

7.

TAPED NARRATOR: The scars left by the environment of hostile and split individuals became open sores. The community closed in on itself, discouraged and demoralized. The fragile unity almost fell to pieces. Inertia set in as the resistance to common projects hardened; creative breakthroughs were no longer made; the period of the commune's growth seemed to be over.

(From right enter SHARON, DONNA & LEON, now 7 or 8, carrying the components of a puppet stage which they assemble during the scene)

LEON: It ought to go here.

DONNA: Then here it goes. It's your show.

SHARON: The greatest thrill is being involved in every part of it. Imagine having to just learn lines, or just paint scenery. That would take all the fun out of it.

DONNA: I can see why everyone's so eager to show you things, Sharon; you're so full of enthusiasm.

LEON: Steve has a crush on her.

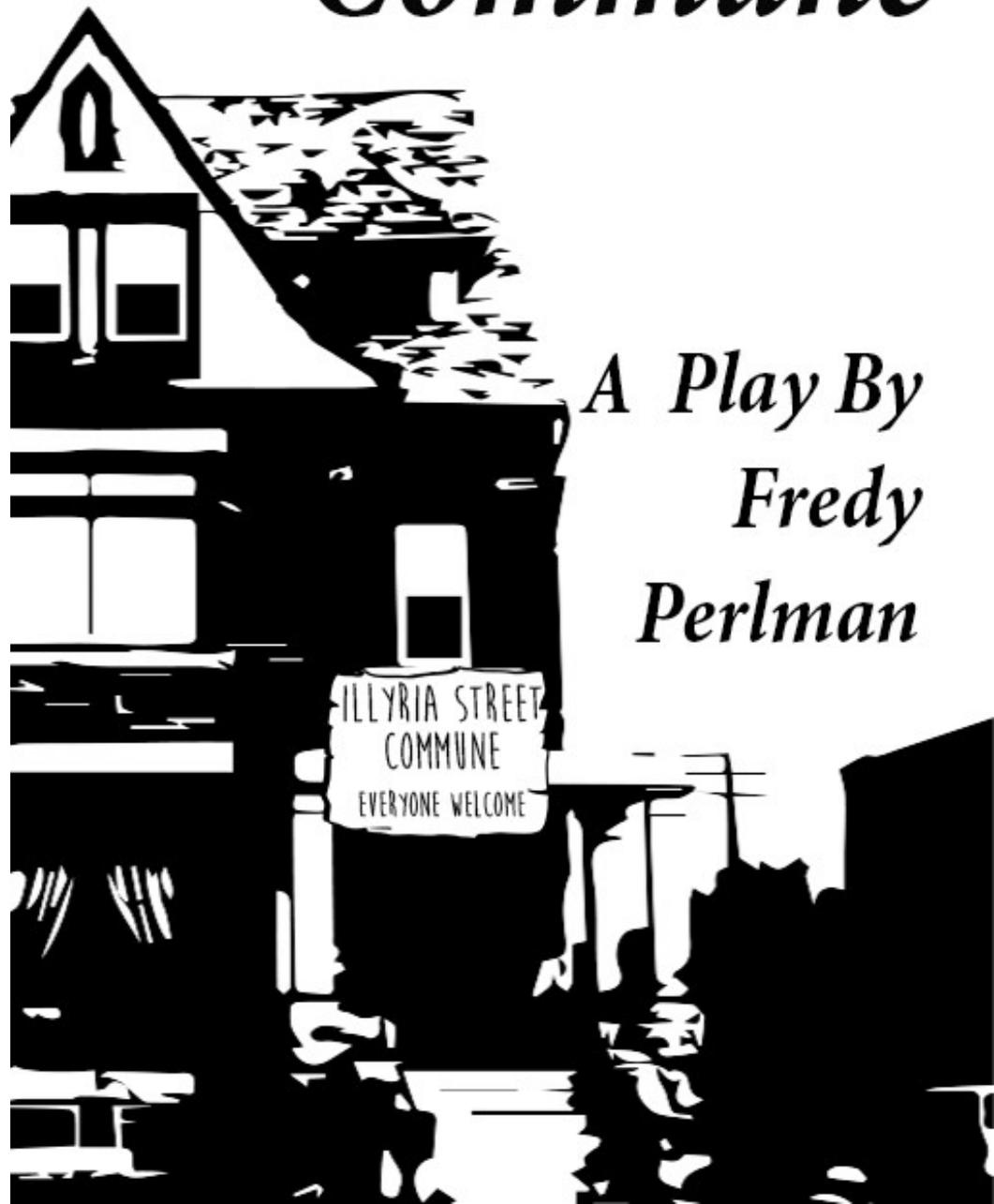
SHARON: Leon! Don't —

LEON: Everyone can see it!

DONNA: I haven't seen Steve so happy since I've known him.

SHARON: I'm sorry — Steve's been so helpful. So has Philip. Everyone's been so wonderful — I never thought Steve would —

Illyria Street Commune



to Donna
— Ben

MATTIE: You people look like wet rags: We'd better get started, Dan; your brother is supposed to arrive in half an hour.

DAN: Oh, shit, I'll never finish this.

MATTIE: If you'll be planting the back later this afternoon, I'll try to come back.

OLYMPIA: I don't think Donna is up to any more planting today. How about tomorrow?

MATTIE: I thought Donna couldn't make it on a weekday.

OLYMPIA: Oh, that's right. What if we schedule it for next weekend?

MATTIE: Could you call Lisa, Dan.

(MATTIE exits left. OLYMPIA, PHILIP & BEN exit right)

DAN (in archway, shouting): Lisa! (exits right)

OLYMPIA: It's not your fault, Grover. Who would have known all that water would gush out as soon as —

PHILIP: I knew.

OLYMPIA: Well fortunately it was only water.

GROVER: That's what I say. This one dude I knew had one of these things blow — I guess I told you that one. You know, Philip, I've been giving a careful look at that brochure you people made —

PHILIP: I'd better go up and put some dry socks on —

GROVER: If you want my opinion, I don't think you should melt that shit down. It's good. What I like best are the caricatures of religious objects, like the one of god playing with his dingy —

OLYMPIA: That's what I've been telling him, but he's so modest.

GROVER: I'm serious. That shit could sell. Now if you just built some shelves here, this room would make an ideal space for a display: hand-molded pottery and shit like that.

PHILIP: Do you really think so?

GROVER: Of course you'd need better light; maybe we could take some of that vegetation back out to the country; and more space —

BEN: Look, Grover, I think you misunderstand —

(MATTIE enters, takes Rose Anne from crib)

A note on performing Illyria Street Commune

A dash at the end of a speech indicates that the next speaker begins before the previous one is finished. In general, there should be no pauses; props can be carried in and out while the action develops. Sequences in different parts of the room can sometimes be done simultaneously, depending on the discretion of the performers. If a prompter is necessary, it would be consistent with the play ("Ben's play") if Ben sat in a corner with a script, and intervened to correct lines, stepping out of his corner into scenes in which he takes part.

In general, only plot and character developments have been worked out; mannerisms, motions, and also actions of other people in the house, have not. Since the setting is the main room of a commune,

much will probably be happening all the time. But in developing such actions, criteria like “This will really go over” or “They’ll lap this one up” should be left to writers of commercials and TV scripts, since such criteria contradict the content of this play. Such elaboration will probably be possible if aspiring professionals confine themselves to roles of aspiring professionals, and if drop-outs play drop-outs, although an unstunted imagination should be able to grasp both. In short, people who might have lived in such a house should develop the actions in accordance with their own potential experiences in it.

The illusion to be created is that the action takes place in a room of such a house, not the illusion that “This is Theater” or “This is Art.” If “artists” require spotlights, that’s fine; they can keep them. The best lights for the room would be bright room lights. If sunlight is to be simulated, a spotlight, or another device created by the ingenuity of the participants, may become necessary (outside the picture window, for instance), but this is dictated by the needs of the play and not by conventions which are totally extraneous to it, like Legitimate Theater conventions. With such provisos, of course, “It won’t sell.” Selling is one of the activities disparaged in the play. Some effort should go into making sure that “it doesn’t sell.”

(GROVER enters from right, dripping)

DAN: What happened?

GROVER: Had a little accident.

OLYMPIA: Where’s Philip?

GROVER: Trying to salvage his oven.

VOICE OF BARRY (from right): Is anyone up there?

VOICE OF TONI: What do you want?

VOICE OF BARRY: Try the hot water.

VOICE OF TONI: It works!

GROVER: Well, it looks like we’ve got things under control.

(PHILIP enters from right, dripping)

OLYMPIA: What about the flood?

PHILIP: Steve found the drain; it was plugged up.

OLYMPIA: And your oven?

PHILIP: I don’t actually know what water does to it.

GROVER: I guess that wasn’t the right connection —

(STEVE, BARRY & ALEC run in from left)

BARRY: That Grover sure is a trip.

(STEVE, BARRY & ALEC exit right)

(DONNA & OLYMPIA enter from left; BEN in archway on right)

DONNA: You're acting as if it were my fault!

OLYMPIA: We've been talking all week long about having the boiler repairman over on Sunday. And we were all going to take part so as to know what to do in case it ever broke down again.

DONNA: Well I've been looking forward to doing the planting for the past three weekends, and this is the first day it hasn't rained.

