

OMNIPOTENCE AND THE WHEELBARROW MAN

By Alan Haehnel

Copyright © 2004 by Alan Haehnel, All rights reserved.
ISBN: 1-60003-078-5

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

RIGHTS RESERVED: All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS: All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers, LLC.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

AUTHOR CREDIT: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this play must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this play. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the play. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this play is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice:

Produced by special arrangement with Brooklyn Publishers, LLC

COPYING: Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Brooklyn Publishers, LLC.

CAST

NARRATOR egotistical character

MARY an audience member

TINA an impossibly prepared woman

FRANK a doctor

TONY TINA's brother

THE WHEELBARROW MAN

VARIOUS AUDIENCE MEMBERS

THE SNAKES a gang of tough guys

"BIG PRODUCTION NUMBER" PEOPLE (any number of extras to participate in some scenes)

NOTE: Some roles may be doubled for a smaller cast.

OMNIPOTENCE AND THE WHEELBARROW MAN

by
Alan Haehnel

The pre-show music ends with a whistling refrain, slow and lazy. The curtain is closed and the auditorium is dark. A spotlight appears in the aisle, near the front of the theater. After a moment, whistling is heard from a character walking slowly - taking his time down the aisle. The character is dressed in a tuxedo, and looks extremely confident. HE continues to whistle until HE is standing beside the spot of light. This is the NARRATOR.

NARRATOR: I think this light is for me. I could step into it, but I don't think I will right now. We make our choices. *(turns toward the light booth and speaks up toward it)* Catch me in the light, would you please?

(The spotlight moves, but so does NARRATOR, leaving him still in the dark.)

Oops, missed me. *(The spot shifts again, but NARRATOR moves.)* Missed again. *(Same action, only quicker.)* Not fast enough. *(Again.)* Shall we dance? *(Again.)* Oh, almost!

(The spotlight is still, as if pouting.)

Aw, getting tired? *(The light lunges, but, again, NARRATOR counters.)* Say uncle? Oh, all right; enough of that. *(NARRATOR saunters into the spot of light.)* Ah, this is nice. Very comfortable. I suppose I ought to have a cigarette for atmosphere, you know? A lot of people like that in their narrators, to have this cloud of smoke around the face and this undulating wispy trail of rising gray mist, twirling and swirling in the soft light. Poetic, ain't I? Anyway, enough about that and on to something interesting: moi. *(HE starts to walk across the stage, but the spot doesn't follow. HE whistles to the light as if it were a dog.)* Come on, boy; follow me. *(The light moves to him again.)* That's the way. Stay close now; that's a good pet. I call him Spot. *(pause)* I mentioned to you that I'm your narrator, didn't I? It's really a great job, all told. The pay is mediocre, the hours a bit sporadic... but the power! Now, that makes it all worth it. *(HE snaps his fingers, and the curtain flies open; claps his hands, and the lights come up on the stage which is littered with various black blocks in disarray.)* Oh, there's an awful lot of responsibility to the position. You can have people enter...

(CHARACTERS enter from both side of the stage.)

... let them interact for a bit...

(THEY cross to one another, embrace, then slap each other in the face, then kiss)

... and then tell them to leave.

(CHARACTERS exit.)

Production numbers are a challenge...

(CHARACTERS enter from all sides and quickly arrange the blocks, revealing that a pleasant park scene is painted on one side. The blocks end up in a pyramid shape - a backdrop behind a park bench.)

Lots of people, lots of activity... it could get confusing to someone with less than superior abilities. ***(NARRATOR watches for a moment, then claps his hands for a freeze. Everyone stops in mid-action. HE strides onstage, goes up and kisses a girl long and hard.)*** Wimps need not apply.

(Quickly, HE spreads his arms in a cutting motion. Thunder echoes, and everyone slumps over at the waist, like puppets with their strings cut. For fun, NARRATOR knocks a couple of them over, then claps and yells for them to stand and get in line. HE starts them marching with a hup, two, three, four, and then begins a cadence, which CAST repeats as they march slowly off.)

We love the narrator, yes we do.

CAST: We love the narrator, yes we do!

NARRATOR: Everyone else should love him, too.

CAST: Everyone else should love him, too.

NARRATOR: I'm great.

CAST: You're great.

NARRATOR: I'm cool.

