are you ready?

BECKMAN: Only if they have an actual device.

KELSEY: They seem legit. Come on in, guys

(Two inventors, FLISTER and MULLEN, bring on a small beige device (possibly on a cart). FLISTER is dressed casually, while MULLEN seems a bit strange and wears a vest full of pockets, and carries a box of kleenex. MULLEN sneezes and blows his nose.)

MULLEN: Sorry. Allergies.

FLISTER: I told you to take the pill.

MULLEN: I need to be sharp. So, anyway, thanks for your time, we know you're very busy today.

FLISTER: Let's start. They know they're busy, all right?

MULLEN: Right. Sorry. So we've come up with a device that will revolutionize the entire world.

FLISTER: Shake it up, from bottom to top.

MULLEN: Or top to bottom.

FLISTER: It doesn't really matter.

MULLEN: Bottom to top just sounds odd. So, anyway, what we have today is a demonstration of the sonic-emotional harmonic equivocator.

FLISTER: Though we'll find a better name for it, don't worry.

MULLEN: I liked Harmonium.

FLISTER: I told you, there already is a harmonium. It makes music. It's a musical device.

MULLEN: Anyway, what this does is eliminate all discord within a six foot radius of the device.

FLISTER: All bad feelings between people just fly out the window.

MULLEN: So whatever baggage you're carrying with you.

FLISTER: Like if your partner crashed your car.

MULLEN: Which was not my fault.

FLISTER: Forgotten.

MULLEN: Or suppose she wasted money on a night wining and dining investors who really weren't investors.

FLISTER: Not my fault. It can be hard to tell.

MULLEN: Anyway, all that goes by the wayside, and you can move on to productive talks. So if we can just have that extension cord...

(KELSEY runs off and returns with the end of an extension cord. The INVENTORS plug in the device. THEY smile placidly.)

BECKMAN: Is it working?

MULLEN: Like a charm.

FLISTER: Subsonic frequencies. Let's just roll it over a little closer to you.

MULLEN: Nicely done.

FLISTER: Thanks.

MORTIMER: It gives off a little tingle.

BECKMAN: But pleasant. Hm. It was very kind of you to bring it here to show us.

MORTIMER: Wasn't it?

FLISTER: With proper funding, we could expand the radius of pacification.

MULLEN: Think of all the family discord suddenly ground to dust.

FLISTER: Hostage negotiations solved.

MULLEN: The end of strife.

FLISTER: The end of war.

BECKMAN: Do you think our ten million would be enough?

FLISTER: A very good start.

MULLEN: Excellent. And you could ask your other venture capitalist friends to chip in little more. I think ten million each would be helpful.

MORTIMER: Maybe you could loan us this device for when we ask them.

FLISTER: That's a lovely idea.

(A snap and a pop from the machine. FLISTER bangs on it. Again. Another pop. BECKMAN and MORTIMER each take a deep breath and frown. FLISTER bangs on the machine again.)

I thought you'd fixed that relay.

MULLEN: I did. It's that circuit pack you put in. It's got a bad controller chip.

MORTIMER: I think we've seen enough.

BECKMAN: Kelsey.

(KELSEY appears.)

FLISTER: You're always blaming me. Can't you accept responsibility, for once?

MULLEN: Me? You're the one who never owns up to mistakes. I do all the work and you take all the credit.

BECKMAN: Toss them out. And don't let them near a power outlet.

(The TWO INVENTORS break into a wrestling match. KELSEY takes her device and uses it like a taser to shock them both into submission.)

FLISTER: Ouch!

MULLEN: Holy Cow! Uncle! Uncle!

KELSEY: Don't make me use this again. Out!

(THEY quickly gather their gear and leave, with KELSEY right behind them. The TWO VENTURE CAPITALISTS just look at each other for a moment.)

BECKMAN: I feel used.

MORTIMER: That whole peaceful equanimity doesn't sit well with you, does it?

BECKMAN: Like lingering indigestion. Acid reflux. I don't know how you get through a single day, with your... your...