OLYMPIA: It's a question of priorities, Donna.

DONNA: It's a question of getting the seeds into the ground before summer! (She walks toward archway)

BEN: Are you going to plant the garden now?

DONNA: Let her do it. I'm going to have a drink. (Exits right)

BEN: Did you want all of us to learn how to flood the basement?

OLYMPIA: I didn't see either of you down there when the trouble started.

Illyria Street Commune

(The setting is the front room of a large house on Illyria Street. The outside door is on the left; the archway on the right gives access to the kitchen, back yard and upstairs. On the wall between the exits is an enormous picture window, almost completely covered by hanging potted plants.)

1.

TAPED NARRATOR (voice of Olympia played through a tape recorder): It began with isolated strangers in the big city, hostile and suspicious individuals surrounded by shells, their tentacles warning them of constant dangers.

VOICE OF OLYMPIA (*from right*): Your garden is extremely well kept.

VOICE OF DONNA: It's what I like best about this house, especially now when the sprouts start coming up.

VOICE OF OLYMPIA: I've never seen such an enormous kitchen and so well equipped!

VOICE OF DONNA: I guess they just ran off and left all their stuff, as if the city were being invaded.

VOICE OF OLYMPIA: What's in here?

VOICE OF DONNA: I don't know what they used this room for, but I've been putting things here I didn't have the heart to throw away.

VOICE OF OLYMPIA: That chandelier — did it actually hang somewhere?

(DONNA & OLYMPIA enter from right)

DONNA: Right in the middle of this room. But it was so old fashioned we couldn't stand it. Do you think you'll take the room?

OLYMPIA: Do I ever? I've never had such a large room all to myself. Do you mind if I have my friends over?

DONNA: Have parties if you want. (Goes to right and calls) Philip!

VOICE OF PHILIP: What is it?

DONNA: One of the new roomers is here.

VOICE OF PHILIP: Just make sure they're able to pay the rent.

DONNA: I thought you'd at least want to meet her.

VOICE OF PHILIP: Oh, all right.

OLYMPIA: Are there other applicants? Are you going to choose among them?

VOICE OF OLYMPIA: Ben!

VOICE OF GROVER: Holy shit!

BEN: what's the matter?

TONI: Sounds like they're having fun.

(BEN exits right. TONI exits left. DAN typesets)

VOICE OF GROVER (from right): Where's the central spigot?

(OLYMPIA runs in from right, dripping)

OLYMPIA: The basement's flooded! (exits left)

DAN: Oh no! (to right) Is there anything I can do?

VOICE OF GROVER: Shut the water off!

VOICE OF PHILIP: The oven is ruined.

(MATTIE & TONI enter from left, cross to right)

MATTIE: Lisa! Come down here this minute)

TONI: Leon!

(MATTIE & TONI exit right)

VOICE OF GROVER: We're drowning!

TONI: Busy as beavers, aren't we? At least I don't have a birthing today. Barry and Steve are trying to have a car rebuilt by tomorrow.

DAN: They've been spending seven days a week in that garage.

TONI: I guess they've both got money problems. Steve got fired — one splice too many, I guess. And Barry's saving up for his next trip; he keeps saying he's glad to have a Base to come back to.

DAN: Does he mean us or the garage?

TONI: He means us, Dan; he's a generous guy. Where are those damned kids? (to right) Leon!

VOICE OF LISA: Toni!

TONI: What is it?

VOICE OF LISA: Leon wants me to ask what Expletives Deleted means.

TONI: Who the hell cares! Tell him to get his ass out here! We're planting flowers!

(BEN enters from right)

BEN: Have you ever thought of sabotaging that TV?

TONI: I've thought of it, but sometimes they show a program I'd like to see.

DONNA: I don't understand — Oh, no, nothing like that. Only one other person answered my ad, and I asked you both to come here tonight when Philip and I are both home —

(PHILIP enters, stands in archway)

OLYMPIA: I'm sorry. I guess I've filled out so many applications that I've come to suspect every new situation of being another application.

PHILIP: Hi. I'm Philip.

OLYMPIA (turning around): Oh, hi. I'm Olympia. I think this house is unbelievable.

DONNA: She's employed at —

OLYMPIA: I work part time as a waitress. I've got all kinds of projects which I intend to use my room for and they are increasing every minute — but none of them are noisy or smelly.

PHILIP: Fine. Any arrangement Donna makes is acceptable to me.

DONNA: Philip, she's trying to tell you about herself.

PHILIP: Oh. Pleased to meet you. Sorry. I'm Philip.

(PHILIP exits right)

OLYMPIA: I'm all in a sweat — I've never had such a cold reception —

DONNA: Don't mind him. He was always a little like that — quiet, I mean — but he's gotten worse since his wife left him. That's why I'm trying to rent the rooms. Becky was the life of this house, always giving parties for her friends and her kids friends. She's had three already and she's only my age. I just turned twenty. Becky and I were friends in high school. When we graduated we both got jobs in the same office, the year of the riots. I was telling you about Philip. Two weeks ago Becky packed up her two youngest sons, left Philip with the oldest — a four year old brat — and ran off with Rick. Rick was my boyfriend.

OLYMPIA: I'm sorry.

DONNA: Don't be for me. I mean, I could see the storm brewing for the whole past year. But I guess Philip didn't see anything. Anyway, it's not because of the money that I put the ad in the paper. With Becky gone the house seemed like a tomb. She's the one who did all the redecorating and she kept changing everything every week. It was always so full of people, like a constant carnival. The kids parties sometimes got on my nerves. But I guess I understand how Philip feels. I miss the noise and the parties and Becky more than I miss Rick. He got to be such a slob, expecting me to do things —

OLYMPIA: I know exactly what you mean.

DONNA: He called me his broad and even his old lady. We did have a marriage certificate, but that's no reason. We all got married together, right in this room. Becky arranged for this Jewish priest to do a non-religious service since none of us believed any of that — You're not religious, are you?

VOICE OF OLYMPIA (from right): Dan, Ben or somebody!

DAN: What is it?

VOICE OF OLYMPIA: Turn on the faucet!

DAN:(Opens door) Hey Ben. Could you give the boiler crew a hand? I'm trying to get this thing typed.

(BEN enters from left, exits right. Dan typesets)

VOICE OF BEN *(from right)*: Which faucet?

VOICE OF OLYMPIA: The hot water, Ben.

(TONI enters from left)

TONI: Are Leon and Lisa in the tree house?

DAN: I think they're in your room watching TV.

TONI: Oh damn! (Goes to right and calls) Leon, come outside, it's the first day of spring!

VOICE OF LEON: Just a second. We're coming.

TONI: What's that you're doing?

DAN: A boring paper I'd like to finish by tomorrow.

BEN: Good luck. Holler when you need us. (Exits left)

OLYMPIA: Isn't anyone else coming? Grover is already downstairs.

PHILIP: Grover knows about boilers?

(PHILIP & OLYMPIA exit right. DAN typesets. MATTIE enters from left, goes to archway)

MATTIE *(calls right)*: Lisa!

VOICE OF LISA *(from right)*: Yes, mommy!

MATTIE: When are you coming out?

VOICE OF LISA: Right away, mommy.

MATTIE: You should come out too, Dan, it's such a beautiful day.

DAN: I'd rather get this done before getting my hands dirty.

MATTIE: You should see how Donna does it. She digs a separate hole for each seed.

DAN: Of grass?

MATTIE: No dummy. We're planting flowers all along the wall and the fence.

(MATTIE exits left. Dan typesets)

OLYMPIA: I was brought up a strict Mormon and I've been rebelling against it ever since.

DONNA: I wasn't brought up a strict anything but I can't stand it either, all that hocus pocus about a bath. Maybe when people didn't bathe, but what's the point nowadays? Anyway, as soon as I saw what was happening I started dating Steve. He was a typewriter repairman then; he works for the phone company now and he promised to get my phone hooked up so I don't have to pay —

OLYMPIA: How does he manage that?

DONNA: I guess you can do a lot of things like that when you work for the phone company. I could tell he liked me the first time he fixed the machine in my office. He's older, I don't mean that he's old. He's in his thirties. As soon as Rick started going for Becky, my typewriter started going on the blink once a week. It was a ball until he got fired — not because of me, but because he wired the assistant manager's dictaphone to the loudspeaker system and the whole building split laughing. Steve is real shy; he must have had some bad experiences but he doesn't like to talk about it. For the whole past year Rick was arranging to meet Becky so I wouldn't know about it and I was seeing Steve at this bar near here twice a week. He walked me home for the first time last week. He likes to sit and just look at me while he sips his beer. I've never had anyone like me like that —

(Doorbell rings)

OLYMPIA: I'll get it.

BEN (entering): I called you earlier about a room? I suppose it's the maid's room in the attic?

OLYMPIA: That's what I thought when I read the ad. You're in for a big surprise. What's your name? Mine's Olympia.

BEN: I'm Ben. Then you're not the woman who's renting? —

OLYMPIA: That's Donna. Why would you want a maid's room, Ben?

BEN: See, I work with a group that puts out an underground paper and we —

DONNA: Gosh, are you connected with those four students who were shot to death? —

BEN: You mean in Kent? No, I'm not connected, I, er —

DONNA (*disappointed*): You're not?

