

# THE REPUBLIC OF ALMOST PERFECT

By Michael Soetaert

Copyright © 2018 by Michael Soetaert, All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-1-64479-026-7

**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 Work must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this Work. 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 Work. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

**PUBLISHER CREDIT:** Whenever this Work 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.

**BROOKLYN PUBLISHERS LLC**  
P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406  
TOLL FREE (888) 473-8521 • FAX (319) 368-8011

# THE REPUBLIC OF ALMOST PERFECT

*A One Act Dark Comedy*

**By Michael Soetaert**

**SYNOPSIS:** It is the Cube, the most diabolical weapon ever conceived, capable of killing everyone on the entire planet, one at a time, or all together, without ever having to leave the comfort of your home. And it has just been handed to the Republic of Almost Perfect, the most peaceful country on the earth. Almost.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(3 females, 4 males)*

EUNICE UNDERTOW (f) .....	Founder of The Republic of Almost Perfect. <i>(63 lines)</i>
PROFESSOR ARTHUR ALTWATER (m) .....	Inventor of the Cube, the most diabolical weapon ever conceived. <i>(118 lines)</i>
MRS. JULIA MUNSON (f) .....	A citizen of The Republic of Almost Perfect. <i>(33 lines)</i>
MR. MUNSON (m) .....	Mrs. Munson's husband <i>(63 lines)</i>
BUDDY (m) .....	Ex-hitman for the Guido Brothers, now a fellow citizen. <i>(70 lines)</i>
MAJOR SNOW (m) .....	The self-appointed military leader of the Republic. <i>(20 lines)</i>
IVOLTA MANUKOV (f) .....	A foreign agent. <i>(36 lines)</i>

**DURATION:** 40 minutes

**TIME:** Present Day

**SETTING:** The Republic of Almost Perfect

**PROPS****PROFESSOR ALTWATER**

- Old Suitcase covered in Decals and held together with a Belt
- Clothing; including white boxers with red hearts (inside the suitcase.)
- Bowling Bag
- Solid Black Cube – six Inches on each side (inside the bowling bag)
- Cell Phone

**EUNICE UNDERTOW**

- Confetti (will throw in the air, twice)
- Party Horn
- Ship's Manifest (with the professor's name on it)
- Yellow Frisbee with a Smiley Face on it
- Banjo with a Smiley Face on it
- Rules Tome (very large, very heavy)
- Committees' Pamphlet (average sized)
- Entertainment Pamphlet (very small, think post stamp)
- Order Form
- The Republic Of Almost Perfect Operations Manual

**COSTUMES**

EUNICE UNDERTOW – A brightly colored sundress.

PROFESSOR ARTHUR ALTWATER – A lab coat.

MRS. JULIA MUNSON – A ballerina's tutu and high-top sneakers.

MR. MUNSON – A tweed sports jacket with leather patches on the elbows.

BUDDY – Casual mobster attire.

MAJOR SNOW – A full dress military uniform, including battle ribbons, medals, dark sunglasses, and a ridiculously large hat.

IVOLTA MANUKOV – A slightly wet wetsuit, including the mask and snorkel on her head and large swim fins on her feet.

## SET

Very simple. A covered table (so things can be hidden under it) in front of a couple of flats Up Center. Above the table, either painted on the flats or on a sign attached to the flats, is: Welcome to the Republic of Almost Perfect.

In two flag stands, one on each side of the table, are the country's flag – same flag twice – a yellow, smiley face flag.

Stage Right, through the Wings, leads to the pier, the only way in or out of the country. Stage Left, also through the Wings, leads to the rest of the country. The audience will never see either, at least, not from their seats.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

The only technical challenge is making the actors disappear. Regardless of how you make people disappear, they're going to need to get off stage quickly. Me? I'd put a couple of flats Up Center – behind the welcoming table – that are easy to slip behind, and from there, the actors can easily get offstage unnoticed. Getting them unseen from the stage behind the flats is the challenge.

