



Dwayne Yancey

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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RHONDA'S HIGH-CLASS ROADKILL CHILI had a staged reading at Showtimers in Roanoke, Virginia, January 2, 2016: Linsee Lewis, director; Stevie Holcomb, stage directions.

CEE CEE: Emma Sala

DEE DEE: Gwyneth Strobe

RHONDA: Heather Sexton

FONDA: Kelly Anglim

DRONDA: Kris Sorensen

ZEKE: Tim Kennard

51HUNTER: Joel Gruver

GOVERNMENT AGENTS: Chris Shepard and Spencer Meredith

RHONDA'S HIGH-CLASS ROADKILL CHILI

COMEDY. Rhonda has a nice doublewide trailer that smells faintly of a dead skunk and a husband obsessed with Christmas lights. Rhonda knows she's blessed, but there's just one thing she's sore about: she's never won anything. To cheer her up, Rhonda's two sisters, Drona and Fonda, encourage her to enter a chili cook-off. When the sisters accidentally run over an armadillo, it's exactly what Rhonda needs to win...a gimmick! Meanwhile, Rhonda's husband Zeke and Fonda's UFO-hunting boyfriend are busy setting up Christmas lights in April so Zeke can get a head start over his neighbors and win the town's contest for best Christmas light display. But it turns out the light display is so bright it can be seen from outer space and attracts some unexpected visitors, which is either going to make history or set off a galactic war! Audiences will love this play's crazy characters and madcap mayhem.

Performance Time: Approximately 75-90 minutes.

CHARACTERS

(2 M, 5 F, 2 flexible)

RHONDA: A former beauty pageant contestant who has never won anything in her life; makes fruit salad with a sledgehammer; female.

ZEKE: Rhonda's husband who's obsessed with Christmas lights and has been trying for 13 years to win the town's contest; two loads short of sense; male.

FONDA: Rhonda's carefree sister who has gone online to find romance since all she finds at the rodeo are clowns; female.

51HUNTER: Fonda's UFO-hunting boyfriend who is obsessed with aliens; male.

DRONDA: Rhonda's sister; a member of the Society for the Prevention of All Things Un-American and a Flat Earther; female.

CEE CEE: Teen girl who wants to be a desperado now that she's been thrown out of Girl Scouts; wears western clothing; female.

DEE DEE: Cee Cee's naïve friend who has been thrown out of Girl Scouts; wears western clothing; female.

AGENTS 1, 2: Government agents; wear dark suits and sunglasses; flexible.

ALIEN: Voiceover.

SETTING

Rhonda and Zeke's doublewide trailer in the small town of Hurleyburg.

SETS

The sets may be as simple or elaborate as your budget allows.

Kitchen. There is a kitchen counter and a small table with chairs.

Exterior/roof of doublewide trailer. The exterior of a doublewide trailer can be seen. The roof is decorated with numerous Christmas lights and decorations. The roof is a platform that can be accessed from behind the doublewide by an unseen ladder or steps.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1: Before the curtain.

Scene 2: Rhonda's kitchen.

Scene 3: Before the curtain.

Scene 4: Exterior/roof of doublewide trailer.

Scene 5: Before the curtain.

Scene 6: Rhonda's kitchen.

Scene 7: Before the curtain.

Intermission, opt.

ACT II

Scene 1: Before the curtain.

Scene 2: Before the curtain.

Scene 3: Exterior/roof of doublewide trailer.

Scene 4: Before the curtain.

Scene 5: Before the curtain.

Scene 6: Before the curtain.

Scene 7: Exterior/roof of doublewide trailer.

Scene 8: Before the curtain.

Scene 9: Rhonda's kitchen.

Scene 10: Before the curtain.

Scene 11: Exterior/roof of doublewide trailer.

Scene 12: Before the curtain.

PROPS

Stick for whittling	Several dark sunglasses, for Zeke and 51Hunter
Pocket knife	Blinking Christmas lights
Fruit salad	Little red wagon
Coffee cup	"Dynamite" (fake)
Cutting board	Wire (for detonation cord)
Tray	Smashed "armadillo"
Assorted fruit (banana, cantaloupe, watermelon, etc.)	Cell phone, for Zeke
Hammer	Gag, for Drona
Drop cloths or tarps	Rope or cord for binding
3 Goggles	Chair with wheels
Sledgehammer	Pot for chili
Tangle of Christmas lights	Plastic spiders
State highway map	Welder's goggles
Video camera	Animal "tail"
Watch, for 51Hunter	Tiny metallic pieces (for alien ship explosion)
Pistol (toy)	Wad of paper (for lifetime Star Trek convention pass)
Axe or some other implement	Blue ribbon
Newspaper	Sash, for Rhonda
2 Shovels	Tiara, for Rhonda
Digging gear	

SOUND EFFECTS

Car screeching to a stop

Car horn

Squealing tires

Bubble wrap popping sound

Sound of a car crash

Clatter, commotion

Sound of Christmas inflatable figures popping

Explosion

"I ONLY FOLLOW THE NEWS
THAT TELLS ME WHAT
I ALREADY BELIEVE.
THAT'S HOW I KNOW
IT'S TRUE."

— RHONDA

ACT I

SCENE I

(AT RISE: Before the curtain, a spring day. Cee Cee and Dee Dee are sitting back to back. Cee Cee is whittling a stick.)

CEE CEE: You know what I want to be when I grow up, Dee Dee?

DEE DEE: What's that, Cee Cee?

CEE CEE: A desperado.

DEE DEE: A desperate what?

CEE CEE: Think about it...spending all day hanging out in dingy saloons and playing cards.

DEE DEE: Gotta be 21 to go into a bar.

CEE CEE: Not if you're a desperado.

DEE DEE: Really?

CEE CEE: That's what makes you a desperado!

DEE DEE: I'm not very good at playing cards.

CEE CEE: That's why we cheat.

DEE DEE: Oh. So what else do desperadoes do besides cheating and gambling?