BEN: Maybe I am connected. What an odd question. The fact is I would have liked to see four guardsmen go down instead of four students.

DONNA: Gosh!

BEN: Are you still willing to show me the room?

DONNA (runs to right, calls): Philip! The other roomer is here! Could you show him a room?

is the easiest thing in the world. All you really have to worry about is that the temperature of the water doesn't rise above 212 degrees Fahrenheit. Let's get to it; where's this boiler located?

OLYMPIA: Grover, are you sure you've seen a boiler before?

GROVER: I would have brought the boiler school diploma nailed up above my bed if I'd known you'd —

OLYMPIA: I suppose you're right; there can't be that much to it. Why don't you go study it; I'll get the others.

GROVER: Where's this thing at?

OLYMPIA: In the basement, Grover!

GROVER: This one dude I knew had one of these things explode on him. (*GROVER exits right*)

OLYMPIA: Can you come now, Dan?

DAN: I've got five pages left of this paper, and I've got —

OLYMPIA (shouting left): Come on, everybody! Boiler repair time!

(*PHILIP & BEN enter from left*)

BEN: I didn't see Grover come with anyone.

OLYMPIA: His friend couldn't come, but Grover says he knows about boilers.

spent reading it. Listen to this. “The whole notion of harmony and fulfillment, separated from their hypostatization in the form of systematization to a functionalization became a purposeless purposiveness —”

GROVER: Don’t knock it, man; that dude was fired from three universities for not being scholarly enough.

DAN: At least in the bank you could see the point, once you knew where you were. But this shit — Oh, hell, at least I can work on my own hours. How’s that tax refund scheme going?

GROVER: Still working on it; give me two or three more weeks.

(OLYMPIA enters from right)

OLYMPIA: Where’s the boiler repairman?

GROVER: Who’s that?

OLYMPIA: Your friend —

GROVER: Oh, him. He couldn’t make it, seeing as it’s Sunday and his only day off.

OLYMPIA: But he can’t come on a weekday because he works then!

GROVER: Six days a week. That’s what I mean. You can’t expect a dude like that to work on his free day too, can you? Now don’t get upset, Olympia. Actually, he taught me all he knew about boilers, and then some. In fact, I knew a lot about them myself. Fixing them

OLYMPIA: I didn’t even know there was an underground paper in this town.

(PHILIP appears in archway)

BEN: Oh, sure. It’s one of the oldest in the country; it’s been going —

PHILIP: How do you do?

DONNA: Ben works for an underground newspaper, Philip. Isn’t that exciting?

PHILIP: What do you do for a living?

BEN: I was about to explain. I don’t get paid at the underground paper. I’m on welfare. Disability.

OLYMPIA: Really? I’ve been trying to get on that for years!

BEN: I actually have a disability.

PHILIP: Fine. I guess we could hardly ask for a steadier source of income than the government. Would you follow me?

(PHILIP exits right with BEN)

OLYMPIA: It isn’t clear to me who owns this enormous house.

DONNA: I do.

OLYMPIA: It must be terribly expensive. Are you — I hope I'm not prying — rich?

DONNA: Me? Gosh, do I look like it? I guess you don't know how cheap these houses were selling, even a year after the riots. Come to think of it I was rich. I was the only one of us who had a bank account; that's why I got to fill out the loan application. It's funny. Philip went to college for four years and got a degree in chemistry or something, and then he spent ages filling out applications. He did finally get a job with a chemicals firm — as a shipping clerk. Becky and I had one interview during our senior year and we started working two weeks after we graduated getting half again as much as Philip gets now, and a year later I'd saved over a thousand dollars. Rick and Becky couldn't hold on to money; they strewed it around like confetti. Here comes the underground.

VOICE OF BEN (from right): You actually do chemistry experiments in your room? Couldn't you blow up the house?

VOICE OF PHILIP: Not very likely.

VOICE OF BEN: Would you be into making bombs?

VOICE OF PHILIP: I beg your pardon?

OLYMPIA: What kind of experiments?

DONNA: He makes silver, I think. Then he makes things out of it and melts them down again. And pottery.

OLYMPIA: In his room?

PHILIP: I melt mine down after I finish them.

OLYMPIA: Yes, I suppose it's the same principle.

PHILIP: Too bad you didn't take a photograph.

(OLYMPIA, PHILIP, BEN exit right)

6.

TAPED NARRATOR: At last the isolated fragments were unified into a community, a federation, a union — but the unity was still fragile. Generations of isolated growth had left their scars; outwardly unified, the community still bristled with resistance toward the launching and implementation of common projects.

(DAN enters from left, begins typesetting. Door opens at left)

VOICES (from left): Come on Grover. A little sunshine won't hurt you.

GROVER (to left): Me and flowers is like icicles and ice cream. Tell me when you get to the poppies. Closes door) Hey, my man, how's business?

DAN: I'm trying to finish that paper on "Non-hierarchic demythologized forms of subversion." It's as boring as anything I typed at the bank.

GROVER: I thought you looked them over before taking them on.

DAN: I figured I could have part of it typeset during the time I

GROVER: Now don't cry, kid. You did one, you can do more. Now this one dude I know, his whole house burned down and he lost —

SHARON: I have an awful feeling that I did something wrong, but I don't know what it is! (Runs out right)

GROVER: Well, I guess I did my harm for tonight. See you around. Thanks for inviting me, Toni.

BARRY: Can you wait a second, Grover? I thought of some more things I wanted to ask about the car parts. You coming, Steve? I'm counting on you for a ride.

(GROVER, BARRY, STEVE exit left)

DAN: Oh, shit, I thought of some things I wanted to ask him too. (DAN exits left)

MATTIE: I guess I'll just leave Lisa up there.

TONI: Don't worry, Mattie. She's so high she won't know where she slept.

(TONI exits right)

MATTIE: It's really too bad about the accident.

OLYMPIA: Don't lose sleep over it.

(MATTIE with ROSE ANNE exits left)

VOICE OF BEN: Cripes what a kitchen. My friends'll think I sold out. I can't even cook. Mind if I look at the garden?

VOICE OF PHILIP: The light switch is by the door.

OLYMPIA: What if — ?

DONNA: Shhh — I want to hear this.

VOICE OF BEN: This sure looks well kept. Just the two of you work on this?

VOICE OF PHILIP: I hate plants.

DONNA: Can you imagine?

VOICE OF BEN: And the rent — did I misread the amount?

VOICE OF PHILIP: Those arrangements are not my department.

BEN (*in archway*): You're putting me on!

DONNA: I don't understand.

BEN: Forty dollars a month for a room in this house? Half the town should have been here trying to rent it.

DONNA: If four of us each pays forty, that covers the loan, tax, utilities, plus some left over for repairs —

BEN: I know, but — are you sure you own this house?

DONNA: Do you want to see the papers?

BEN: The plants in that window are out of sight. Did you do that?

DONNA: I'm glad you like them. I thought you underground people didn't care about things like that.

BEN: Will you still own the house an hour from now when I come back with my bags?

(BEN runs out left)

DONNA: Some people sure are odd. I did give you the keys, didn't I, Olympia? Good night.

(OLYMPIA exits left, DONNA exits right)

2.

TAPED NARRATOR: For almost a year we failed to break down the isolation. We remained strangers, tenants in an apartment house, miles apart at our jobs during the day, walled off from each other at night, polite and suspicious, unwilling to share, afraid to touch each other. One experimented in the privacy of his room, another smoked in the privacy of his, the third continued to tend her garden. The house was big — but dead. And then something happened; it started to come alive.

VOICE OF PHILIP (from right): If you break that vase one more time I'll break your ass! Play with your own things. *(Upstairs door slams)*

(BARRY pours for each and sets SHARON'S cup on a surface between Sharon and her painting)

GROVER: The only painter I know who did anything like this is Kahlo, that Mexican woman who'll outlive her husband Diego Rivera. She went right off the canvass and painted all over the frame and the easel and probably the wall, although they don't bring the wall in on the traveling exhibits. But this has a different kind of power. Did you do this yourself? How did you get that cracked paint effect?

OLYMPIA: Actually it's Sharon who painted it. She started with a large sheet of paper, a travel poster in fact. I'm sure she'd love to tell how she got the paint to crack.

SHARON (gesticulating): It's because I didn't know you couldn't lay thick layers of oil paint on paper. It started to shrink and curl and whenever I tried to straighten it —

(SHARON's arm flies wildly into her tea cup, sending cup and tea into her paper painting)

GROVER: Sorry I asked.

STEVE: Maybe it can be fixed.

TONI: Poor Sharon. Your arms. They're so uncontrolled.

BARRY: They're always like that when she's excited.

OLYMPIA: Even if he does, is that the kind of basis we want? What do you think, Ben?

BEN: He uses the word Business an awful lot: garage business, typesetting business —

DAN: Aw, Olympia, why are you winding Ben up on that track? I thought we'd resolved that, and it's the first time I actually have a prospect of quitting that bank job —

(GROVER, STEVE, BARRY enter from right, BARRY with tea pot)

BARRY: I made tea for everybody that wants some.

GROVER (standing in front of Sharon's painting): I picked up from Toni that you people were into some fancy shit, but I never expected anything like this. You're Olympia, right?