It's easy to make somebody disappear on stage, especially if your theatre has a gravity well. You can use it to create a wormhole that will instantaneously transport the actors to the Green Room. However, if your theatre does not have a gravity well...

A single flash of a strobe aimed at the audience is effective. This will need to be a fairly large strobe (*or two*), probably not something you can pick up at the mall. It's like a really big camera flash in the audience's eyes. It will take a few seconds for their eyes to adjust, which is plenty of time to get your actors offstage. However... strobe lights can trigger adverse physical reactions in very rare cases, but generally not with a single flash. Regardless, the audience will need to be warned. Just put an announcement in the program and slap a few signs up outside the theatre doors.

A smoke screen works. Basically, you're going to use a flash pot that emits a large "puff" of smoke. It is rather limited in its scope, so it may be harder to get your actors offstage unseen, and then you have to deal with the lingering smoke. As well, depending on what you use, it may require a pyro technique's permit, which probably means you will have to hire a professional to do it.

Turn off the lights and sneak out in the dark. It's cheap and effective, but less believable and a whole lot less fun than setting off a flash pot or a strobe, but it requires no permits or warnings.

You may also want to use sound effects in tandem with the flash, puff, or whatever, such as a loud "pop." This is mostly to cover the sounds of your actors getting off stage, if that is a problem.

Do Not Copy

**AT RISE:** *We are in the reception area of The Republic of Almost Perfect's main, and only, boat dock. It is the only way in or out of the country. EUNICE, is excitedly awaiting the new arrival. She's sitting UC behind a draped table. Over the top of the table is a large, festive sign that reads, "Welcome to the Republic of Almost Perfect." Behind her, on each side of the table, are the flags (same flag twice) of the Republic of Almost Perfect: A yellow happy face flag. After a beat, PROFESSOR ALTWATER enters Right. In his left hand is an old suitcase covered in decals of where it's been, most of those places without the Professor. It's held together with a belt. In his other hand is a bowling bag... but there is no bowling ball in it. As PROFESSOR ALTWATER gets close to EUNICE, she stands, throws confetti into the air, and blows on a party horn. PROFESSOR ALTWATER, necessary to say, is taken aback.*

**EUNICE:** *(Bubbling over with excitement.)* Welcome to the Republic of Almost Perfect! *(Throws another handful of confetti into the air and gives the horn another toot.)*

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** *(After the confetti has settled.)* Almost Perfect?

**EUNICE:** We didn't want to seem presumptive.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** *(Looking around.)* Is it just me? Am I the only one who got off the boat?

**EUNICE:** Yes! It's just you.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** I would've thought there'd been more.

**EUNICE:** So it would seem. Maybe more people would come if we had an airport... *(Drifting away for a moment.)* ...but the country's not long enough. *(Quickly snapping back, still perky.)* But be it one, or be it many, Welcome! Welcome to the Republic of Almost Perfect. You must be Professor Arthur Altwater!

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** *(Surprised, in a paranoid sort of way.)* How did you know that?

**EUNICE:** *(Holding up the manifest.)* Your name is on the ship's manifest.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Oh. I suppose it is.

**EUNICE:** Welcome, Professor! Welcome to the Republic of Almost Perfect! Let me introduce myself. I'm Eunice Undertow. Undertow was my maiden name, you know. *(Drifting, ever slightly, toward the*

*nasty side.*) If my ex-husband didn't want to be married anymore, if he'd rather chase after those perky young girls – then fine! I don't need him, and I certainly don't need his name. (*Snapping back.*) But that's neither here nor there, now, is it?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Oh! I've heard of you. This is your country.

**EUNICE:** Please! I don't think of this as "my" country, even though I founded it. I created my country as a respite for good, decent people. I wanted a place where good, decent folk could be safe, where they could grow, where they could live free from fear. I wanted it to be a place for everybody, because at our very core, aren't we all good and decent people?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Well...