CAST: You're cool. ***(By this time, they are offstage and we can't hear them anymore.)***

NARRATOR: ***(dancing, to himself)*** Get off the stage, you ugly vermin.

(waits for the imaginary echo) I'm getting tired of seeing you squirming. ***(HE stops his grotesque dance and looks out at the audience with mock sincerity.)*** They are such good kids. ***(pause)***

Well, I suppose you people came here to see a play, and by now you're getting tired of hearing from me. Are you getting tired of hearing from me? Don't answer that. It doesn't matter anyway. I can stay out our here for as long as I want; it's the nature of the narrator to go on and on. Ask the Greeks; ask Thornton Wilder, or Tennessee Williams... we have a long history of rambling. Oh, I am going to leave and let you in on a little "girl meets boy" story in a minute, but I'll probably be back. ***(HE starts to walk off.)*** In fact, you can count

on it. **(HE walks off, and then pokes his head back onstage.)** I've got the power. **(exits)**

(A young WOMAN enters. SHE is attractive and carries a very large handbag, which SHE sets down beside the bench before sitting. SHE takes a magazine out of the bag and begins to read. In a moment, an equally attractive young MAN enters from the other side. HE sits on the bench also. WOMAN looks up and smiles. MAN sits and enjoys the sun on his face. At one point, WOMAN looks up from her magazine and glances at MAN. HE catches this and looks back. THEY smile briefly at each other, embarrassed but interested. WOMAN goes back to the magazine, but MAN starts stealing more obvious glances at her. SHE smiles, her face still down in the magazine. SHE looks up; THEY look at each other again and laugh self-consciously.)

MAN: What a day.

WOMAN: It's beautiful. **(there is another lull in the conversation, SHE goes back to her magazine)**

MAN: I don't know how you do that.

WOMAN: Excuse me?

MAN: I don't know how you can read out in the bright sun like that, especially that glossy magazine paper.

WOMAN: Oh, I've been a glossy sunshine reader since way back.

MAN: Oh, yeah? Born with the talent, huh?

WOMAN: It's a recessive gene. Skipped my father, but... well, here I am.

MAN: Here you are.

NARRATOR: **(entering while MAN and WOMAN continue talking quietly)** How nice. Two witty, well-dressed, attractive people beginning a relationship on a park bench. Pardon me while I vomit. Obstacles! Give them some obstacles, some conflicts, some difficulties! Ah, he's moving closer... how about if he just ate a hot meatball sub with extra garlic and jalapeños? That ought to slow things down a bit. **(NARRATOR stays and watches the interaction)**

MAN: **(easing his way over on the bench)** What are you reading, anyway? Is it interesting or just shiny? **(WOMAN turns away from his breath slightly.)** Oh, I'm sorry. I'm afraid they really loaded on the garlic at lunch.

WOMAN: **(taking a small package from her purse)** Breath mint?

MAN: Thanks.

NARRATOR: Breath mint? Breath mint? Are you kidding me? **(to WOMAN, who pays no attention)** Do you have a bottle of Scope in

your purse? I have a feeling... let's give this guy a cold. (**MAN sneezes.**)

WOMAN: Tissue?

MAN: Thanks.

NARRATOR: I knew it! I just knew it. The woman is a walking pharmacy. If he gets cut she's ready to give him an on-the-spot blood transfusion. All right, let's get tough, here. How about if we make her a school administrator with a fetish for John Wayne movies? That oughtta gum up the works.

WOMAN: I feel that every high school curriculum should include the study of the Western film genre. No student should graduate without memorizing the script from True Grit. (**MAN gets up and walks off stage quickly. WOMAN looks out for a moment, shrugs, then walks offstage herself.**)

NARRATOR: Some obstacles are just too much to handle. (**whistles a bit, then begins to mock the CHARACTER who just left**) Bad breath? Here's a mint. Cold? Here's a tissue. Touch of pneumonia? I've got some antibiotics in my purse. Head wound? Just a moment; I'll bring you a trauma unit. (**HE sighs, looking bored**) You didn't really want to see any more of those two, did you? Don't answer...

(A VOICE from the audience interrupts.)

VOICE: Yes, I did.

NARRATOR: (**peering out**) What?

VOICE: I said I would like to see more of those two, please.

NARRATOR: You want... what about me?