OLYMPIA: Yes, but —

GROVER: You probably know this without my telling you, but there isn't a painting can hold up a candle to this in any gallery in town. This is post-naive post-abstract expressionism post-everything.

BARRY: Tea, anyone?

OLYMPIA: I'll have some.

SHARON: Me too, Barry.

(OLYMPIA and TONI enter from right)

TONI: How can you expect me to move in here when you haven't even told them about me?

OLYMPIA: I thought it would go more smoothly if you helped create an atmosphere.

TONI: What kind of atmosphere? If they're all as uptight as you say —

OLYMPIA: They're not all uptight. Shh — someone's coming.

(PHILIP enters from right)

PHILIP: I guess I'm early — *(turns to leave)*

OLYMPIA: You're not early, Philip. Everyone else is late. I wanted us to try to — I don't know how to say it — Do you realize that you and I have hardly spoken to each other since the day I moved in? I thought we could — I wanted to introduce all of you to my friend Toni.

PHILIP: Good evening. Pleased to meet you. *(Sits down)*

TONI: Olympia has been telling me all kinds of things about you.

PHILIP: Oh? Who told Olympia? *(silence)* What's supposed to happen next?

TONI: *(rolling a joint)*: That's the kind of thing she told me —

OLYMPIA: Philip, Toni's son Leon is almost the same age as Alec.

PHILIP: Congratulations.

OLYMPIA: I know it's none of my business, but Alec spends every evening locked up in your room —

PHILIP: I never lock it —

OLYMPIA: I didn't mean literally. What I'm getting at is that you and Alec don't exactly seem to get along. Don't you think he might enjoy playing with someone closer to his own age? —

PHILIP: You'd have to ask Alec.

TONI: (passing joint to Olympia): Olympia told me you take Alec to a nursery every morning and you don't even care what they teach him there.

PHILIP: What am I supposed to do? Take the kid to work?

OLYMPIA: What if you didn't have to take Alec to the nursery. What if he had a playmate right here, and someone to help? —

PHILIP: Is she going to organize a nursery at this house?

(DONNA enters from right)

DONNA: Who's organizing what?

(STEVE & BARRY exit right)

SHARON: When I started I didn't know there was a right way to do it.

TONI: There isn't.

SHARON: I just started the painting on the back of one of Barry's travel posters, but after a point it started to curl so bad I almost gave up. The man who sold me the easel showed me how to mount canvass to a frame, but by then I loved what was here — I just stapled the poster to the frame. The paint cracked when the sheet flattened, but I liked that so well I was intending to start with another travel poster —

OLYMPIA: But part of the painting curves around the frame and continues on the back, and has staples going through it.

SHARON: I thought it was honest to let the painting tell how it became the way it was.

OLYMPIA: Toni, your friend sure is a bullshit artist. I don't see why everyone's so taken in.

PHILIP: He's a blabbermouth. And probably dangerous. He admitted he was a dope dealer.

DAN: You have the impression he wont come through with the typesetting, Olympia?

TONI: Don't worry about that. He'll come through.

PHILIP: Was Sharon educated on samples of five different brands of marihuana? —

TONI: You're evading the issue, Philip!

OLYMPIA: I thought you wanted to be an actress, Sharon. How do you find time to develop your acting and also to paint?

SHARON: I don't know, Olympia, but I know that every morning I wanted to go on until it was finished; I even got up before dawn —

OLYMPIA: Oh, Sharon, the paint is already cracking; any number of people could have showed you how to mix paint properly —

SHARON: You're right, I didn't have time to learn all that. Once I started I wanted to give all my time to it and my job became unbearable. I set my alarm for six hours after I reached bed, and I rushed up every morning —

TONI: Don't get so excited, Sharon, you'll knock something over!

OLYMPIA: Oh how could you, Sharon? This is a sheet of paper, stapled to a frame.

(BARRY enters from right)

BARRY: Hay Steve, come here a second. This dude Grover says he could get us cheap car parts — the garage would have it made.

STEVE: I could use a strong drink —

OLYMPIA: Oh, Donna. No one's organizing anything. I was trying to introduce Philip to Toni. She happens to have a son and — well, I wanted to introduce her to you too.

TONI: Pleased to meet you, Donna. *(Shakes Donna's hand, and then passes her the joint)*

DONNA: No thanks, I don't smoke — Gosh! Is this marihuana? I've heard so much about it but I've never tried it. What do I do?

TONI: Is this for real?

DONNA: Honest.

OLYMPIA: Inhale it deeply and hold it in. That's it.

DONNA: I don't feel anything.

TONI: You will.

PHILIP: Isn't that dangerous?

TONI: For your health or your police record?

PHILIP: I understood it was bad for your health. And what if the police did happen to look in just now?

DONNA: Philip, we'd ask them to stop peeping.

OLYMPIA: The reason I wanted you to meet Toni is that she's just been evicted from her apartment, and I thought, since two of the upstairs bedrooms are empty —

DONNA: Did Philip object to that?

PHILIP: She was telling me not to take Alec to the nursery.

TONI: It's not the nursery. It's the discipline and the brainwashing and the stifling of the child's imagination —

PHILIP: So you're against our entire educational system?

TONI: You've got it.

PHILIP: But what can you do about that?

TONI: I can keep my child out of it.

DONNA: What does this have to do with Toni's moving in?

TONI: You mean you don't object?

DONNA: Me? I think it's great. Here, let me give you keys. First of all we could each pay less rent — let's see —

OLYMPIA: Wait a second, Donna. I've been thinking about something. Let me just lay it out to see what people think —

(BEN enters from left)

BEN: Sorry I'm late. We had a meeting. Hey, is my nose hallucinating?

OLYMPIA: Oh hi, Ben. Look, people, it seems to me that someone

GROVER: I understand some of you are into the business of repairing the four-wheeled life preservers marketed by Ford and General Motors. Say, do you have something to soothe a parched throat, something a little stronger than beer?

BARRY: Come with me and pick out what you want, Grover. Yes, we're into fixing cars —

(GROVER & BARRY exit right)

BEN: You can really paint.

SHARON *(gesticulating wildly)*: It's all of you who did it to me, doing all kinds of things you've never done before.

DAN: Have you honestly never painted before? This is so powerful it stands off the canvass —

SHARON: It's not even canvass; when I started I didn't know —

TONI: It's so naively expressive, so perfectly unspoiled. Have you seen it, Philip? She had to quit school to express herself like that; if she'd stayed two more years they would have squeezed it out of her, boxed her imagination, conventionalized her perception —

PHILIP: It certainly is original. I think it's good.

TONI: Admit that it's good in spite of what she was taught in school.

ative tax, about getting huge checks from the government, refunds, like when you run your gas meter backwards with a vacuum cleaner —

DONNA: I think your friend is hilarious —

TONI: He's hardly gotten started yet. Grover could help that type-setting co-op get off the ground.

DAN: Really? In what way?

GROVER: Without exaggerating I'd estimate that every radical in this town goes through me for one thing or another, and they're the wordiest people you'd hope to find —

DAN: But how could we make contact?

GROVER: Easiest thing in the world, my man. Next time a dude starts telling me about his newest theory, I'll just ask if I can borrow it so as to get an estimate. That way you can decide if it's up your alley before taking it on. Dig? I could keep a whole room full of you at your machines round the clock —

MATTIE: Oh, wow, from rags to riches!

STEVE (*near Sharon's easel*): It's very moving. Did you do it?

SHARON: I intended it as my gift to the commune.

BEN: When did you bring this in, Sharon? I've never seen anything like it. It's fantastic!

is getting exploited around here, and that someone is Donna. She doesn't want to play the role of landlady so she charges us ridiculously low rent and now she's proposing to lower it even more. Yet she's the one who faces all the hassles and does all the work around the house while the rest of us just stretch out in our rooms taking it all for granted.

BEN: Right on —

OLYMPIA: Now what if, for instance, we continued paying forty a month, even though there were five of us, only instead of giving it to Donna we deposited it in a common purse, a sort of house kitty.

PHILIP: I don't see —

OLYMPIA: Wait, I'm not done yet. Out of that kitty we could pay all the bills and make repairs and then decide what to do with what's left over —

PHILIP: Who would decide that?

OLYMPIA: We would, by meeting like we're doing now. The other side of the arrangement is that we'd all share the work of cleaning, mowing the lawn, maintaining the garden, repairing —

PHILIP: That doesn't sound efficient to me.

OLYMPIA: You'd rather have cheap rent and no work?

PHILIP: All those things get done more efficiently if one person makes all the decisions, especially if that person happens to own the house.

DONNA: Well I think the idea is great! That's exactly how Becky — oops, that's just — great! As for the ownership papers, I'll have them transferred to the people living in the house. That way, Philip, you'll just do work on the part you own. I should have done this four years ago!

BEN: This is far out. I've been underestimating the revolutionary potential of marihuana.

TONI: Don't be cynical.

BEN: I'm not. This morning I was living with the straightest people in the city; I come back at night and they've all turned to heads organizing a commune.

DONNA: A commune?

PHILIP: Is that a good thing?

OLYMPIA: Won't you try even a drag on this, Philip?

PHILIP: What about all the health propaganda?

TONI: Don't they also say, "Try it and see?"

BEN: How was I being cynical?