CEE CEE: Well, let's see... *(Thinks.)* They rob trains.

DEE DEE: I thought they tore up all the train tracks around here and turned 'em into a hiking trail.

CEE CEE: Oh. Well, they rob banks, too.

DEE DEE: Don't they have those camera things? You always see 'em on the news.

(Pause.)

CEE CEE: Well, then we take up cattle rustling. I've got an old jump rope we could use.

DEE DEE: We live in a subdivision.

CEE CEE: A technicality. *(Pause. Thinks.)* A rather inconvenient technicality.

(Pause.)

DEE DEE: Maybe we should just watch some old John Wayne movies?

CEE CEE: I guess. But let's at least mooch off the neighbor's wireless, okay?

DEE DEE: Deal.

(Cee Cee and Dee Dee exit. Blackout.)

SCENE 2

(AT RISE: Rhonda and Zeke's kitchen in their doublewide trailer in the small town of Hurleyburg. Rhonda is fixing a fruit salad. Her sister Fonda is drinking coffee and not doing a thing to help. Drona is at the table working on some papers.)

DRONDA: So which loser is it this time, Fonda?

FONDA: Loser? What are you talking about?

DRONDA: You said you had a new boyfriend. All your previous ones have been losers, so why should this one be any different?

FONDA: You know, I kinda thought sisters were supposed to give each other moral support.

(Rhonda moves from behind her workspace to the a more open space in the kitchen, not far from Drona and Fonda.)

RHONDA: All right, you two, stand back.

(Rhonda puts a cutting board on the floor. She puts the assorted fruit that can be easily and safely smashed like a banana on the cutting board. Rhonda wields a hammer, getting ready to smash the fruit. Note: Throughout Rhonda's preparations, Drona and Fonda pay no attention to her.)

FONDA: I come over here to share some exciting news in my life and what do I get? Lectured by my own sister about all of my personal failings!

DRONDA: Not all of them. I don't have that much time. I have to get ready for tonight's meeting.

FONDA: What is it tonight...the [West Texas] Know-it-All Society? *[Or insert another locale.]*

DRONDA: No. That's on Thursdays. Tonight is the Society for the Prevention of All Things Un-American. We have to get ready for next week's school board meeting. Do you

know they're now serving eggrolls in the school cafeteria? Eggrolls! I don't know what happened to good old-fashioned freeze-dried, machine-processed, American tater bits. If the school board won't listen to reason, I guess we're just going to have to raise some money to get 'em out of there in the next election. I think we'll have a spaghetti supper! (*Rhonda smashes the fruit.*) What in the world?!

FONDA: I thought the world was too unpatriotic for you, Dronda. Maybe you should ask about something smaller...like your mind.

RHONDA: (*To Dronda.*) What's the matter? Haven't you ever seen someone make a fruit salad before?

DRONDA: Not with a hammer!

RHONDA: The recipe says "finely chopped."

DRONDA: You know, most people do that with a knife.

RHONDA: That takes too much time. Besides, this helps me work out all my negative energy. (*Returns to her workstation and starts gathering up other fruit.*)

FONDA: I prefer going to rodeos.

DRONDA: And that's why you always wind up with loser boyfriends. Just saying...

FONDA: I'll have you know, this one is not a loser.

DRONDA: All right. I'll bite. What is he?

FONDA: He's a scientist.

DRONDA: A scientist? Really? What kind? He better not be one of those kind who believes in evolution. Although, I must say, that last one you had did bear a very strong resemblance to an orangutan.

FONDA: Ah, yes...Owen.

DRONDA: Owen, the orangutan.

FONDA: I liked Owen. There was just one thing wrong with him.

DRONDA: That he looked like an orangutan or that he smelled like one?

FONDA: That was his cologne, "Oh-Do-Musk"!

DRONDA: More like "Oh Do You Smell Like Monkey," if you ask me. In which case the answer is yes.

FONDA: Well, he scratched my itch at the time.

DRONDA: Along with his own, from what I could tell. (*Acts like a monkey scratching itself.*)

FONDA: Anyway, I'm all over that now.

DRONDA: I would say you have evolved, but you know I don't believe in that sort of thing...although I will admit that guy might have qualified as "the missing link."

(*Rhonda brings a tray of fruit into the open part of the kitchen and puts the fruit on the floor.*)

RHONDA: [Cantaloupes] and [bananas] coming through. [*Or insert other fruit.*]

DRONDA: (*To Fonda.*) So just what kind of scientist is this new guy, anyway?

FONDA: He's an ufologist. [*Pronounces it "uf-ologist," not "U-F-O-logist."*]

DRONDA: Oh.

FONDA: Have I managed to impress you?

DRONDA: Maybe. I'd never admit it, though.

(*Rhonda hands out drop cloths to Dronda and Fonda.*)

RHONDA: (*To Dronda and Fonda, indicating drop cloths.*) You might need these.

FONDA: What is this...a Gallagher show?

RHONDA: And these...

(*Rhonda hands out goggles to Dronda and Fonda.*)

FONDA: I guess it is.

(Rhonda picks up a sledgehammer and practices. Note: From now on, until Rhonda finally swings the sledgehammer, she makes various preparations.)

DRONDA: So what is an ufologist, anyway? I hope it's not anything like a proctologist.

FONDA: It means he's a UFO hunter.

DRONDA: Oh, so he is like a proctologist, then. They're both buttheads.

FONDA: Now that's not very fair. 51Hunter is really smart. Did you know he's figured out that Roswell was real and the moon landings were fake?

DRONDA: Well, as long as he doesn't believe in some crackpot theory like global warming. Wait a minute. Why are you calling him 51? Are you numbering your boyfriends so you can keep track of them all?

FONDA: Because that's his name, that's why. Well, his screen name, anyway.

DRONDA: His screen name? So you met this guy online?

FONDA: Well, at the rodeo, all I was finding were clowns. Those big red noses...not my thing. Did you know they honk?