VOICE: Well, you've said quite a bit already. I'm interested more in relationships than in...

NARRATOR: In what?

VOICE: Never mind.

NARRATOR: No, please; I'm fascinated by your response. You're more interested in relationships than in what? What? What?

VOICE: Than in egotistical narrators.

NARRATOR: Oh. Egotistical. I see. Oh, by all means, let's bring the Ken and Barbie dolls back on! (**HE stomps offstage through this monologue, bringing the two CHARACTERS back to the bench.**) I mean, who wants to listen to an egotistical narrator when one can eavesdrop on the budding relationship of two bubble-headed mannequins? What am I thinking? This is the viewing public, after all - the ones who tune into reruns of *Gilligan's Island* whenever possible. By all means, strike the egotistical narrator... bring on the morons! Here's your magazine, sweetheart. (**HE gives the magazine back to WOMAN on the bench**) Oh, excuse me out there... (**looking out toward the audience**) Mr. Siskel, is it? Mr.

Omnipotence and the Wheelbarrow Man – Page 7

Ebert? Is it all right if I give them just a teensy-weensy obstacle to overcome, hmm? Can we add a slight bit of interest? Or is that too egotistical of me? All right; let's give her a stutter.

WOMAN: It ppppprobably bbbbothers you to have to llllllllisten to my ststststutter.

MAN: Not at all.

WOMAN: Yyyou're very pppppatient.

MAN: Hardly. Both of my parents had a similar speech impediment. Talking to you makes me feel at home.

NARRATOR: That is so heart-warming. So lovely. You could get diabetes just listening to these two. Okay, let's see how you get over this, Mr. and Miss Match-Made-in-Heaven. A sudden dose of alien radiation (**light change, "alien" music for a moment**) causes the growth of facial tissue! Deal with this, ha, ha! (**NARRATOR puts a large nose on MAN and large ears on WOMAN**)

MAN: My job is all right, but I'm looking for something new. I've got my ear to the ground. Oh, pardon me.

WOMAN: Well, no one nose when something will come up. Or, I mean...

MAN: I've been looking ear and there. Oh, gosh.

WOMAN: You're bound to sniff something out. (**There is an uncomfortable silence, and then they both laugh.**)

MAN: You have very big ears.

WOMAN: And your nose is tremendous.

MAN & WOMAN: (**shrugging and laughing**) Oh, well.

NARRATOR: Oh, well? Cyrano meets Dumbo and it's "oh, well"? This is a conspiracy. Okay, kiddies, let's see how you do if I...

VOICE: Why don't you leave them alone?

NARRATOR: (**staring out menacingly for a moment**) Oh, goodie, our voice from beyond the fourth wall is back. How are you enjoying the show?

VOICE: I just wish you would let the characters do whatever they're going to do.

NARRATOR: Why don't you come on up here, huh?

VOICE: I'd rather not.

NARRATOR: Oh, pretty please.

VOICE: I'm not in the show.

NARRATOR: Oh, but you are. Come on up here. Come on; I don't bite.

VOICE: I'd really rather just sit and watch.

NARRATOR: Oh, it's very apparent to me that you can't just sit and watch. Something is obviously compelling you to get directly involved with what's happening in the play so please, please, for the sake of your characters up here, who I'm about to put into irreversible comas, why don't you join me?

VOICE: (**standing, walking toward the stage**) Oh, all right.

NARRATOR: Excellent. Wonderful. Here... I'll meet you halfway. Spot!

(The spotlight finds the audience member (MARY). NARRATOR goes down to meet her.)

It's such a pleasure to meet you. I'm the narrator... I think I've mentioned that already.

VOICE: Several times.

NARRATOR: Sev... yes, yes, I did. And I didn't catch your name.

VOICE: It's Mary.

NARRATOR: Mary. That's nice. Very... mainstream. Very ordinary. But nice. Mary, Mary, quite... you know the rest. So, Mary my dear, how can I, a humble, egotistical narrator, help you?

MARY: Well, I'd just like to see how these two characters get along without all your... interruptions.

NARRATOR: So you'd like me to just leave them alone - just let them be who they are... no head colds, no pneumonia, no nothing?

MARY: I think there are enough obstacles that two normal people have to face when they're building a relationship. You don't have to add all that other stuff.

NARRATOR: Interesting theory. All right, Mary, you're on. I won't touch them. I won't alter who they are. Fair enough?