MORTIMER: Optimism?

BECKMAN: Blech. Next!

(SHANNON enters, looking around cautiously. SHE wears sweats and is empty-handed.)

SHANNON: Hi.

BECKMAN: Who are you?

SHANNON: I'm Shannon. I'm here for the Next Big Thing search.

MORTIMER: You're in the right place, Shannon. Tell us a little bit about you and your device.

SHANNON: My device?

BECKMAN: Your invention. The reason why you're here.

SHANNON: Right. I get it. Originality is critical. I know exactly where you're coming from. Totally. I'm sure sitting there all day, you just see the same thing, person after person.

BECKMAN: You have no idea.

MORTIMER: It's fine. Just show us what you've got.

SHANNON: Okay.

(SHANNON does a stretch and takes a few deep breaths.)

BECKMAN: Sooner is better than later.

(SHANNON quickly strips off her sweats to reveal a unitard. SHE leaps into a sudden wild dance, all across the stage, circling BECKMAN and MORTIMER at their table. The dance is frenzied and full of energy--this is the chance of a lifetime and SHANNON will put out every ounce of effort possible. {The quality of the dance does not have to be great, though if you have a terrific dancer, this is the role for him or her.} SHANNON eventually finishes the dance with a flourish and collapses at the feet of BECKMAN and MORTIMER. MORTIMER applauds. BECKMAN crosses his arms, peeved.)

What the hell was that?

MORTIMER: Nice job.

(SHANNON waits, looking at BECKMAN and MORTIMER in anticipation.)

SHANNON: Well?

BECKMAN: Kelsey! Kelsey!

SHANNON: Do I get to move on to the next round?

BECKMAN: For what?

SHANNON: This is The Next Big Thing, right? The TV talent show?

BECKMAN: No.

SHANNON: I wasn't just on television?

MORTIMER: Sorry.

SHANNON: So all that was just--

BECKMAN: Annoying.

MORTIMER: Spirited. Perfectly lovely.

SHANNON: You think so?

BECKMAN: Kelsey!

(KELSEY finally appears.)

KELSEY: Sorry. Flister and Mullen wouldn't stop hitting each other. It took three security guards to break them up. *(To SHANNON)*

What are you doing in here?

SHANNON: Someone shouted "next," so I just...

BECKMAN: Shannon is in the wrong building, maybe the wrong continent. Please make Shannon go to the right place. Now!

(KELSEY escorts SHANNON out, and consults with her device.)

KELSEY: Are you sure you were on the schedule?

(THEY're gone.)

MORTIMER: I think she could go far.

BECKMAN: As long as it's far from here.

MORTIMER: It was a simple mistake.

BECKMAN: Why are all the simpletons attracted to us, that's what I want to know? Maybe we've finally reached the ultimate decline of civilization, and that's all we can expect to see: attention-crazed whirling dervishes. Our educational system has apparently transformed into one giant vomitorium, full of the great mentally wretched.

MORTIMER: But if we can find a new product that's shiny and pretty, maybe the mentally wretched will buy millions and millions of them.

BECKMAN: Good point. Kelsey!

(KELSEY enters behind HERNANDEZ, her device pointed towards his empty hand; though HE acts as if HE's holding something in it).

HERNANDEZ: No, you may not "scan" it. This device is entirely proprietary. Not for the eyes of someone like you.

KELSEY: If it doesn't get past me, then--

BECKMAN: What's the hold up?

KELSEY: Mr. Hernandez won't let me inspect his device.

MORTIMER: Where is it?
HERNANDEZ: Right here.
BECKMAN: I don't see anything.
HERNANDEZ: Exactly. It's an invisible cell phone.
BECKMAN: Right.
MORTIMER: How do you expect us to--

(HERNANDEZ apparently presses a button on the invisible cell phone. The sound of a cell phone RINGING. BECKMAN realizes that it's hers, finds it, and opens it.)