DRONDA: So when do we get to meet this mysterious 51Hunter so I can pass judgment on him? Which, I'm sure, will be negative.

FONDA: I don't know. He should have been here by now. I hope he hasn't been abducted by aliens or anything.

DRONDA: Here? Like *here* here? You gave some guy you only know online the address of your sister's house?!

FONDA: I do have some shred of modesty. Besides, you seem to run all your "patriotic" groups out of Rhonda's house for some reason.

DRONDA: That's different. It's one of the great regrets of my life that my husband has made our home unsuitable for decent people to visit.

FONDA: Why? What's he doing...sitting around all day watching [Cartoon Network]? *[Or insert another channel.]*

DRONDA: Worse.

FONDA: Worse?

DRONDA: The History Channel! Do you know they said on there that Columbus didn't really discover America? It was some bunch of foreigners!

(Rhonda smashes the fruit with her sledgehammer.)

RHONDA: Banzai!

DRONDA: *(Referring to smashed fruit.)* What in the world?

FONDA: 51Hunter would say, "What in other worlds?"

RHONDA: *(To Dronda.)* I told you...fruit salad, negative energy. Have to work out all my aggression.

DRONDA: Rhonda, you are the only person I know who can turn making fruit salad into an act of violence.

RHONDA: Well, I guess I'm finally good at something, then.

DRONDA: What are you so upset about, anyway? You have a good job as an assistant cow inseminator, a nice doublewide that smells only faintly of the skunk that died under it last month, a husband who's not locked up. *(Slight pause.)* He's not locked up in jail this weekend, is he? *(Zeke enters, carrying or dragging a tangle of Christmas lights. To Zeke.)* You're just now taking down your Christmas lights?

ZEKE: Putting more up. *(Exits.)*

DRONDA: *(To Rhonda.)* On the other hand, it's probably good to have a constructive way to channel your energies...as long as it's not yoga. Yoga's un-American. You might try karate instead.

(Blackout.)

SCENE 3

(AT RISE: In front of curtain. Cee Cee and Dee Dee enter, talking.)

CEE CEE: You know what we need?

DEE DEE: What's that?

CEE CEE: We need names.

DEE DEE: I thought we already had names.

CEE CEE: We need nicknames.

DEE DEE: Oh. *(Slight pause.)* "Dee Dee" is short for Deirdre.

I'm not sure what "Cee Cee" is short for.

CEE CEE: I mean we need Western nicknames...outlaw nicknames. All the old outlaws had nicknames.

DEE DEE: They did?

CEE CEE: Billy the Kid.

DEE DEE: True.

CEE CEE: Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.

DEE DEE: Were they all "The Kid"?

CEE CEE: There was Big Nose George.

DEE DEE: Oh. I think I like "The Kid" thing better, then.

CEE CEE: There were lots of others: Black Bart, Texas Jack, Cool Hand Luke.

DEE DEE: I kinda like "Cool Hand."

CEE CEE: Dynamite Dan, Rattlesnake Dick, "Mysterious Dave" Mather.

DEE DEE: Oh. "Mysterious" is good, right? I wouldn't mind being mysterious.

CEE CEE: Doc Holliday, "Dangerous Dan" Tucker, the Red Robber of the Rio Grande.

DEE DEE: Oh. Sounds like all the good ones are taken.

CEE CEE: We just have to come up with new ones.

DEE DEE: True. *(Slight pause.)* So how do we do that? Can we just give it to ourselves or does somebody else have to give it to us?

CEE CEE: I think we have to do something first. You know, to earn it.

DEE DEE: Ah, like a Girl Scout badge.

CEE CEE: Exactly.

DEE DEE: Except I guess it would be more like a demerit badge than a merit badge.

CEE CEE: I still don't understand why they threw us out of the Girl Scouts. It seemed a perfectly good way to get rid of those cookies to me.

DEE DEE: I think they wanted us to *sell* them.

CEE CEE: We sold them...sort of.

DEE DEE: Tying up the Boy Scouts at their pinewood derby and taking all their entrance money probably isn't the same thing as selling.

CEE CEE: We left 'em cookies, didn't we?

DEE DEE: True.

CEE CEE: Besides, I figured if they knew how to tie knots, they'd know how to untie them, too.

DEE DEE: It did seem a shortcoming on their part. Although I guess it's hard to do when you're all trussed up like that.

CEE CEE: So whaddya think: Hogtie 'Em Hannah and The Kid?

DEE DEE: Um, your name's not Hannah.

CEE CEE: There's always a complication, isn't there?

DEE DEE: Seems that way.

CEE CEE: Guess we should go read some Zane Grey novels or something, huh?

DEE DEE: Guess so.

CEE CEE: I still think that was a good way to get rid of those cookies...

(They exit. Blackout.)

SCENE 4

(AT RISE: Exterior/roof of Zeke and Rhonda's doublewide trailer. Zeke climbs up on the roof, dragging a big tangle of Christmas lights. Note: Zeke can be whistling, singing a Christmas song, muttering, or a combination of all three. Zeke humorously tries to untangle the lights, but they only get more tangled up. By the end, he's completely tangled up in the lights.)

ZEKE: (Finally realizing his predicament.) Oh. (Struggles some more with the lights but only gets more tangled up. Muttering to himself.) How do I...? This seems to be...? Maybe if I...? What if I...?

(51Hunter enters, waving a state highway map.)

51HUNTER: (Calls.) Hello! Hello?! Anybody home? I'm lost, and I'm trying to find—

ZEKE: (Calls.) Up here! (Struggles some more with the lights).

51HUNTER: (To himself.) It's one of the pod people! And he has tentacles! I've got to get evidence of this. (To Zeke, calls.) Just wait right there till I get my video camera!

ZEKE: (Struggling to free himself from the lights, calls.) Uh, I could use a hand here, if you don't mind!

(51Hunter gets out his video camera. Zeke is still struggling to free himself from the lights.)