MARY: Yes, thank you.

NARRATOR: You are so polite... I like that in a drab person. All right, then; here I go. There they are: two obstacle-free personalities.

(sings) Boring. But, I'll leave them alone; won't touch them. **(exits)**

MARY: Uh, I guess we can take these off. **(SHE removes the ears and the nose from CHARACTERS)** It's pretty ear-y up here. **(SHE smiles slightly and then gets off the stage, back to the auditorium)**

MAN: I've been coming to this park for a couple years. I'm surprised I never saw you here before.

WOMAN: That might have something to do with the fact that I've never been here before.

MAN: That would account for it. Did you just move here?

WOMAN: To the park?

MAN: No...

WOMAN: As a matter of fact, I do have a cardboard shack set up on the west side.

MAN: I meant, did you just move into town.

WOMAN: **(enjoying herself)** Oh, into town! Did I just move into town?

MAN: Yes, into town.

WOMAN: No.

MAN: Oh.

WOMAN: I moved in a week ago.

MAN: That's not "just moving in"?

WOMAN: No. Yesterday would be just moving in. Last week means I'm well established.

MAN: I see.

NARRATOR: **(reentering from the back of the auditorium)** This is sublime, Mary; you were right. It's all so... what's the word I'm searching for? Shallow? No, no, that's not quite it. Understated? No. Ah... insipid. It's all so insipid, is what it is. But I'll keep my promise; I won't touch them. But I didn't say anything about changing the circumstances surrounding them, now did I? Come in, Tony, come in. **(A disheveled looking young man enters at the narrator's request.)** This is Tony, a young but very desperate individual. You're desperate, aren't you, Tony?

TONY: Desperate. Yes. Very.

NARRATOR: Down on his luck, out of work, not a friend in the world. No place to stay.

TONY: And my dog ran away.

NARRATOR: His dog ran away. Hasn't eaten in two...

TONY: Four.

NARRATOR: Four days. Tony, Tony, Tony. What will such a desperate individual do?

TONY: Anything. Starving.

NARRATOR: Anything, hm? Leaves a lot of lovely options open, wouldn't you say? I thought Ken and Barbie here might like to meet my pal Tony. Geez, Tony, I smell food. Seems to be coming from the direction of that bench over there.

(TONY staggers over, his hand in his pocket as if concealing something.)

MAN: Careful.

TONY: I've got a gun.

WOMAN: No, you don't.

MAN: Shh. What are you doing?

TONY: I do! I have a gun!

WOMAN: No, you don't.

MAN: He might.

WOMAN: He doesn't.

TONY: I do!

WOMAN: He doesn't have a gun because he hates guns and he wouldn't hurt a fly.

TONY & MAN: How do you know?

WOMAN: And his name is Tony. What do you have in your pocket, Tony... your finger?**(TONY takes his hand out of his pocket to reveal his finger.)** Is it loaded?

MAN: How did you... ?

TONY: (*looking more closely at WOMAN*) Tina?

TINA: (*standing to hug TONY*) Hi, Tony. You lost your glasses, didn't you? Are you hungry? There's a bologna sandwich in my purse.

NARRATOR: (*looking appalled at the turn of events*) A bologna... ?

MAN: You know this guy?

TINA: Of course. He's the reason I moved here, to look for my brother.

MAN: This is your brother?

TINA: Right. He's Tony and I'm Tina Tyson.

TONY: (*stuffing the sandwich in his mouth and reaching over to shake MAN's hand*) Hi. Sorry about the finger thing, but I haven't eaten anything in four days.

MAN: That's okay. You might not want to eat too quickly.

NARRATOR: This can't be happening. Someone has it in for me. The writers! The writers are out to get me.

TINA: I'd introduce you two, but I don't even know this gentleman's name. We've been having such a nice conversation.

MAN: Geez, Tina; you're right. My name's Franklin Farraday.

TINA: No wonder.

FRANK: What?

TINA: I was just admiring your frankness.

(ALL three laugh jovially.)

NARRATOR: Aaah! I can't stand it! Where's Mary? Mary, is this what you wanted?

MARY: I think it's going very well. Frank and Tina get together, right?