DAN: I'd thought not a single shot was fired in France in 68.

GROVER: That's what everyone thought, but that was the most successful media blitz in history. The news was kept under such tight control that even the companeros themselves didn't know that those large bricks they kept passing each other were actually crates loaded with machine guns —

TONI: The first thing you should all know about Grover is that he's a terrific storyteller. But he's got contacts all over this city who can make his stories come true. When I told him what Steve had done with our phone and electricity —

GROVER: I figured, why stop with the corporations, my man? The State's the biggest corporation of them all and Agnew is up there in the vanguard, raising our consciousness about some of the possibilities.

BEN: Don't you mean Nixon?

PHILIP: Didn't you know, Ben? The vice-president was found guilty of defrauding the government of several thousand dollars. I thought you followed these things.

BEN: I do, but not up close.

GROVER: You know what's even better than free phone and electricity? Listen to this. I know this lawyer who could rig up papers and they'd look like the cabbages on this farm, everything legal from the road but don't invite your neighbors for lunch. I'm not talking about paying no tax on this building; I'm talking about neg-

GROVER: We've been to a cabbage farm. That's what it says on the sign. Head cabbage. And that's all you see growing when you drive up to it either way. But that cabbage is for the pigs. The cabbage for the heads is Michoacan and Acapulco gold and Colombian —

PHILIP: Are those the brands of marihuana you had Alec sample?

GROVER: Man, that's the only kind of farm I'd ever want to get close to —

BEN: Why haven't you brought him around before, Toni?

GROVER: That, my man, was executed at my request. Why would you want to weld a U-haul to your car when you were pulling it all right with a hitch and chain?

BEN: I don't get it.

GROVER: Look, my man, the connection, to be on the safe side —

BEN: Why did you want to be on the safe side?

GROVER: Now we're getting to the historical nitty gritty, as my business associates call it. The fact is, it's not just the pot that's being watched nowadays. Anyone that even looks like someone from a commune has five investigators assigned to him at every airport in the country. Remember the French revolution of 1968? Well me and this other dude ran M-38's across the border and our companeros on the loyalist side shot the bodies of priests full of holes and burned Notre Dame to the ground. Now if the pigs ever added two plus two together, they'd get the connection. Dig?

TONI: You know perfectly well, or you ought to, that it's the people and not the pot that gets things going.

BEN: Then why have we been playing the landlord-tenant apartment house in the big city routine since I've been here? And how do you know what I know?

TONI: Olympia told me you worked on that underground rag, and if you want my opinion of those male-chauvinist counter-culture oriented —

BEN: You must be thinking about another paper which is called —

TONI: See what I mean? You're telling me what I'm thinking.

DONNA: I feel odd.

BEN: It'll get worse.

TONI: Better!

DONNA: Philip? Are you willing to give it a try?

PHILIP: I guess so. Until something better comes along.

DONNA: Gosh, Philip, are you going to go on grieving for the rest of your life?

OLYMPIA: Honestly, Philip, are you actually content to work at your experiments behind the closed door of your room, without ever sharing your project with anyone, without interacting with the people in your own house?

PHILIP: I guess I'm willing to try it and see.

TONI: That's the spirit!

PHILIP: Am I supposed to be feeling something now?

TONI: Yes. Good.

PHILIP: I'd better go now. It's Alec's bedtime.

(PHILIP exits right)

BEN: You know, it's funny. I've been writing articles about self-organized activity since the riots. But when it actually starts happening in my own house I suddenly find myself empty, like I don't have anything to share. I don't even know how to boil an egg.

DONNA: I'm starting to float.

OLYMPIA: I'll tell you what, Ben. Why don't you not go to your greasy spoon for breakfast tomorrow morning. How can you afford to eat all your meals out on welfare anyway?

DONNA: Good night, everybody.

TONI: Don't play dense, Philip. Doesn't anyone get it? I'm giving him. I've kept him to myself all these years through no fault of my own, and now I'm sharing him —

GROVER (*auctioneering*): ...going twice, going three times, sold; the left arm goes to the lady in the back row. Now the head; do I hear a nickel...?

TONI: Stop clowning, Grover. Why is this so obscure? It's gift giving day, so I'm giving Grover. I mean, he's the gift — I'm giving him to — to everyone — to the commune —

PHILIP — But why? Or what for? What does it do? Sing? Lay eggs?

TONI: I've never in my life —

BEN: You're keeping something from us, Toni. Are you asking us to reintroduce cannibalism?

TONI: I'll be damned if I'm not on the verge of tears. I've been raving to Grover about the only bunch of genuine radicals in the world, the only ones who didn't treat a person as some kind of thing, and all you want to know is what the thing is for and how it tastes! I'm not reintroducing cannibalism! You are cannibals.

BEN: Worse, Toni. Ten thousand years of progress worse —

TONI: Grover is my best outside friend and my resource person and it's thanks to him that I always have free pot and —

PHILIP: Say, what kind of farm did you take the kids to?

MATTIE: Actually, I think it's time for us to leave.

TONI: You two can't leave. I brought you something.

MATTIE: Oh all right, Lisa. But don't be too rowdy.

(LEON, LISA & ALEC exit right)

TONI: I'm sorry I missed it all. Grover and his friends insisted that we all try samples of everything. Oh, is this the brochure? It looks great! Mattie, you finished the crib!

MATTIE: And you probably want to know why.

TONI: If you could paint something imaginary with as much realism it would really be out of sight.

DAN: Olympia gave each of us a candle.

(SHARON returns, sets a second easel on stage, sits down near it)

DONNA: And Ben wrote me a poem. Could one ever give anything nicer?

TONI: I bet I could. That's why I dragged Grover in. I wanted to give him.

PHILIP: Give him what?

TONI: Good night, Donna. Thanks. You're a gem.

(DONNA exits right)

OLYMPIA: Meet me in the kitchen at 9 and I'll show you how to boil your egg.

(OLYMPIA exits right)

BEN: Do you have far to go?

TONI: I take a bus.

BEN: Mind if I walk you to the station?

TONI: Not if you don't mind hearing what else I think of that pseudo-revolutionary thing you call a paper, neither vertical nor horizontal, too big to fit in a purse but too small to wrap around packages —

BEN: Are those your keys on the table?

TONI: Thanks. Another thing I've wondered about is where do you guys get your pot? I have this friend who could get it for us dirt cheap; his name is Grover —

(TONI & BEN exit left).

3.

TAPED NARRATOR — Five isolated particles started to come out of their shells, to shed their tentacles, to form a community bristling with life. And as soon as five of us stepped out of our prisons, other lonely, isolated individuals were drawn to us like bees to flowers.

(During the narration, ALEC and LEON have installed themselves on the floor near the picture window)

ALEC: It's my turn.

LEON: No, it's mine.

ALEC: All right, it's yours.

LEON *(Shakes and throws dice)*: My armies invade Ran!

ALEC: That's Iran. *(throws)*: My armies invade Syria!

(TONI enters from right)

TONI: What are you two doing?

LEON *(throws)*: Mine advance to the Tigers.

ALEC: We're playing a game my father gave me.

TONI: Can I just see one of those?

LEON: But we're playing!

DONNA: You're sweet.

STEVE: I think it's really nice for a person to be able to make this kind of gift to another.

OLYMPIA: I think the poem is as corny as the conversation. But I certainly am surprised. "The Cool Lady"! Ben, I thought you and your newspaper preached the liberation from wage labor.

BEN: I thought so too.

OLYMPIA: Donna, how long have you worked in your office?

DONNA: I guess it's going on five years. But I don't understand what that —

OLYMPIA: Have you ever thought of quitting?

DONNA: I can't imagine what I'd do with myself. The company organizes my time better than I ever could. Why do you —

OLYMPIA: I was asking Ben about his paper.

BEN: That's not very cool, Olympia.

(TONI, GROVER, ALEC, LEON & LISA enter from left, all high)

LEON: Mattie, can Lisa spend the night here?

LISA: Can I, mommy?

OLYMPIA: Oh? What is it?

BARRY: Hey, it's poetry.

SHARON: Who's the cool lady?

DAN: Do you know the Italian word for lady?

PHILIP: It's also clear from "her sumptuous rooms, plant-cluttered window, precious garden" —

BEN: " — conspiratorial smile."

DONNA: I'm going to kiss you, Ben.

BEN: That's what I hoped you'd do when I wrote it. (*DONNA kisses him*)

DONNA: I'm going to cry.

SHARON: I've been saving something too — for the commune.

BEN: Good for you, Sharon.

(*Sharon exits right*)

DONNA: They're no longer mine to give, the rooms, the window, the garden. And they were all I had to give.

BEN: There's still the smile; that'll always be yours to give.

(*Alec hands Toni a sample*)

TONI: Jesus, a soldier! (*Runs to archway and shouts*) Ben, come here a second. Look at what Philip is teaching the children.

VOICE OF BEN: I can't leave this omelet!

TONI: What's this game called?

ALEC: World Conquest.

TONI (*shouting from archway*): It's a game called World Conquest!

VOICE OF BEN: I can't hear you!

(*TONI exits right*)

ALEC: It's my turn.

LEON: No, it's mine!

ALEC: Oh, all right.

(*TONI and BEN enter from right*)

LEON: My armies invade everything up to the sea!