51HUNTER: (To himself, watching Zeke.) Fascinating! It has no upper limbs! No wonder— (Realizes.) Oh! It's here to harvest our organs! (To Zeke, shouts.) No! You can't have my hand! Or any other part of me, you slimy alien filth! Now you just hold still and tell me, where do you come from? Andromeda? Alpha Centauri? The dark side of the moon? (To himself.) I knew NASA was hiding something. (Realizes.) Wait a minute. The moon landings were fake. Or

maybe that's just what they want us to think. *(Into his video camera.)* This is 51Hunter, and I've got a positive visual sighting on an extraterrestrial. The time is... *(Looks at his watch. It has stopped.)* ...well, I don't know what time it is. Its magnetic rays have apparently rendered my watch inoperative. This probably explains why my GPS was haywire on the way here and I had to rely on an old-fashioned map that—

(Zeke finally frees his hands from the lights.)

ZEKE: *(To himself, relieved.)* There! Whew! *(To 51Hunter, calls.)* So, can I help you?

51HUNTER: *(Into video camera.)* Amazing...it's apparently some kind of shape-shifter. It appears to have shed its exterior skin of tentacles and now is fully bipedal with upper extremities. Strangely, its skin tone isn't green, and its head appears only slightly larger than normal. Likely more evidence of how the being is trying to assume a human form to make First Contact go more smoothly...either that or trick our entire species into servitude to our new alien overlords. *(To Zeke, shouts.)* Greetings! Do you come in peace?

ZEKE: *(Confused.)* Uh, sure. Peace on earth...all that.

51HUNTER: *(Into video camera)* My hands are shaking. This is such an awesome responsibility...to be the first earthling to make contact with an alien life-form. If I say just one thing wrong, our whole planet could be doomed to extermination. *(To Zeke, shouts.)* Welcome! Welcome to our world! It's a pleasure to meet you! *(Into video camera.)* Wait. Maybe "pleasure" isn't the right word. They might take that the wrong way...really the wrong way. *(To Zeke, shouts.)* Uh, happy to meet you! Joy! Joy from this world!

ZEKE: *(Confused.)* What? Huh? Yeah, I've got "Joy to the World"...both the traditional version and the one about the bullfrog that drinks wine. Never did understand that one.

(Zeke climbs down from the roof while 51Hunter speaks.)

51HUNTER: Bullfrogs? No, no. Not bullfrogs. Humans...we are the dominant species on this planet. Humans are. Bullfrogs...they're just...icky and slimy. Not that we have anything against slimy creatures. Nothing at all. It's just that they're small and green and live in swamps and— *(Realizes. To himself.)* Swamp gas! Now it all makes sense! *(To Zeke.)* Look, I'm really sorry about what happened at Roswell. I didn't have anything to do with that, I swear. That happened before my time. *(Begging.)* Please don't experiment on me! Please! Not the probe! Anything but the probe! *(Ends up hunched over, begging for mercy.)*

ZEKE: *(Completely bewildered.)* Who are you, and what do you want?

51HUNTER: Me? I'm just a nobody...nobody at all. It's the government you want. They're the ones who have all the secrets— *(Looks up at Zeke, realizes.)* Wait a minute. You're just a guy.

ZEKE: You were expecting maybe the Sugar Plum Fairy?

51HUNTER: No, but—

ZEKE: I've got some Sugar Plum Fairies on order. They're supposed to light up. Also got an army of toy soldiers, some elves in a toy workshop, a Frosty the Snowman that waves and tips his hat, and a Mrs. Claus.

51HUNTER: You have a whole yard full of Christmas decorations?

ZEKE: Nope. *(Pause.)* There's still some grass over there. *(Points.)* That's where I'm going to put my penguins. Now don't be one of those purists getting all technical on me telling me penguins don't live at the North Pole. You know what I tell people? The only reason there aren't penguins at the North Pole is because the polar bears ate them. Still trying to find me a good light-up polar bear. I could put

him right over there. *(Points.)* You don't happen to know where I could find one, do you?

51HUNTER: Why are you putting up Christmas decorations now?

ZEKE: Because last year I didn't have enough.

51HUNTER: It's April.

ZEKE: Never too early to plan ahead, I say.

51HUNTER: You're putting up Christmas decorations in April? That's...that's...that's not normal. That's weird. That's crazy.

ZEKE: Crazy like a fox. Not sure why foxes are crazy. Now, armadillos...armadillos are definitely crazy. Those little buggers will try to stare down a tractor trailer out on the highway by jumping up onto its grill. One, two, three, splat! Never seen one yet that scared off a truck. Well, for 13 years, I've been that armadillo. Now it's time to become the fox!

51HUNTER: You've been jumping in front of tractor trailers?

ZEKE: Of course not. Don't be ridiculous. I've been trying for 13 years to win the town's contest for best Christmas lights.

51HUNTER: Oh. Well, that's ridiculous.

ZEKE: I rig up a red light for Rudolph's nose. Willingham over there... *(Points to offstage.)* ...makes his blink. I cut a Christmas star out of plywood and string some lights around it. Henderson over there... *(Points to offstage.)* ...puts up a whole planetarium show. I set out a boom box to play some holiday music, and Needleman marches his wife and kids to stand outside all night and sing carols. Well, at least, I think it was his wife and kids. For all I know, he hired some urchins off Craigslist. Well, no more of that! I say it's time to fight fire with fire! And by "fire," I mean a couple hundred gigawatts of pure electricity. Nobody's going to outshine me this year. Nobody. I think I might need some more extension cords.

51HUNTER: A couple hundred gigawatts? How are you doing that?

ZEKE: (*Pointing offstage.*) See that power pole over there?

51HUNTER: Yeah?

ZEKE: Tapping right into the power grid.

51HUNTER: Oh. Isn't that illegal?

ZEKE: Last year, I used so much electricity, the power company sent me a thank-you card.

51HUNTER: Oh.