**EUNICE:** Don't get me wrong. I know there are bad people... (*Drifting.*) ...bad through and through... (*Almost back again.*) ...but that shouldn't be everybody... should it?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Oh, I would think not. After all, isn't that the hope of all Mankind?

**EUNICE:** Womankind, too.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** But tell me, Mrs. Undertow...

**EUNICE:** Oh, do call me Eunice. And it's Ms.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Then Ms. it is. Tell me, Ms., how does one come to have a country of their own?

**EUNICE:** I won the lottery. 148 million dollars. And that was after taxes. I'd been a school teacher, you know. I taught the third grade for 22 years. (*Slipping away.*) Stinking little... (*Snapping back.*) And then I won the lottery. I hit the jackpot, so they say. 148 million. It was more money than I could ever spend. So I asked myself how I could do the most good with all that money. I could've helped my family, but they were already doing a pretty good job of helping themselves before I struck it rich. (*Ever so slightly nasty.*) Especially my ex-husband. (*Snapping back.*) I could've given it to a worthy organization, but there are so many worthy organizations – how can one ever choose? So I bought a country! That way I could help everybody. Don't you agree?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** I...

**EUNICE:** (*Before he can answer; obviously rehearsed.*) Here, in the Republic of Almost Perfect, we want everybody to be happy. Here,

in the Republic of Almost Perfect we celebrate diversity, even though we're not diverse in the least. But if somebody diverse came along, no matter how weird they might be, they'd be welcome! Here, in the Republic of Almost Perfect, we welcome everybody, regardless of race, religion, or Creed.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Creed?

**EUNICE:** You know. People who are fans of the band Creed. They're a bit... eccentric, but it's OK to be odd. We welcome odd. We welcome everybody to the Republic of Almost Perfect. Here in the Republic of Almost Perfect, everybody shares, not because they have to, but because they want to. Everybody in the Republic of Almost Perfect is polite, not because we're told to, but because we want to. In the Republic of Almost Perfect, everybody is civil. And what a nice thing it is to be civil. *(Beat.)* Oh! I almost forgot! *(Grabs a Frisbee from underneath the table.)* Here's your Frisbee.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** My Frisbee?

**EUNICE:** Well, it's actually not a Frisbee. That's a registered trademark. But we call them that anyway. See? It's got a smiley face on it. We give all new arrivals to the Republic of Almost Perfect a Frisbee. It's hard not to be happy if you have a Frisbee, especially one with a smiley face on it. Don't you agree?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** I... I would want to see the research.

**EUNICE:** If you don't want a Frisbee, then how about a banjo? *(Grabs a banjo from underneath the table.)* You can't even look at a banjo without smiling.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Well... I...

**EUNICE:** Or you can have both! Go ahead and take them.

*PROFESSOR ALTWATER awkwardly takes both the Frisbee and the banjo, while still holding onto his grip and his bowling bag.*

**EUNICE:** Wait! You almost forgot your pamphlets.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** I did?

**EUNICE:** Oh, yes. You have to have your pamphlets. Pamphlets are so informative, you know, and it's good to be informed. Don't you think? The first one covers all the rules.

*EUNICE reaches under the table and grabs a very thick, and very heavy, rules tome, which she drops heavily on the table. PROFESSOR ALTWATER awkwardly picks it up, along with everything else – it's OK to drop things. Careful with the banjo.*

**EUNICE:** The next one outlines all the wonderful committees we have here in our little Republic.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Committees?

*EUNICE reaches back under the table and comes back with a more normal sized committees' pamphlet, which she places on top of everything PROFESSOR ALTWATER is already holding.*

**EUNICE:** Oh, yes. We have a lot of committees. I'm on the Politeness Committee, the Happiness Committee, and the Controlling Your Murderous Thoughts Committee.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** My. So many committees you are on.

**EUNICE:** I consider it my civic duty... that, and if I didn't, it wouldn't get done... especially the Murderous Thoughts Committee. Oh! And here's the final pamphlet.