BEN: That's incredible.

ALEC: My armies defeat yours! You've got to retreat.

TONI: It's worse than television. Here they're actually involved in it.

BEN: Have you talked to Philip about it?

TONI: Ben, I've tried. Last month he had them playing a thing called Nuclear Holocaust. I could have strangled him. I burst into his room and asked how anyone could be stupid enough to buy children a game like that. You know what he told me? "The kid's eventually going to face the world that's out there, not the world that's in your head."

BEN: He sure hasn't learned anything.

TONI: As if the world that's out there were unrelated to the games parents buy their children!

BEN: I'll call Olympia. *(exits right)*

TONI: I'll be right there.

VOICE OF BEN: Olympia! Breakfast!

TONI: Are you two coming?

LEON: We're right in the middle.

ALEC: We'll be right there. My armies advance to the Indus.

(Doorbell rings)

OLYMPIA *(running from right to left)*: I'll get it!

BARRY: Busy, Sharon, Busy.

OLYMPIA: Isn't it your turn now, Mattie?

MATTIE: Mine's going to seem so plain compared to what you all did.

DAN: It's the valleys that make the peaks.

MATTIE: Oh, Dan, it's the first one I actually finished.

DAN: Did I say valleys were bad?

MATTIE *(turns easel around; it contains a reproduction of the crib standing next to it)*: Well, there it is. I'm not sure it's worth sharing.

OLYMPIA: You finished it!

MATTIE: I rushed to get it done by the time the brochure was printed.

OLYMPIA: Your technique has really improved.

PHILIP: It's obvious why you picked that subject.

OLYMPIA: It's nearly a perfect reproduction, Mattie.

(BEN has been distributing sheets to all, and people are reading them)

BEN: I've been saving a little surprise of my own.

DAN: Olympia and Barry did the printing.

SHARON: Barry worked on this? He never told me anything.

BEN: Maybe he wanted one person to be surprised.

(DONNA, STEVE, BARRY enter from left)

DONNA: I'm sorry we're so late.

OLYMPIA: You're just in time for the biggest surprise.

DONNA: Barry's been telling me about it. *(examining brochure)* It's unbelievable. I never expected anything like this to happen when I advertised rooms three years ago. Did you, Philip?

PHILIP: It's very well reproduced considering it's only in two dimensions. Do you see this grayish outline? It's the shadow cast by this elevation located at the opposite extremity.

OLYMPIA: I was sure you'd be pleased, Philip.

MATTIE: I should hope so! It's beautiful.

BARRY: Hey, Sharon, what's happening?

SHARON: Nothing at all, Barry. You don't even live here and you know more of what's going on than I do. Why didn't you tell me about this book?

(Mattie, DAN and LISA at the doorway)

MATTIE: Hi. We're neighbors and we saw your sign —

OLYMPIA: Come on; we mean what the sign says.

(BEN at archway)

MATTIE: We've got our little girl with us —

TONI: That's great! She can play war games with our two little boys.

DAN: War games? What kind of place is this?

TONI: We're all anti-war except the kids — almost.

DAN: Ha! Don't trust anyone under ten!

BEN: I was just fixing breakfast, could you join us?

MATTIE: We're early risers; we've already eaten.

BEN: How about just coffee, then?

DAN: Sure. I've always got room for more coffee.

TONI: Come on, I'll help you set three more places.

(TONI and BEN exit right)

LEON: What does the sign say?

ALEC: Illyria Street Commune, Everyone Welcome. My turn.

OLYMPIA: I don't know how to tell you what kind of place —

DAN: What I meant was —

OLYMPIA: Of course. You meant the war games. That would have thrown me for a loop too. That's Philip's thing. Not even. They're his idea of being a good father by giving his son presents.

MATTIE: How many of you are there?

OLYMPIA: Seven, counting the boys. Philip and Donna are out on jobs, the boys are Alec and Leon, and you just met Ben and Toni. Ben suggested the word commune, but none of us knows enough about communes to be sure it fits. Actually each of us is into his own thing most of the time, we eat together when we can, and we take turns doing the chores — not that all of them are unpleasant. But I'd like to see us expand into other things and involve more people in the community.

DAN: What community? Do you relate to a larger group, a political organization?

OLYMPIA: It's funny you ask that. I put up my sign three weeks ago and you're the first people who've responded. I guess people read "Everyone Welcome" and think it refers to everyone who belongs to a certain club! We mean the community, the neighbors, everyone.

DAN: Aren't you afraid of drunks or cranks dropping in?

OLYMPIA: No one's actually seen the finished product. (*DAN returns with carton*) Let's see how they came out.

(*DAN passes out brochures*)

BEN: It looks far out.

SHARON (*reads*): "Metamorphoses, Illyria Street Commune." What is this?

OLYMPIA: The first genuine commune production, created by communards at every single stage.

SHARON: Aren't these Philip's vases?

OLYMPIA: Those are printed reproductions of photographs of Philip's objects.

PHILIP: It's a record of a finite portion of the infinite metamorphoses of an initial given quantity of raw matter.

SHARON: I see — I think.

DAN: Olympia photographed Philip's objects before he melted them down again to make other objects with a different combination of the same materials and with other processes. At least that's how I understand it.

OLYMPIA: Ben wrote poems for some of the objects and edited Philip's technical texts explaining some of the processes. Dan typeset all the textual material, and we printed it at the cooperative print shop run by Steve's friends.

OLYMPIA: Oh, no, of course not, Sharon. I'm sure Philip will be glad to show you everything he showed me. Well, go on everybody, take your choice. There's a candle here for everyone in the commune; the bitty one is for Rose Anne.

MATTIE: (*taking one*): My, they're gorgeous. Who could blame Sharon for wanting to learn to make them? I'd like to learn myself.

PHILIP: I wasn't exactly intending to start a school.

OLYMPIA: Hmm. That's an idea.

DAN: They're so colorful. These are out of sight, Philip.

PHILIP: Olympia made them.

MATTIE: You mean she didn't just watch you?

OLYMPIA: I watched Philip shape two, then I melted those down and started again on my own.

PHILIP: She's a fast learner.

OLYMPIA: Get the books now, Dan.

(DAN exits left)

MATTIE: Unfortunately everyone knows what the next surprise is.

SHARON: I don't.

MATTIE: Dan! That could just as well be us!

DAN: You're right. We haven't even told you about ourselves. I'm Dan.

MATTIE: I'm Mattie and she's Lisa.

OLYMPIA: What did you expect when you saw the sign?

DAN: Just what we found, I guess; a commune. See, I was politically active during the student movement days. I helped typeset the campus paper, the radical one. I dropped out of everything when the sects took over. Now I study history on my own and I work part time, typesetting in a bank, doing for capital what I learned to do in the movement. Coopted. But if someone convinced me that was it, the end, I'd commit suicide.

OLYMPIA: That was beautifully put.

DAN: I've thought of getting a standalone, that's just a glorified typewriter, in our apartment so as to work at home and typeset things that interested me —

OLYMPIA: Isn't that something that could involve a lot of people?

VOICE OF TONI: Olympia! Your omelet is getting cold!

MATTIE: That's why we dropped in here —

OLYMPIA: Would you mind joining me in there? (Shouts to right)
We're coming. Our new friends have all kinds of suggestions for projects!

LISA: Can I play with them, mommy?

MATTIE: I guess that'll be all right. But be sure not to disturb their game.

(OLYMPIA, MATTIE and DAN exit right)

LEON: Where can I put my armies now?

ALEC: You lost!

LEON: I did not either!

LISA: Can I play too?

ALEC: Only two can play this game.

LEON: You want to see our tree house?

LISA: Mommy!

VOICE OF MATTIE: What is it, Lisa?

LISA: Can I go see the tree house?

VOICE OF MATTIE: Just a second, Lisa — Oh, all right. But be sure you don't fall!

DAN: That's far out! Do you suppose he'd be willing to do the same thing for our apartment?

OLYMPIA: Ask him. Barry worked with Steve on that. Maybe Barry should do it. He's been picking things up at lightning speed.

MATTIE: How could Barry ever find the time, with all the garage work he's been doing? Dan, isn't it time you brought the booklets from the car?

OLYMPIA: No, no, wait until Philip comes back.

DAN: Maybe I'll talk to Barry about our electricity.

(PHILIP and SHARON enter from right, carrying trays with colorful, fat candles)

SHARON: How can you find it again after that?

PHILIP: The wax always stays separate.

SHARON: I'd think you'd get soup. Can I watch you sometime?

PHILIP: Sure, that's how Olympia learned.

SHARON: Where should I set this?

OLYMPIA: Here, Sharon, I'll take it. I'm glad you're so interested, I had thought you weren't into the things we do around here.

SHARON: You mean because I had a date that night when you —

PHILIP: Toni took them to a farm to look at pigs.

(DAN, OLYMPIA enter from right; OLYMPIA takes ROSE ANNE)

DAN: You sure go through a lot of pans when you cook, Ben.

BEN: I guess my teacher neglected that part of my education.

MATTIE: You'll learn when you have to clean after yourself —

OLYMPIA: How's my little Rose Anne, the first full-fledged com-munard?