ZEKE: And a bill about the size of the Dallas phonebook. Did you know that banks don't like to give out 30-year mortgages to pay off power bills? I don't know what's wrong with this country.

51HUNTER: But with that much power—

ZEKE: You should be able to see this baby from—

ZEKE/51HUNTER: Outer space!

(Zeke and 51Hunter look at each other. Blackout.)

SCENE 5

(In front of curtain. Cee Cee and Dee Dee enter, talking.)

CEE CEE: The English language shore is confusing.

DEE DEE: Isn't that the truth?

CEE CEE: (Correcting.) *Ain't* that the truth.

DEE DEE: That, too.

CEE CEE: No, that's what you gotta say, "*Ain't* that the truth."

DEE DEE: Really?

CEE CEE: "*Ain't*" is cowboy talk. The other's schoolmarm talk. We don't wanna sound like schoolmarms.

DEE DEE: Isn't that—? (Realizes.) I mean, *ain't* that the truth.

CEE CEE: You got that right.

DEE DEE: So I guess that's why we haven't... (Realizes.) ...*ain't* been able to pull off one of them there heists we been talking about.

CEE CEE: Nope. Reckon not.

DEE DEE: You said we oughta rob the coach.

CEE CEE: And we did.

DEE DEE: Or at least we tried to.

CEE CEE: How were we supposed to know they meant the stagecoach and not the football coach.

DEE DEE: He was kinda nice about it, though...once he got through making us run laps and all that.

CEE CEE: Half the time they say "rob the coach," the other half the time they say, "rob the stage."

DEE DEE: So we did both.

CEE CEE: Yeah, and you see where that got us, don't you?

DEE DEE: Yeah. Extras in "Oklahoma."

CEE CEE: I don't know about you, but I never heard no wind ever come whistling down the plain.

DEE DEE: The director said if we didn't watch out, we might steal the show. I don't know if she meant that as a good thing or a bad thing, do you?

(Cee Cee and Dee Dee start to exit.)

CEE CEE: The English language shore is confusing...

(Blackout.)

SCENE 6

(AT RISE: Rhonda's kitchen. Dronda is still working on her paperwork. Fonda is still relaxing. Rhonda has placed a very large watermelon on the floor and is practicing swinging a sledgehammer to smash it. Dronda and Fonda are oblivious.)

DRONDA: Incredible! Just incredible! Now they're right here in Hurleyburg!

FONDA: Who is?

DRONDA: The U.N.! The multi-culturalists! The global internationalists who are trying to undermine the youth of America with their subversive foreign lifestyles! Do you know what they're doing now? They're infiltrating the parks and rec department! Well, you know what we need to say to that course—

(Rhonda gets ready to whack the watermelon.)

FONDA: (To Rhonda.) Stop!

DRONDA: You bet! We don't need their soccer sign-ups around here!

FONDA: No! I mean Rhonda!

DRONDA: I'm pretty sure Rhonda isn't signing up for soccer. She never was very good at sports, anyway.

FONDA: No, I mean—

(Dronda turns to see Rhonda getting ready to whack the watermelon. Dronda jumps up to stop her.)

DRONDA: (To Rhonda.) Oh, my goodness, no! (Taking control of Rhonda's sledgehammer.) Let's just put that down, okay? Let's back away slowly and put that down. (Takes the sledgehammer away from Rhonda.) There, that's better.

FONDA: What's gotten into you, Rhonda?

RHONDA: I told you. I need to work out my negative energy.

DRONDA: Well, if you want to do that, you need to do that the old-fashioned American way...with a Smith & Wesson. *(Pulls out a pistol and points it at the watermelon.)*

FONDA: Hey!

DRONDA: Fine. Be a wimp. Use a knife, then. *(Puts the gun away.)*

FONDA: What's wrong, Rhonda? When we were growing up, you were always the one who smiled all the time.

RHONDA: I only smiled because I was practicing!

FONDA: Practicing for what?

RHONDA: What else? All those dang pageants I was in!

FONDA: Oh.

DRONDA: *(Without a hint of irony.)* A good, wholesome American pastime...to judge girls by their physical beauty. If only Hollywood could be more like that.

RHONDA: Yeah, and you see how that worked out for me, don't you?

FONDA: Oh, you're not still sore about that, are you?

RHONDA: Sore about what? Never winning anything? Not even Miss Shove-It-Up-Your-Royal-Patoot Congeniality? No, I'm not sore.

FONDA: That's good, then.

RHONDA: I'm bitter. I'm angry. I'm frustrated. But I'm definitely not sore.

FONDA: Okay, good. This is good. You're getting it out of your system.

DRONDA: Sounds like therapy to me.

FONDA: *(To Rhonda.)* Deep breath, let it all out.

DRONDA: Best be careful. Some foreigner invented that. This is my therapy right here. *(Indicating her gun.)* I've been thinking about getting something bigger, you know, like an Uzi...a good American gun.

RHONDA: I'm also depressed...and dejected...and demoralized—

DRONDA: As long as you're not a Democrat.

RHONDA: Discouraged...dismayed...disheartened—

FONDA: Okay, I think we get the picture.

RHONDA: You do? Really? I don't think you do. You weren't the one standing up on that stage every time some other girl got named the winner. Do you know how embarrassed that made me feel...having to stand there with a big stupid, fake smile on my face while some other girl always got declared prettier than me? She might have gotten a sash and a crown, but I may as well have been walking around with "loser" stamped right across my forehead or across my chest.

DRONDA: Now, now, you know those were scholarship pageants.

RHONDA: Yeah, which is why they were always won by the girls with the big GPAs!

DRONDA: Well, whatever. That was a long time ago. Put it behind you.

RHONDA: Oh, so now I'm old? Is that it?

DRONDA: Not old. Just more...mature.

FONDA: Um, I don't think you're helping, Dronda.

DRONDA: It's called "tough love." Compassion is for communists.