*EUNICE once more reaches under the table. This time she comes back with a very small entertainment pamphlet that she places on top of everything else.*

**EUNICE:** Entertainment.

*MRS. MUNSON enters left, unseen by PROFESSOR ALTWATER and EUNICE. She is doing an interpretive dance. Really, it's pretty bad, but she has a lot of enthusiasm. PROFESSOR ALTWATER and EUNICE eventually notice her.*

**EUNICE:** Oh! It's Mrs. Munson.

**MRS. MUNSON:** *(Still dancing, but not quite as animated.)* Please, don't let me stop you. I do hope you don't mind. This is my interpretive dance. I call it, "Welcome to the Republic of Almost Perfect." It's original. I hope you don't mind, but I do so love to perform. I call this part "Happiness."

*MRS. MUNSON does a few pirouettes and sashays, or whatever a real dancer might call whatever it is that she's doing, but it all quickly decays into her miming an anguished scream – think Van Gogh – followed by heartbreaking sobs... all quiet, of course... and then she quickly snaps back.*

**MRS. MUNSON:** I call this part "Politeness."

*Once again, MRS. MUNSON does a few dance moves, but quickly degrades to where she's miming violently kicking and stomping somebody... but just as quickly stops.*

**MRS. MUNSON:** And I call this "Forgiveness."

*MRS. MUNSON doesn't even bother with the dance this time, going straight to where she's miming first violently strangling somebody, then beating them about the head and face with her fists, and then stabbing them with an invisible knife... but that's OK. They're invisible, too. She will only "snap back" when EUNICE says...*

**EUNICE:** Oh. Mrs. Munson. How... How are you?

*MRS. MUNSON will do a curtsy and then, poorly, very poorly, walk over to EUNICE and PROFESSOR ALTWATER en pointe. When she gets there, she will try to hold her pose, but quickly give up. It's alright if she stumbles into people and causes PROFESSOR ALTWATER to drop things.*

**MRS. MUNSON:** (After catching her breath.) I've had professional ballet training, you know.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Oh? Where did you study?

**MRS. MUNSON:** Day Care. I was six.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Oh.

**EUNICE:** Let me introduce Professor Altwater. We're hoping he'll join us. (To PROFESSOR ALTWATER.) Mrs. Munson is one of our citizens. She's the Chairperson of our Controlling Your Murderous Thoughts Committee.

*MRS. MUNSON takes PROFESSOR ALTWATER'S hand, the best that she can, what with all the stuff he's holding, causing him to drop anything she already didn't cause him to drop by bumping into him earlier.*

**MRS. MUNSON:** A professor! Then you've been to college. I went to college. I got a degree in History. I wanted to get a degree in Theatre, but my parents said I was wasting their money. Not like I ever did anything with a degree in History. Do you like history, Professor?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** No.

**MRS. MUNSON:** Oh. That's a shame. How about the theatre? I just love the theatre! I was part of the Crossgrove Community Theatre... back in my home town. (*Longingly.*) Back home. I had just landed the roll of Blanche in our spring production of *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* Do you like to sing? I love to sing. I attended two different churches... back home... just so I could sing more on Sundays. I like the Catholic's songs, but the Baptists can sing so much better. I thought about starting my own choir here, but it's kind of hard to have a choir with just one person. I still sing, but it's just not as much fun. Oh! I'm going to so enjoy getting to know... another person!

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** I look forward to getting to know *all* the people of your country...

**MRS. MUNSON:** Don't worry. It won't take long.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Pardon me?

**MRS. MUNSON:** It won't take that long to meet everybody. There's only five of us, and you've already met two.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Five? (*To EUNICE.*) Did she say five?

**EUNICE:** Six... if you stay. Oh, don't get me wrong. It's a wonderful place to live, but many people find it a tad bit... dull.