MATTIE: Thanks to you! Although by rights I should be con-sidered the first; I came alive thanks to this place several months before she did. (Places Rose Anne in the crib)

OLYMPIA: We haven't yet reached the point of giving out certifi-cates. Philip, why don't you bring your surprise?

PHILIP: Donna isn't here.

OLYMPIA: Neither is Toni but who knows when either of them will turn up. Besides, didn't Donna say she might work overtime today, and then eat out with Steve and Barry?

PHILIP: All right. (Exits right)

OLYMPIA: Oh, did we tell you Steve connected our electricity to the same GM office that pays our phone bills?

(LEON, ALEC, LISA exit right)

(TONI enters)

TONI (*rushing toward game*): I'll burn it! I'll burn it! (*picks up board*) Shoot, I can't do that either. (*Shouts to right*) Hey you guys! Come back in here and put your stupid game away!

(MATTIE enters, places game in box)

MATTIE: I spend most of my day picking up the things Lisa leaves lying around.

TONI: Well I don't! And they don't expect me to.

ALEC (*enters from right*): Where is it?

TONI: Mattie put it on the table. And Alec, do me a favor. Put that box someplace where you can't find it again. And tell Philip —

ALEC (*running out with box*): Yes, Toni. (*exits*)

MATTIE: Having two of them around must keep you all running all the time.

TONI: (*picking up glasses, ashtrays*) The kids? They're so deep into their own thing they don't even want the rest of us around. Come on, I'll show you the tree house they built in the garden. Then we can talk while I do the dishes.

MATTIE: They built it? Will Lisa be safe?

TONI: Oh sure. We didn't even know they were building it, we're so busy with our own things; I've started to study midwifery —

MATTIE: I don't see how you find the time! Lisa takes up every second I have —

TONI: Say, aren't you pregnant? What'll you do with two? —

(OLYMPIA, BEN, DAN enter from right)

OLYMPIA: Is everything you want on this grocery list, Toni? I've got to get going. There were several other errands I wanted to run —

TONI: Add dried garbanzos; I'll make humus.

MATTIE *(exiting with Toni)*: Could you tell? I only became aware —

(MATTIE, TONI exit right)

OLYMPIA *(shouting to right)*: We think we can get the typesetting project off the ground!

BEN: I've got to split.

VOICE OF TONI: That's great. We can call ourselves the Revolutionary Birth and Type Commune.

BEN *(shouts to right)*: Revolutionary horseshit!

VOICE OF TONI: You're the one who wades in that.

after Lisa, feeding her and changing her. When I was pregnant with Rose Anne I thought things would get twice as bad, and they would have if we hadn't met you people. Suddenly I've got the time to read and to do some typesetting and Olympia is even pushing me to learn to paint —

(SHARON enters from left)

SHARON: Did I miss everything? Those bastards kept us overtime.

MATTIE: You almost missed Ben's delicious kish but I think there's a slice left.

SHARON: Good, I'm starving. *(runs out right)*

MATTIE: I'd never have agreed to have Rose Anne at home if I hadn't thought Olympia and Toni would consider me a spoil sport —

(PHILIP enters from right. MATTIE hands him joint & he smokes)

MATTIE: Wasn't that meal something?

PHILIP: It was good.

BEN: I liked the melted peanut butter dish you made the other day. Where did you get the recipe?

PHILIP: Cook book.

BEN: Where are the kids?

(OLYMPIA, DAN exit left)

BARRY: I told you that actress bit would do it.

(SHARON, BARRY exit left)

5.

TAPED NARRATOR: Strangers became friends, formerly hostile enemies became allies tied by bonds of common projects, formerly warring tribes were drawn together in a federation of kinsmen, brothers and sisters. If the initial suspicion and hostility still survived, it was only a diminishing residue.

(An easel and a crib are placed near the typesetting machine)

(BEN, MATTIE with ROSE ANNE in her arms, enter from right, sit)

MATTIE: Your kish was wonderful, Ben. Dan sometimes succeeds with a pie, but whenever I try making something with a crust it somehow never comes out right. Were you always a good cook?

BEN: (rolls joint; smoking continues during the scene) Before I came here I knew how to cook instant coffee, and that was all.

MATTIE: You're kidding! No, you look like you mean it. Come to think of it, I could say the same thing about myself. I never realized how deeply other people affected what one does. Before, I couldn't find the time to read even newspaper headlines in between running

DAN: Are you opposed to the typesetting commune?

BEN: Man, everything the capitalists did in the nineteenth century is called Revolutionary when we or the Chinese do it.

DAN: What do you call it?

BEN: Hasn't Nixon's visit to Chou En-lai made everything clear? Their Great Leap is a leap into capitalism, repressive, informer-dominated, right wing capitalism right up Nixon's alley, and Nixon knows it; the only ones who don't know it are leftists who —

DAN: Why do you keep bringing up China? I wasn't ever a Pee Ell-er. I wasn't advocating that we start building the Party. We were talking about independent activity, organized by the people themselves —

BEN: Shit, man, you two were talking about starting a small business in this house. Business is what the whole fucking system is all about. Independent and self-organized business. You're mangling words. You don't step out of the system to do that; you step into it. It organizes it for you from the minute you decide to play that game. You start by getting a loan for the basic equipment —

OLYMPIA: Aren't you being awfully narrow and selfish, Ben? You've got your steady welfare check and that's the only reason you don't have to worry about your survival. But we can only get part-time welfare, the rest of the time we've got to rummage in the garbage for the leavings. It's the state that gives you the vantage point from which to look down on us while we're rummaging.

DAN: What kind of steady welfare are you on, Ben?

BEN: Disability.

DAN: Really? Mattie gets ADC; officially we don't live together —

OLYMPIA: So does Toni. I myself have been getting food stamps since they expanded the program after the riots. My point is, what's wrong with Dan wanting to get out of a bank job, and with the rest of us getting involved in something that could put us in closer touch with the community?

BEN: I think everyone should abandon banks. It's just that I object to calling wage labor revolutionary, even when it's done at home. I'll see you tonight. Welcome to the tribe, Dan.

(BEN exits left)

OLYMPIA: He'll come around. He almost has already.

DAN: What kind of name is Olympia?

OLYMPIA: It's Greek. It's actually Olympia's. But that's odd, like it's plural. I think it's a mountain in southern Greece.

DAN: I thought that was spelled with a u.

OLYMPIA: I was third generation and never learned any Greek. What do you think?

DAN: About the typesetting?

OLYMPIA: This coming weekend Steve's going to fix your car, and if you act as if you take that for granted he'll teach us all to fix cars and we can open a revolutionary garage, solve our transportation problem once and for all, and start something the community could really get involved in.

DAN: Ben will flip when he hears about the revolutionary garage.

OLYMPIA: Ben isn't the only one. Philip's ears perked up when I asked if I could photograph his silver plates before he melted them back down. Watch his ears when we tell him we can put those pictures in a printed brochure with typeset texts explaining what they are!

DAN: I can't take it all in. Are you coming?

SHARON: Do you have a name picked out yet?

DAN: Dimitri if he's a boy, Rose Anne if she's a girl.

SHARON: Do I call you Brother now?

DAN: I'd rather you called me Dan.

SHARON: Being as I'm a member of the commune now, Dan, can I come and watch the birth? I've never seen one.

DAN: Sure. Let's all go. *(to right)* Leon, coming with us?

VOICE OF LEON: Don't come any closer! You'll never get me alive!

OLYMPIA: I'm not joking!

BARRY: What's happening, man?

DAN: Fine, thanks. I'd better go look for Toni's things.

(DAN exits right)

OLYMPIA (*shouts from archway*): I've just spent the most exciting afternoon! Everything's happening all at once —

VOICE OF DAN: You mean there's more than Sharon?

OLYMPIA: There's Sharon's acting and the puppet theater Toni's been talking about. Barry's an experienced farm worker and he'll probably help us grow our own produce in the garden. And that's only a start. You can drop that service contract with IBM —

VOICE OF DAN: Sharon doesn't own IBM!

OLYMPIA: Donna's friend Steve, the phone repairman, used to repair typewriters, and he'll fix it free of charge. He also knows some people starting a revolutionary printing commune, so you can consider those brochures we've been talking about as good as printed —

DAN (*entering from right*): You're putting me on.

OLYMPIA: Ben criticizes everything we do around here. That's all he knew how to do until he learned to cook. But as soon as a project gets started, he works harder on it than anyone else. I think you'll get along with Ben all right. The one that's impossible is Philip. Whenever you ask him to share something, he thinks you're a dentist coming at him with pliers. At one meeting some of us suggested we might like to learn pottery making. He molds it right in his room and bakes it in the basement. He stiffened as if he'd just drunk poison. "Of course you know there are patents on these things."

DAN: How did a person like that ever get involved with a commune?

OLYMPIA: He came with the house. At an earlier meeting we were trying to deal with the transportation problem. Only two of us have cars, the two with jobs, and they sit in lots all day long. Philip would have had to get up half an hour early to pool a ride with Donna, but nothing could move him to do that. As it is, whichever of us is going to need a car has to drive Donna to work and pick her up again. Do you have a car?

DAN: An old one, but we don't mind sharing it.

(TONI, Mattie, LISA enter from right)

MATTIE: I think that's fascinating. How long have you been studying?

TONI: You still here, Olympia? I thought you had all those errands.