FONDA: Aw, now that's not fair.

DRONDA: Fine. Socialists, then.

FONDA: I didn't mean fair to *them*. I meant fair to Rhonda.

DRONDA: So? Life isn't fair. Get used to it.

RHONDA: Oh, I'm used to it, all right. I'm very used to standing in front of an auditorium full of people and being humiliated. Mother was right about one thing—all those pageants were good preparation for life. You know why? Because I've never won anything in my life! Nothing! (*With increasing intensity.*) Nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing! (*Composes herself.*) But I'm all over that now. I have a fruit salad to make.

DRONDA: (*Offering Rhonda her gun.*) You might want to take this outside.

FONDA: Dronda!

DRONDA: What? She's got a constitutional right to make fruit salad.

FONDA: Forget the salad! Can't you see our sister needs our help?

DRONDA: She seems to be doing okay on her own.

FONDA: I'm talking about emotionally.

DRONDA: Oh. (*To Rhonda.*) Sorry you lost. Probably couldn't have won anyway, though.

RHONDA: (*Sarcastically.*) Thanks for the vote of confidence.

DRONDA: Anytime...within reason. I'm not like on-call or anything.

FONDA: (*To Rhonda.*) I don't know why Mother always made you enter all those pageants, anyway.

RHONDA: She said it was good for my self-esteem. You can see how well that worked out.

FONDA: Oh, Rhonda, I had no idea...

(*Fonda hugs Rhonda.*)

DRONDA: (*To Rhonda.*) I always thought those were tears of joy. Who knew?

RHONDA: Every time I lost, I just felt like I was digging myself into an even deeper hole.

FONDA: Poor baby.

RHONDA: A hole so deep sometimes I felt like I ought to be coming out in China.

DRONDA: Whoa, whoa, whoa. Don't be saying things like that now.

RHONDA: Why not? Because you're finally going to try to cheer me up?

DRONDA: No. I'm just saying the earth might not be round.

FONDA: You think the earth is flat?

DRONDA: I didn't say that. I'm just saying we don't know for a fact it's round. Those science books at the school say all kinds of things that can't be proven. That whole periodic table looks pretty sketchy to me. It might be some kind of secret code. I hear a Russian invented it, anyway. So there.

RHONDA: So, both of you, just stand back. I'm warning you...I've got a lot of issues to work out. *(Picks up another item to wield against the watermelon.)*

FONDA: You just need to find something you can win, that's all.

RHONDA: Good luck with that. I can't even win at solitaire, not even when I cheat.

DRONDA: How do you cheat at solitaire?

RHONDA: Poorly, apparently.

DRONDA: If you're that bad, then maybe that watermelon may have nothing to fear...or maybe a lot.

FONDA: There ought to be something we can find for Rhonda to win.

DRONDA: And that's exactly what's wrong with this country today: Everybody gets a trophy.

RHONDA: I never got a trophy!

(Zeke and 51Hunter enter.)

ZEKE: Hey, everybody, look who I found! This is Hunter!

FONDA: Hunter!

51HUNTER: *(Correcting.)* Actually, it's 51Hunter.

ZEKE: What? Fifty-one?

51HUNTER: Yeah, like hunting for Area 51. It's not where they say it is, you know. That would be too easy. The government's not just going to put out a map that says, "Okay, here's where the aliens are." Besides, we all know the maps they put out are wrong, anyway. It's all part of "the plan."

DRONDA: Oh, so you're a conspiracy theorist, I see.

51HUNTER: Ah, so you must be—

DRONDA: Uh, no. I don't think so. But I must say I like the way you think.

51HUNTER: Oh. *(To Rhonda.)* So you must be—

RHONDA: Uh—

ZEKE: *(To 51Hunter.)* That's my wife.

51HUNTER: Oh, sorry. *(Looks around and finally sees Fonda. To Fonda.)* Oh, so you must be—

FONDA: Yeah.

51HUNTER: Sorry. I didn't recognize you from your picture.

ZEKE: All right, so back to work. You know, it's hard work hauling all those garden gnomes up on the roof. Those little rascals are heavy.

DRONDA: I'm pretty sure garden gnomes are supposed to go in the garden.

ZEKE: Oh, it's a garden all right! A garden of lights! *(Exits.)*

FONDA: *(To 51Hunter, sing-songy.)* So...you're here.

51HUNTER: My GPS doesn't show this place at all. I don't know what's wrong with it.

DRONDA: Did you bother to turn it on?

51HUNTER: Oh, I'm afraid to do that. Then the government can monitor where you are.

DRONDA: *(Under her breath.)* You got yourself a real winner this time, Fonda.

RHONDA: *(Seizing the tool from Fonda.)* You people!

51HUNTER: *(Getting out the highway map.)* So then I stopped at a gas station and got this highway map, and that didn't have Hurleyburg on it, either.

DRONDA: What do you mean it didn't have Hurleyburg on it? Of course, it has Hurleyburg on it. *(Grabs the map from 51Hunter.)* Fonda, I can't believe some of the— *(Grapples with the map.)* Well, where is...? *(Looking at map.)* How does this thing go...? *(Rotating map.)* I don't know why they have to make these maps so hard to—

51HUNTER: See, I told you it doesn't have Hurleyburg on it.

DRONDA: Okay, let's see. *(Looking at map.)* There's [Dallas]. There's [San Antonio]. So that makes Hurleyburg...should

be right about— *(Can't find it on the map.)* Hmmm.
Well...where is it? *[Or insert other cities.]*

51HUNTER: Told you.

DRONDA: Oh! Y'all come look at this.

FONDA: What?

RHONDA: Doesn't anybody care about fruit salad?

DRONDA: Not really. Real Americans eat meat.

RHONDA: Oh! *(Stalks off to another part of the kitchen where she resumes her strange labors, preparing to smash something else.)*

DRONDA: Anyway, look at this map. It doesn't have Hurleyburg on it.