NARRATOR: Not if I can help it! Get in here, you delinquents! (**Four tough-looking GANG MEMBERS enter and surround the three on the bench.**) Meet the four toughest members of the Snakes, ladies and gentlemen. Their initiation includes chewing razor blades and spitting out throwing stars. What's your motto, boys?

GANG MEMBER: Kill 'em till they're dead.

NARRATOR: Very intelligent. Perfect. Now let's see how our happy trio gets out of this one!

FRANK: I don't suppose you're related to any of *these* guys?

TINA: Not even remotely.

TONY: (*with his finger in his pocket again*) I have a gun!

GANG MEMBER: You don't.

TONY: I might.

GANG MEMBER: (*to another*) He doesn't.

TONY: I do!

GANG MEMBER: (*to another*) What if he does?

TONY: I do!

TINA: You don't.

TONY: Tina!

TINA: Tony.

GANG MEMBER: **(pulling out a very imposing gun)** You do?

TONY: I don't, really.

GANG MEMBERS: **(together)** Kill 'em till they're dead.

(Suddenly, FRANK bursts into the middle of the scene, making low "kung-fu" type noises. HE slashes his hand, disarming the GANG MEMBER with the gun; we hear a whip crack, as in the martial arts movies. HE makes some Japanese-sounding jibberish, kicks and slashes a couple more times with the impressive sound effects, and then faces off with the GANG, whose MEMBERS now look very intimidated.)

GANG MEMBER: I got a hacky sack. Anybody wanna play? **(ALL move off, heading elsewhere to play hacky sack.)**

NARRATOR: **(near desperation)** No! Don't leave! What about killing em till they're dead? He doesn't know anything about kung fu... it's just sound effects! **(GANG is gone.)** Look, I can do it, and I don't know a thing about... **(HE attempts to duplicate the effect, but it doesn't work for him)** Hey!

TONY: **(to FRANK)** How do you do that?

FRANK: It's an oriental trick. Do you watch a lot of Bruce Lee movies?

NARRATOR: Bruce Lee?

TINA: He's got the whole collection on video.

FRANK: Me, too. That helps with the technique. You just snap your hand like this. **(HE demonstrates and the whip-crack sound accompanies)**

NARRATOR: I don't believe this. I got a gang of hardened criminals off playing hacky sack and these two are practicing the art of late night movies!

FRANK: Try it.

TONY: **(swinging his hand)** Like this?

FRANK: Not bad, but a bit quicker. Try talking like this to work into it. **(HE talks like an out-of-sync sound track, moving his lips more than HE needs to)** You've insulted my honor!

NARRATOR: Your honor!? Oh, my aching... !

TONY: Here goes. **(HE swings with authority this time, getting the desired effect)** Wow!

FRANK: You're a natural.

NARRATOR: You're a nut case. This is ridiculous. I can do this stuff. **(HE swings again, and kicks... nothing)** I can do anything, I tell you! **(TINA suddenly stands and performs an elaborate karate routine, complete with all of the sound effects.)** That's simple.

That's very easy. I could do any of that if I wanted. I just don't feel like it right now, understand?

FRANK: I think I'm in love.

TONY: **(to TINA)** How did you...?

TINA: I'm a quick learner. If I like the teacher, that is.

NARRATOR: Oh, my... **(to the audience)** Ladies and gentlemen, this theater is equipped with schmaltz-sickness bags. Ask the usher if you are in need of one.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Could you get out of the way, please?

NARRATOR: Are you talking to me? You want me to get out of the way?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes. We can't see what's going on!

NARRATOR: I'm going on! Me! The narrator... the omniscient! How dare you talk to me like this? It's that Mary person who did this... Mary!

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Down in front!

NARRATOR: **(purposely standing in front of the action on stage)**

Down in front, huh? You people don't know what you're supposed to watch! I'm the important one here!

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Get out of the way, will you?

NARRATOR: Mary, this is your doing! Get out here, Mary!

MARY: **(entering)** You seem to be upsetting a few people, Mr. Narrator.

NARRATOR: You started all this! These people are with you, aren't they?

MARY: I don't know them.

Thank you for reading this free excerpt from OMNIPOTENCE AND THE WHEELBARROW MAN by Alan Haehnel. For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script, please contact us at:

Brooklyn Publishers, LLC

P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406

Toll Free: 1-888-473-8521 • Fax (319) 368-8011

www.brookpub.com