BECKMAN: Hello?
HERNANDEZ: Can you hear me?
KELSEY: You're in the same room, we can all hear you.
HERNANDEZ: Do you hear me over your phone?
BECKMAN: Of course n... I do.
HERNANDEZ: There you have it.
MORTIMER: *(To BECKMAN)* Are you serious?
BECKMAN: It's a real call.
HERNANDEZ: My unique optical optimizer technology has enabled me to create the first invisible cell phone. Everyone will want one.
BECKMAN: Hm. Is it really working?
HERNANDEZ: I'll whisper a joke, so that only you can hear it.

(HERNANDEZ holds the phone close to his mouth while BECKMAN listens on her phone.)

MORTIMER: You're wasting your time on jokes for Beckman, you'd have to invent in an implantable sense of humor first.

(BECKMAN starts to laugh, but then quickly stifles it, as if embarrassed to be seen laughing.)

BECKMAN: Excuse me.
HERNANDEZ: I rest my case.
KELSEY: Ms. Beckman, what's the number showing on your screen?
BECKMAN: 555-959-1437.
(KELSEY punches the numbers onto her handheld device. Frowns.)

KELSEY: I'll be right back. *(SHE exits.)*
HERNANDEZ: Excellent. I feel that it's better to negotiate confidentially.
MORTIMER: Kelsey is completely trustworthy.
HERNANDEZ: No sense taking chances. As you might expect, secrecy is very important with this device. And also its advantage. Consider the value of an invisible cell phone to the world of espionage. The CIA would pay a mint for this device.
BECKMAN: They do go for the James Bond sort of stuff.
HERNANDEZ: But it has appeal for slackers, too. People can secretly talk to their friends and family while at work, and no one will ever know.
BECKMAN: There are a lot of sneaky, lazy people out there. Definitely a huge potential market.
MORTIMER: Let me give it a try.
HERNANDEZ: I'm afraid this doesn't leave my hands until at least some money enters the picture.

(KELSEY enters, dragging a nerdy looking man, EUSTACE, in by the ear.)

EUSTACE: Ow! Let me go. Don't zap me again. Please. You've got the wrong idea.
KELSEY: I found the source of our invisible phone call.
EUSTACE: It's not true. I was just--
KELSEY: Mr. Eustace was in the supply closet with a regular cell phone. *(SHE holds up her device)* I tracked down the signal coming to Beckman's cell phone, and it wasn't originating from here at all.

(SHE grabs at HERNANDEZ, who dives to the floor as if HE's just dropped his phone. HE starts crawling towards the exit.)

HERNANDEZ: You made me drop it. She's lying. She's lying. Where's my phone? Where's my phone? What have you done with it?
MORTIMER: Hm. Users might not appreciate never being able to actually find their invisible cell phones.
BECKMAN: Though think of all the customers who would need to buy replacements.
KELSEY: *(To EUSTACE)* Tell them.
EUSTACE: Never.

(KELSEY raises her device towards him and HE cowers.)

Okay, okay. There's no cell phone. He just has a tiny bluetooth microphone hidden in his pocket. I had the actual phone. I don't know how you figured it out.

HERNANDEZ: *(As HE quickly crawls off stage)* Here phony, phony, phony. Here phony, phony, phony.

BECKMAN: Should we just let him get away?

KELSEY: Don't worry. The not-so-invisible security guards are out there. They'll teach him a lesson. *(To EUSTACE)* And you, too. Come on.

EUSTACE: It was really a cool idea. We were so close in the lab. But light is harder bend than you'd think.

KELSEY: Out!

(KELSEY marches EUSTACE out after HERNANDEZ.)

MORTIMER: Too bad they didn't just pitch that tiny microphone. I think I could have gone for that.

BECKMAN: Sheer laziness. It disgusts me. In the old days, when I was starting out, people worked night and day on actual, physical inventions, which we could then buy for a pittance and sell for wild profits.

MORTIMER: Those days are long gone. Everyone wants a quick hit. Not just us.

BECKMAN: I guess there's always New and Improved. We could find something to new-ify.