51HUNTER: That's what I've been trying to tell you. It's like Hurleyburg is some kind of secret place— *(Realizes.)* Oh, that's it! Have you ever seen any aliens around here?

DRONDA: Just the trolls who live up the road, but I don't think that's the kind you had in mind.

FONDA: *(Pointing to the map.)* Well, what's that?

51HUNTER: Ketchup stain.

FONDA: Oh.

51HUNTER: Or maybe special sauce. No, wait, the special sauce is over there in New Mexico...maybe near Roswell. Hmmm...that could mean something. Maybe gravity is somehow directing the way it falls on the page, or maybe there's some kind of gravity well—

DRONDA: Or maybe you just lost control going around a curve?

51HUNTER: Or maybe it's really secret sauce! That would explain everything!

FONDA: *(Pointing to map.)* Well, what about that big black "X" right there?

51HUNTER: Oh, that's what the fellow at the gas station marked on it. I never would have gotten here if it hadn't been for him.

DRONDA: Well, there you have it. It does have Hurleyburg on it—a little south of the ketchup stain and a little east of the special sauce. Or the secret sauce. Whichever.

FONDA: Why wouldn't they put Hurleyburg on the map?

Didn't we used to be on the map? Did they take us off?

DRONDA/51HUNTER: It's probably a conspiracy.

(Dronda and 51Hunter exchange knowing looks.)

DRONDA: It's how the creeping one-world government starts. First, they start taking places like Hurleyburg off the map and nobody notices. Next thing you know, they're erasing national borders and turning us all into cheese-eating Europeans.

FONDA: What's wrong with cheese?

51HUNTER: Or maybe there's some super-secret government installation here they don't want anybody to know about?

DRONDA: I'm pretty sure there are no secrets in Hurleyburg, not since Myrtle Cunningham discovered Facebook wasn't the wanted posters down at the post office.

51HUNTER: Have you noticed any unusual activity around here...anything out of the ordinary?

(Dronda and Fonda look at Rhonda, who is making preparations to smash something. She how has an axe or some other implement.)

DRONDA: Not really, no.

FONDA: *(To 51Hunter.)* Can't say as I have.

51HUNTER: Maybe this is the real Area 51!

DRONDA: Well, all I know is we don't need this piece of government propaganda around here. *(Takes the map, balls it up, and throws it out the door.)*

RHONDA: You just threw that out into my front yard!

DRONDA: The wind will blow it away.

RHONDA: But that's littering!

DRONDA: Nah. It'll rot. Besides, the darned thing was on recycled paper, anyway.

FONDA: What's wrong with recycled paper?

DRONDA: It's unpatriotic. This country was made strong by people cutting down trees. Even George Washington cut

down a cherry tree. If he were around today, he wouldn't have used a hatchet. He'd have pulled out a chainsaw and turned that little tree into sawdust. Father, I cannot tell a lie, I have contributed to carbon emissions, and I enjoyed every minute of it!

RHONDA: (*Angry.*) Oh! (*Storms out to retrieve the map.*)

FONDA: (*To 51Hunter.*) So...we meet at last.

51HUNTER: Yes, yes, we do.

FONDA: So...what do you think? (*Twirls around, hoping 51Hunter will respond.*)

51HUNTER: Amazing...incredible...more than I could have hoped for in even my wildest dreams.

FONDA: So you like?

51HUNTER: Oh, yes.

FONDA: Oh?

51HUNTER: This could be...earth-shaking.

FONDA: Ohhhhhhh!

51HUNTER: Cosmic even!

FONDA: Oh, yes!

51HUNTER: I've been waiting for an opportunity like this my whole life!

FONDA: What?

51HUNTER: It's practically pregnant with possibilities.

FONDA: (*Admonishingly.*) Hey!

51HUNTER: (*Confused.*) Huh? What? I'm talking about the lights up on the roof!

FONDA: What lights?

51HUNTER: The Christmas lights that guy has rigged up!

DRONDA: (*To Fonda.*) He means Zeke. Everybody knows Zeke is two loads short of sense. That boy's got enough lights up there to light up everything from here to Albuquerque.

51HUNTER: Alpha Centauri.

DRONDA: Alpha what? Don't go speaking that Spanish now. We don't allow that around here. This is an *English-*

speaking country. It's bad enough they have it on the money now.

FONDA: There's Spanish on the money?

DRONDA: "E pluribus unum." It's some kind of code. I think it means "one free bus ride."

FONDA: For a quarter?

51HUNTER: *(To Dronda, correcting.)* Alpha Centauri...it's the nearest star.

DRONDA: Oh, I don't know anything about that. Around here, we just teach the science that's in the Bible. You know, like the horoscope.

51HUNTER: Zeke and I are going to send 'em a message.

FONDA: What kind of message? What are you talking about?

DRONDA: *(To 51Hunter.)* Whatever message it is, it better be in English, that's all I'm saying.

51HUNTER: Oh, it's going to be in a language everyone can understand.

DRONDA: Well, that rules out English, then. I called the bank the other day and wound up trying to talk to someone in some call center in some foreign country somewhere. I think it was California.

51HUNTER: It's going to be in lights! *(Starts to exit.)*

FONDA: Wait. Where are you going?

51HUNTER: Where else? To go help him! That's not the First Noel out there—that's First Contact! *(On second thought.)* Well, other than Roswell...and Rendlesham Forest...and the Incas, and the Nazca Lines...and the Egyptians, and the Ancient Astronauts who gave them the blueprints for the pyramids. But other than that, it'll be First Contact...just like in Star Trek!

(51Hunter exits. In a huff, Rhonda enters, holding a newspaper.)

FONDA: But—

RHONDA: Where's he going?

FONDA: *(To 51Hunter, calls.)* But what about—?

DRONDA: Fonda, I think you just lost your latest boyfriend to the Ghost of Christmas Past, Present and Future.

RHONDA: Well, I couldn't find it. I guess you're right. The wind blew it away.