**MRS. MUNSON:** And speaking of dull... here's my husband.

*MRS. MUNSON'S somewhat hyper/desperate personality is a bit subdued when MR. MUNSON enters Left. It's almost as if it's all she can do to repress... something. I don't know what. MR. MUNSON is very self-assured. Some, especially MRS. MUNSON, might say to a fault. MR. MUNSON walks up to PROFESSOR ALTWATER and*

*extends his hand. PROFESSOR ALTWATER, who had started picking the stuff up he'd dropped when he met MRS. MUNSON, will end up dropping all of it again when he tries to shake MR. MUNSON'S hand – careful with the banjo.*

**MR. MUNSON:** You must be our new arrival.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Yes. My name is Doctor Altwater. Doctor Arthur Altwater.

**MR. MUNSON:** I'm Munson. Mister Munson. A doctor, huh? We could always use a doctor.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** No. I'm afraid I'm not that kind of doctor.

**MR. MUNSON:** Then what kind of doctor are you?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** I'm a Professor of Applied Physics.

**MR. MUNSON:** Well, I suppose we could use one of those, too. Just the same, glad to meet you, Professor Altwater. Like I said, my name is Mr. Munson, and this is my wife, Mrs. Munson.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** We've already met.

**MR. MUNSON:** Well, that takes care of that, then. So Professor, what do you think of our little Republic so far?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** I have to say, it's not exactly what I expected.

**MR. MUNSON:** Things rarely are. Expect the worse, I say, and then when you're surprised, it's always for the better.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Well... Um...

**MR. MUNSON:** Let me be square with you, professor, and I mean square, not some sloppy rectangle I'm trying to pass off as a square. I came here because it made sense. And if something makes sense, there's nothing for it. It's what you do. Isn't that right, dear?

**MRS. MUNSON:** *(More as if she were agreeing to something violent going on concurrently in her imagination.)* Oh, yes, dear.

**MR. MUNSON:** The minute I heard about this place, I said, "That's the place for me!" So I bought two tickets, and we left the next day. It was quite the surprise.

**MRS. MUNSON:** You have no idea how surprised I was... dear.

**MR. MUNSON:** Surprise! It's what keeps a relationship fresh, don't you agree, Professor?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** I... I'm sorry, but I wouldn't know. I've never married.

**MR. MUNSON:** (*Slapping him on his back.*) Well, your loss! Right, dear?

**MRS. MUNSON:** Oh, yes, dear.

**MR. MUNSON:** A helluva lady, that Mrs. Munson. You might find this hard to believe, Professor, but not once, ever, in all our years of marriage, have we had a disagreement... well, not one that led to an argument, that is. Ain't that somethin'? Right, Mrs. Munson?

*MRS. MUNSON, unseen by MR. MUNSON, raises her hand like she has a knife in it, but quickly stops herself with her other hand, then quickly regains her composure.*

**MRS. MUNSON:** Yes... that's right... dear.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** It is my pleasure to meet you... Mr. and Mrs. Munson. My first name is Arthur. Might I call you by your first names?

**MR. MUNSON:** Nope. We don't need 'em.

**MRS. MUNSON:** My name is Julia.

**MR. MUNSON:** See? Now you know her first name. Doesn't change a thing. She's still the same person. You know what I like about this place, Doc? I like it here because I'm free to believe what I know is right.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** I believe in religious freedom, too.

**MR. MUNSON:** Religion? Who was talking about religion? I'm talking about being Universe Centric.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Pardon me?

**MR. MUNSON:** Universe Centric. It's knowing that the earth is smack dab in the center of the universe. Just look around you! There's no proof for it. They say, right now, we're on the side of a spinning ball. You tell me how that's possible?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Well...

**MR. MUNSON:** Oh! I know you're going to say, "Gravity." Fine. But what's gravity? While you're thinking that over, you show me any proof that says we're *not* in the center of the Universe. Since we're obviously not moving, and everything else is, there can be only one logical conclusion. The earth is in the center of the Universe. Well, the actual center of the Universe is in the Sporting Goods Department of the Wallington's in Crossgrove, Illinois. Makes no

difference. Something as big as the Universe, anywhere on the earth – there's no statistical difference.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** But...