OLYMPIA: Cripes, I'm always doing this. I guess I'll be seeing a lot more of you two. I'm positive that loan is going to work out. Donna's credit is as solid as a rock.

(OLYMPIA exits left)

TONI: It was Olympia who got me to actually start studying it. I only griped about doctors until then. I've learned they're a lot more vicious than I ever imagined. It's like having the Marine Corps cutting up women. Olympia is into it because she thinks it'll involve other people. I'm into it because I like kids, at any age, and I can't stand what's done to them in hospitals, or to the mothers.

MATTIE: She's been telling me about midwifery.

DAN: You people sure are into a lot of interesting shit.

(LEON runs in from right)

LEON: When're you coming back, Lisa?

TONI: She'll be here a lot, so you and Alec had better start thinking up a lot of games for three — and I don't mean war games. That Philip. When I waved Nuclear Holocaust in his face he said, "What's wrong with it? I played monopoly when I was a kid." So I said, "Don't you think it shows, Philip?" His face looked like he wished the nuclear holocaust on me.

LISA: Will you show me the witch in the tree next time?

(LISA, Mattie, DAN exit left; TONI, LEON exit right)

DAN: All right, Leon, go and play your war game in the tree house.

LEON *(plays the "marine," stops in front of Barry)*: I've seen you on the corner! You're the one with the motorbike.

BARRY: Cool it, kid.

LEON: Bang. You're dead.

(Leon Exits right, running)

OLYMPIA: I could have brought Toni's things, Dan, if you'd told me —

DAN: I needed the walk. Mattie's just gone into labor. Toni's really competent, and Ben is being very helpful. Even Alec and Lisa are helping. Compared to their usual energy level they're like robots. But Leon of all people is a royal pain in the ass. Are these the people who dropped in?

OLYMPIA: This is our newest member. Sharon is moving into the empty room. She's an actress.

SHARON: Pleased to meet you.

DAN: Charmed, I'm sure.

OLYMPIA: And this is Sharon's chaperone, Barry.

DAN: Her what?

SHARON: Well — that's only half of it. When I was little I dreamed of being a movie actress. And last week I got my first job — in a clothing factory.

OLYMPIA: As a start, you mean?

BARRY: You blew it, Sharon.

SHARON: Ever since two weeks ago I've been staying at Barry's. But we both feel we can experience life more profoundly if we continue to live independently.

OLYMPIA: You mean you're looking for a place to stay?

BARRY: Aw, Sharon, you really blew it.

SHARON: I'm not just out looking for a room. I know I'll be able to do everything that's done in a commune. I've seen Dr. Zhivago and —

OLYMPIA: We have an empty room and you're welcome to it. The thing is, do you foresee any difficulties?

SHARON: You mean I can move in? I promise there won't be any difficulties. I told my parents to fuck off — I mean, they've messed up their own lives and I don't want them messing with mine!

BARRY: I hope you don't get the wrong idea, Miss — Sister — I'm not just dumping Sharon on you here. I'll come around and see what's happening.

(DAN, LEON enter from left)

4.

TAPED NARRATOR: The ice was broken. Two members of the community joined us, then a third, and still others followed, even actual street people. We were no longer a green island surrounded by indifferent, salty sea; the waters receded and new land began to appear. The community around us became aware that something live and vital was stirring in its midst.

(During the narration, a typesetting machine, a desk and a chair are brought to the room. ALEC runs in from left, panting, and slams the front door. OLYMPIA runs in from right)

OLYMPIA: What's the matter? Is something wrong?

ALEC: Nothing's happening yet. Toni wanted me to get the largest pan we've got.

OLYMPIA: I know the one she means.

ALEC: Phone fixed yet?

(OLYMPIA, ALEC exit right)

(Doorbell rings. OLYMPIA runs to left. STEVE enters)

OLYMPIA: You must be Steve. Am I glad to see you!

(ALEC enters from right with pan)

ALEC: You the phone man?

STEVE: I guess so.

OLYMPIA: Does Toni need me, Alec?

ALEC: Naw. She says one more would be in the way.

(ALEC exits left, clowning with pan)

OLYMPIA: What an awful time for the phone to go out! Mattie's giving birth.

STEVE: Donna told me she was due. I'm sorry I couldn't come yesterday. *(Starts to take apart the telephone)*

OLYMPIA: I've been dying to find out how you managed to rig us up a free phone.

STEVE: It's not a free phone. It's a regular phone with an unlisted number, bills are sent out monthly, and I'm making a standard service call —

OLYMPIA: But we never get any bills —

STEVE: That's because the bills are sent to the General Motors Corporation.

OLYMPIA: You're kidding.

STEVE: This phone is regular in every way, only it's located in an executive office at GM headquarters. This particular office isn't likely to report discrepancies —

OLYMPIA: How old are you, Sharon?

SHARON: Sixteen, but —

OLYMPIA: *(on phone)* Hello — Dan! Yes, I'm still here. The funniest people dropped in. How is she?

BARRY: That was a little heavy, Sharon. Besides, it's Underground, not Underside.

SHARON: What do you want me to say?

BARRY: Couldn't you tell them about wanting to be an actress? They're probably into shit like that.

OLYMPIA *(on phone)*: I can bring it and be right over with it! — That's silly! Just tell me where it is! *(hangs up)* Please go on. I'm sorry about the interruption. One of us is giving birth.

SHARON *(gesticulating with her arms)*: Oh how exciting. I love newborn things —

BARRY: It's probably a kid, Sharon —

SHARON: and particularly babies.

OLYMPIA: You said you wanted to experience the underside of life —

(OLYMPIA exits right)

SHARON: You don't have to order things the minute we arrive!

BARRY: Shit, Sharon, how else are we going to find out what it's all about?

(OLYMPIA returns with beer)

BARRY: Me and Sharon, we got a pretty clear idea what a commune is. I read in the papers about this commune in West Germany, the Red Army Fraction —

OLYMPIA: Oh, we're nothing like that!

BARRY: I guess not, or you wouldn't have that sign. The way I see it, it's not a problem for me. What I mean is, I quit high school two years ago. I figured, it's boring and there's so much out there. I haven't actually reached a lot of it yet, but I've got big plans. Last year I worked as a migrant farm worker, and then I went to see what was happening up in Alaska. I've got this assembly job now, except on my day off, and in a few months I'll be going down to check out Mexico. Como esta usted? This dude I work with is clueing me in on the lingo. So it's not a problem for me, see. But now my girl here, Sharon —

SHARON: I quit high school two weeks ago. Oh, it's not Barry who talked me into it. I'm committed to experiencing the underside of life, and I'm convinced I can learn about life and people more profoundly on my own —

(Phone rings)

OLYMPIA: That's ingenious!

STEVE: It's just wire and a splice. I've been trying to connect your electricity to the same office —

OLYMPIA: Do you do a lot of that?

STEVE: Not really. One time I put two people who weren't supposed to know about each other on a party line. Another time I put eight such people on a party line.

OLYMPIA: That's hilarious! I meant, do you do things like this for other friends than Donna?

STEVE: I'm not familiar with that many executive offices.

OLYMPIA: Donna told us you can fix all kinds of things.

STEVE: Oh that's what you mean! I used to fix a friend's van and he'd get me things I needed from his plant. But he retired and moved away.

OLYMPIA: Have you ever thought of relating that way to our commune?

STEVE: Donna keeps asking me that. I don't know. Recently I did some wiring for some young people like you who are setting up a printing cooperative —

OLYMPIA: An actual printing plant organized like a commune?

STEVE: I wouldn't call it a plant. They'll be able to do a few books and brochures, nothing large. When I was done they all offered to do things for me, and I was sorry I got involved.

OLYMPIA: I don't understand.

STEVE: There, it works now. Look, they offered to do printing for me. Now why would I need anything printed?

OLYMPIA: Couldn't they offer you something more useful?

STEVE: That's just it. Why did they have to offer me anything? Everything was fine while we worked together. Then everything went foul. I became some kind of charity case.

OLYMPIA: I think I understand. What if each of us is so involved in his own thing that no one remembers to thank you?

STEVE: I'd better go now before the company gets suspicious. I'll think about it.

OLYMPIA: Dan's car is on the blink and he can't afford to take it to a garage.

STEVE: Donna could have told me that. When does he need it?

OLYMPIA: There's no hurry, he's using Donna's. Philip finally agreed to drive Donna to work.

STEVE: I'll try to get to it this weekend. You're Olympia, right?

(STEVE exits left)

OLYMPIA (Shouts left): Steve! When will you do our electric wiring?

VOICE OF STEVE: As soon as I get to it.

OLYMPIA: *(slams door and dances to phone)* We've got it made now! *(dials)* Hi, Leon. Tell Toni the phone works and I'll be right there.

(Doorbell rings)

OLYMPIA *(opening door)*: Did you forget something — Oh.

VOICE OF BARRY: Hi, what's happening? We've been seeing this sign you've got, and —

OLYMPIA: Please come in.

(BARRY AND SHARON enter from left)

BARRY: Thanks. I'd like to introduce you to my girl Sharon. And your name is? —

OLYMPIA: Olympia. Won't you sit down? Would you like something? Coffee? Beer?

BARRY: Don't mind if I do. Beer will be fine.

SHARON: No thank you.