FONDA: (*Disgusted.*) Oh! Can you believe that? I just got ditched in favor of a bunch of Christmas lights!

DRONDA: (*To Rhonda, indicating newspaper.*) So what's that?

RHONDA: Oh, some old newspaper. I guess it blew in from somebody else's yard.

DRONDA: It's trash.

RHONDA: Yeah, well, so was the map you balled up and threw outside, too.

FONDA: Oh, well. Easy come, easy go, I guess.

DRONDA: No, I mean it's a newspaper. Ergo, it's trash. Oh my gosh, now even I'm speaking Spanish! Quick, where's the soap? (*Runs to the sink to find the soap.*)

FONDA: Uh, I'm not exactly the brain in the family, but I'm pretty sure "ergo" isn't Spanish. I think it's French.

DRONDA: Even worse!

FONDA: French is the language of love! Maybe I should try to find a boyfriend from Canada. I bet I could find one down at the truck stop.

RHONDA: Actually, I think it's Latin.

DRONDA: Which means it's practically Spanish.

FONDA: How do you figure that?

DRONDA: Duh! Who lives in Latin America? Latins! (*Starts washing her mouth out with a bottle of "dishwashing detergent."*)

RHONDA: Hey, that's my good dishwashing detergent!

FONDA: You have good dishwashing detergent? I usually just let the cat lick mine clean.

(*Dronda spits out the "detergent."*)

DRONDA: That's disgusting!

FONDA: Well, it is detergent.

DRONDA: No, I mean that you have a cat! Real Americans ought to have dogs. There ought to be a law against cats.

FONDA: That would be that "limited government" thing, right?

DRONDA: Don't laugh. You know they're all foreign, right? Persians... Siamese—

FONDA: German Shepherds.

RHONDA: You two amaze me sometimes. Here... *(Slaps the newspaper down in front of Dronda and Fonda.)* ...go do the crossword or something while I get some real work done.

DRONDA: *(Indicating newspaper.)* What's this? I don't want this liberal rag.

FONDA: I'm pretty sure "The Hurleyburg Weekly Miracle" isn't a liberal rag.

DRONDA: Better safe than sorry. I only follow the news that tells me what I already believe. That's how I know it's true.

FONDA: Oh, you mean like... *(Reading from the newspaper.)* ..."Garden Club to host program. Forever Friends: The pros and cons of taxidermy for your pet. To be followed by potluck dinner."

DRONDA: Be careful of what the people on the "con" side bring to that. That's all I'm saying.

FONDA: *(Looking at newspaper.)* Or what about—? *(Stops.)* Hey!

DRONDA: Come on, spit it out. Which is probably what they'll do at that potluck.

FONDA: This is it!

DRONDA: This is what?

FONDA: Rhonda! You've got to listen to this!

RHONDA: Can't you see I'm trying to make fruit salad? And I don't even like fruit salad!

DRONDA: We can tell. So can the salad.

FONDA: No, seriously...you've got to listen to this! *(Reads.)* "Entries now being accepted for the First Annual Hurleyburg Chili Cook-Off."

DRONDA: That's probably what happens to the rest of that potluck.

FONDA: Don't you get it?

DRONDA: Get what? That some people want to stuff their pets and put them up on the shelf and some don't?

FONDA: No, not that. This! Rhonda, you've got to do this!

RHONDA: Do what? Get Fluffy stuffed? He's not even dead yet!

DRONDA: Fluffy? That sounds like a cat's name. Please tell me you don't have a cat, too.

RHONDA: And even if I did, Zeke would probably just take him, string lights on him, and call him a reindeer.

FONDA: Forget cats!

DRONDA: I'd like to!

FONDA: Don't you see, Rhonda? You could win this!

RHONDA: How?

FONDA: By entering, silly! You said you'd never won anything. Well, here's your chance!

RHONDA: That's what Mom said before sent me off to the Miss West [Texas] Used Tire Dealers Pageant...and the Miss Sewage Treatment Plant Operators Convention Pageant, and worst of all, the Miss Artificial Inseminators Pageant. You have no idea what they do to those bulls. *[Or insert another state.]*

DRONDA: Oh, I think I have some idea.

FONDA: *(To Rhonda.)* Think about it. It's the first time they're doing it. There's just one tiny little announcement here in the paper. How many people do you think they'll get to enter?

DRONDA: *(To Rhonda.)* And Hurleyburg's not even on the map anymore, anyway.

FONDA: Exactly! *(To Rhonda.)* So the odds are already in your favor.

DRONDA: They don't judge those based on looks, right?

RHONDA: Gee, thanks, Dronda.

FONDA: Forget her. Just listen to me. You could do it, Rhonda! You would win!

RHONDA: I don't know. It sounds like a lot of work.

FONDA: It's chili! How much work can it be?

RHONDA: Well, I don't know. There's all that chopping and cutting and —

DRONDA: *(To Fonda.)* That doesn't seem to be a problem for her. You know, all that negative energy and all.

FONDA: *(To Rhonda.)* Besides, we'll help you.

DRONDA: What's this *we* business?

FONDA: All for one, one for all!

DRONDA: I don't know. That sounds like communism to me. Whatever happened to "rugged individualism"?

FONDA: *(Grabs a tool or weapon, threatening Dronda.)* It's called being a family. Now, are you going to help your sister win something, or are you going to watch while I chop your head off and throw it in the cook pot?

DRONDA: Uh, what happened to all the peace, love, and understanding?

FONDA: You want peace, love, and understanding? Fine. I'll give you peace, love, and understanding. My latest love is up on the roof stringing up Christmas lights so he can talk to little green men. So, instead, I'm giving you a piece of my mind. Now do you understand me?

DRONDA: I suppose I could offer some advice now and then.

FONDA: *(Releasing the weapon.)* I'll take that as a yes. *(To Rhonda.)* So, are you in?

RHONDA: Do I have a choice?

FONDA: Not really.

[END OF FREEVIEW]