**MR. MUNSON:** No butts about it. There's more believers than you'd think. Few of us admit it, but we know who we are. We – the true believers – have secret signals. *(In confidence.)* It's half a peace sign. *(Holds up a peace sign.)*

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Um... which half?

**MR. MUNSON:** It doesn't matter. Try it for yourself. You'd be surprised at how many people return it. We have to keep it quiet, you know.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** I can imagine.

**MR. MUNSON:** You're absolutely right. Why, could you imagine the panic if everybody realized what was really going on? Think about it. If we're not floating in space on a spinning ball... then just what is holding us up?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Well...

**MR. MUNSON:** Oh, I've got theories, but they're just that: theories. But then, a theory is just a truth that hasn't been proven yet. Isn't that right, Doc?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Well...

**MR. MUNSON:** No "Well's" about it. *(Beat.)* So what can we do for you Professor? What brings you to our happy little Republic?

**EUNICE:** I was just explaining to Arthur how wonderful the Republic of Almost Perfect is.

**MR. MUNSON:** I'd think the name would pretty much say it all.

**EUNICE:** You know, we've been voted the most peaceful country on the entire planet 12 years in a row based on UNESCO's Leopold Scale.

*A short, maniacal laugh escapes from MRS. MUNSON.*

**EUNICE:** And we have a Five Star rating from Triple A. You can't do any better than that.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** I know. That's why I'm here.

**MRS. MUNSON:** It is? Oh! That's wonderful!

**MR. MUNSON:** Same question as before, Professor. How can we help you?

*BUDDY, always just a little bit too loud, enters Left.*

**BUDDY:** Hey? Whatcha doin'? Having a party without me?

**MR. MUNSON:** Oh, Mr. Buddy. That just about makes everybody.

**BUDDY:** It's just Buddy. There ain't no mister. And you must be the new guy. *(Extending his hand.)* Welcome to our peaceful little berg. I'm Buddy.

*PROFESSOR ALTWATER, who had once again been slowly picking up all the stuff he dropped, will drop it all again before even trying to shake BUDDY'S hand. This time, he won't bother to pick it up again.*

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Buddy?

**BUDDY:** Yeah. I know. Crazy, huh? What with my chosen profession.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** And what profession might that be?

**BUDDY:** It's really more of an ex-profession. I used to kill people. I got paid to do it, so you don't have to worry about me being psychotic or anything. I admit, it probably wasn't the best career choice. Don't get me wrong. It had great hours, I got paid really good, and I got to travel. But then there was that whole going to prison thing. So I ratted out the Guido Brothers. Both of 'em. Guido and Guido. *The* Guido and Guido that rule Atlantic City, Jersey City, them little outer islands, and... well, that's pretty much the entire state. The same Guido and Guido who refuses to die until they can see me dead first, preferably after prolonged and intense suffering. The same Guido and Guido who swore, and these are their very words, "to have their revenge even if they have to follow me through the gates of hell." To say the least, I'm a popular guy.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Are you hiding here? What do they call it? Witness Projection?

**BUDDY:** Naw. Everybody knows I'm here. I get Christmas cards from the Guido Brothers every year... very... disturbing cards. These are not cards I think they sell at Hallmark, if you know what I mean.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** I'm afraid I don't understand.

**BUDDY:** That's understandable. You see, the Guido Brothers are both very patient men, especially Guido. They figure it's only a matter of

time until I crack from the boredom and end up at a more convenient place to meet my demise. Until then, I have to suffer. You know, when it comes down to it, it's all about money. I hurt their business. Now they want to hurt me. Got to hand it to the Guido Brothers. They're good. I can see why they've done so well in their chosen profession. But you know, I think they underestimate me. I grew up in Kansas. I know how to be bored. Oh! Pardon me, Doc. Sorry to go on talking like this. You see, the others... They're not exactly conversationalists, if you know what I mean. I mean, after seven years, you kinda run out of things to talk about. It's nice to get some new blood, if you know what I mean.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Perhaps...