(KELSEY enters with DR. WASHINGTON, a woman with a stethoscope. SHE carries two thick binders. SHE looks a little worse for wear--SHE has an occasional twitch, a sniffle, loud cough, snort, SHE even might suddenly crash to sleep while standing and wake herself with a violent snort.)

KELSEY: Nothing invisible this time, I promise. Lots of documentation. Dr. Washington.

(DR. WASHINGTON steps forward, sneezes, blows in handkerchief.)

DR. WASHINGTON: Excuse me. Very nice to meet you. I'm here with the results of an astounding medical breakthrough.

(DR. WASHINGTON limps over to them and places a small bottle on their desk.)

The solution in that bottle, what I like to call Maximus Verruca Removimus, MVR, is guaranteed to remove any and all warts from the human body, effectively and painlessly. As you may or may not know, almost all human beings are affected by warts at some time in their lives. And, though there are many treatments, very few are effective. And none works on more than one kind of wart. My MVR works on common warts, flat warts, filiform warts, plantar warts, mosaic warts, and genital warts, with no burning or freezing. Just a simple application daily for two weeks, and the warts are gone forever.

BECKMAN: We've had a whole day of people making pretty outrageous claims, Dr. Washington. Do you have anything resembling--

DR. WASHINGTON: Proof? Certainly. I have extensively studied the MVR compound in numerous stumies.

MORTIMER: Stumies?

DR. WASHINGTON: S-s-s-studies. Sorry. Sometimes by pongue thutht thtops working. *(Clears her throat and seems better now.*

SHE puts one of her binders on the table in front of BECKMAN and MORTIMER.) We've studied hundreds and hundreds of, ACK!, Excuse me, patients with warts, of all ages, races, men and women, ACK! ARGH! Sorry. Tickle in my throat. *(SHE scratches vigorously at an itch.)*

MORTIMER: And it's worked?

DR. WASHINGTON: 98% cure rate.

BECKMAN: And how many people have warts in the United States?

(WASHINGTON's eyes have wandered up into her head, as SHE has a mini-seizure.)

DR. WASHINGTON: Millions and millions. By some estimates, more than half of all humans will have warts at some time on their lives, and most people will have them more than once. The potential market is enormous.

MORTIMER: And is it safe?

(DR. WASHINGTON opens the second binder.)

DR. WASHINGTON: There are a few side effects--use of MVR may cause sleeplessness, rash, slurred speech, limping, sudden weakness, loss of vision, deafness, ACK! ARGH!, decreased I.Q., tumors, vertigo, high blood pressure, anxiety, seizures, loss of sexual function, sharp pains, hemorrhage, and bad breath.

BECKMAN: But it won't kill anyone?

DR. WASHINGTON: We don't think so.

MORTIMER: Did you used to have warts, Dr. Washington?

DR. WASHINGTON: Oh, yes. I was subject number one. I had a very bad case. *(Abruptly falls to the floor)* But now they're completely cured. *(DR. WASHINGTON falls unconscious.)*

BECKMAN: Kelsey!

(KELSEY enters and rushes to DR. WASHINGTON.)

KELSEY: What happened?

BECKMAN: Warts.

MORTIMER: Dr. Washington might need an ambulance.

(KELSEY drags DR. WASHINGTON off stage.)

The FDA might not be so excited about this one.

BECKMAN: Makes you miss the good old days of lax regulation, doesn't it? I've had warts.

(MORTIMER hands her the bottle.)

MORTIMER: Guaranteed cure.

BECKMAN: I'd hate to risk the bad breath.

MORTIMER: I don't know how to break it to you...

BECKMAN: Next! *(Under her breath)* Must be the garlic and anchovy pizza.

(KELSEY enters with a pair of INVENTORS, POLK and FUTTERMAN. THEY're young and dressed very casually.)

POLK: Yo.

FUTTERMAN: 'Sup?

BECKMAN: It's been a long day.

MORTIMER: Can you promise that your idea won't kill anyone?

POLK: Exactly the opposite.

FUTTERMAN: Totally, man. We're here to talk about the next step in online social networking.

END OF FREE PREVIEW