**BUDDY:** Hey! You like baseball?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** No.

**BUDDY:** Not even the Yankees?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** No.

**BUDDY:** Oh. How about hockey! Now there's a sport. All the violence of boxing, but with sticks... on ice. I really like a sport where they know how to hurt each other, don't you?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** No.

**BUDDY:** OK, then, how about bowling?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** No.

**BUDDY:** Probably just as well. We ain't got a bowling alley. Still, we could talk about bowling...

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** But I know nothing about bowling.

**BUDDY:** So you said. (*Newly inspired.*) How about fishing? Certainly you must like fishing. You like to fish... right?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** No.

**BUDDY:** Well... what *do* you like to do, then?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Science.

**BUDDY:** Science? That's it?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Yes.

**BUDDY:** No card playing...

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** No.

**BUDDY:** No pool...

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** No.

**BUDDY:** No chasin' after the dames?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** No.

**BUDDY:** You were sent by the Guido Brothers, weren't you? Just to torment me. Man! Those guys are good!

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** I assure you, I was not sent by the Guido Brothers, or anybody, as far as that goes.

**BUDDY:** Yeah, right.

**MR. MUNSON:** Well, then, Professor Altwater, that takes us back to my question. Why are you here.

**BUDDY:** This ought to be good.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** I want to defect.

**MR. MUNSON:** You want a defect? Why would you want one of those?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** No. *Dee*-fect.

**MR. MUNSON:** Oh. You want to report a defect. Not a problem. Just tell Ms. Undertow here, and she'll help you fill out all the forms.

**EUNICE:** We could use a standard repair order (*Taking out the order form from under the table.*), unless it involved a personal injury. (*To PROFESSOR ALTWATER.*) Was anybody hurt?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** No! I want *to* defect.

**MR. MUNSON:** Two defects? I don't know why you'd want one defect, much less two, but we shouldn't judge, or so I'm told. Whatever makes you happy. All that matters is that we keep smiling. Right, dear?

**MRS. MUNSON:** Right, dear.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** No! You don't understand.

**BUDDY:** Well, don't let us stand in your way.

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Listen. Please. I am a scientist. In my country, I was working on a weapon so powerful that it could kill everybody on the planet, instantly, just by pushing a button. (*Mimes pushing a button.*) Click.

*He has everybody's undivided attention.*

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** Here...

*PROFESSOR ALTWATER snaps his fingers and everybody jumps, startled.*

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** ...then gone. There were many of us. We were all working on the same thing. Nobody thought any of us could ever invent such a device... but I did. I did. And when I did, I realized how terrible such a thing was. How terrible it is. So I stole it. I stole it before they ever knew I had been successful. I stole it and I brought it here, to the most peaceful place on earth.

**MR. MUNSON:** I'm sorry, but could you repeat that?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** I have a device capable of killing everybody on the entire planet ...instantly. It's here in my bag. I want to give it to your country. I want to give it to the only place on the entire planet where it will be safe.

**BUDDY:** I told you it was gonna be good.

**EUNICE:** (*Picks up The Republic of Almost Perfect Operations Manual from under the table and thumbs through it for a few seconds. Closing the manual; To the others.*) I'm sorry. I can't find anything in here that tells me what to do when a scientist shows up with a... what did you say that thing was?

**PROFESSOR ALTWATER:** It is a device capable of instantly killing everybody on the planet.

**EUNICE:** Yes. One of those.

*For every suggestion that MR. MUNSON gives, MRS. MUNSON will slightly jump... and then smile*

**MR. MUNSON:** Did you look under "Bomb"?

**EUNICE:** That was the first place I looked.

***Thank you for reading this free excerpt from THE REPUBLIC OF ALMOST PERFECT by Michael Soetaert. 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](http://www.brookpub.com)**