



DONNA: Don't be childish, Sharon. Steve and I are good friends, as we've always been, and we need each other less now than we ever did before; we both know so many other people now. I used to meet Steve in a bar years ago when my husband took up with another woman —

LEON: That was Alec's mother, wasn't it?

(STEVE & PHILIP enter from right carrying bookshelves which they align along one wall and assemble during scene)

SHARON: Leon! I'll —

LEON: Not if you don't catch me!

PHILIP: Do you need my help setting up the puppets?

LEON: Not yet; we want to change some things when Lisa comes.

DONNA: Sharon's been telling me how helpful you both are — even you, Philip.

PHILIP: Sharon's a fast learner.

SHARON: It's like building a complete world with your own two hands. I'm doing things I never dreamed I'd be able to do.

PHILIP: Me too. I fixed my car yesterday, with Steve's help.

STEVE: I only watched.

DONNA: You, Philip?

PHILIP: It's a lot simpler than I thought.

(TONI enters from right, arranges blanket with 17 pillows on floor)

TONI: Ben thinks we won't all fit in the kitchen and that sitting on the floor will be in the spirit of the meal.

LEON: What's he making — dog biscuits and catnip?

TONI: We're preparing some Japanese specialties.

SHARON: Steve, can you show me how this joint is supposed to fit? I wish we were doing all these things just for ourselves, especially the puppet show. Why does Grover have to bring people tonight?

PHILIP: Grover said they were people who'd be highly sensitive about the kinds of things we're doing here.

TONI: And we all know that Grover's word is as reliable as inflated money.

PHILIP: I happen to be interested in finding out what other people think —

TONI: I could care less.

STEVE: I agree with Toni.

SHARON: So do I. The puppet theater is ours and it's only meant for us. I can't imagine what outsiders are going to see —

PHILIP: Maybe that's true of the puppet theater.

SHARON: I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking of your things. Somehow I can never say the right —

TONI: Let's drop it. What's Olympia doing in the garden?

PHILIP: She told me she wanted to improve the soil.

*Formatted and Recorded by
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*This play was written and performed in Detroit in 1979. For another take on collective living and other anti- authoritarian issues see the play *Revolutionary Purity Showdown* by Richard Aides*

TONI: But it's freezing out.

DONNA: What was wrong with the garden before?

PHILIP: How should I know. She says if we wanted to grow our own food, we should do certain things to the soil —

(From left, enter LISA, now 7, MATTIE with ROSE ANNE, now three)

LEON: Come on, Lisa, and you too Sharon. We've got to change the faces of the two presidents.

LISA: Did you and Alec decide if we're going to erase them or cover them with paint?

LEON: Alec thinks we can't erase them.

LISA: You want to come with us, Rose Anne?

(ROSE ANNE cries. Leon and Lisa exit right with Rose Anne)

SHARON: I'll be right up. Steve, where does this dowel go? Oh, that's right. Those kids are out of their minds.

PHILIP: Really? In what way?

SHARON: They're such a trip when they're together. If any of you think I contributed anything to the play, you'll be dead wrong. I can hardly keep track of my own parts, and Alec changes half the play every other day! He's probably changed it again since I've been down here.

(PHONE rings. TONI answers)

TONI (*shouts to right*): Olympia! Barry's on the phone. Ben, do you need me yet?

(*OLYMPIA enters from right*)

VOICE OF BEN: In about ten minutes; I'm washing the vegetables.

OLYMPIA (*to phone*): Did you find it? — Can you cut through it? — Well can you find a way to climb over it? — Yes, everything here is almost ready. (*Hangs up*)

DONNA: Aren't you going to join us with the preparations, Olympia?

OLYMPIA: I'm busy with preparations of my own. And you're a funny one to ask, Donna. That time when I was inside working on the boiler you told me the garden was your priority.

SHARON: I guess I'll go up and join the kids. (*Exits right*)

DONNA: I'm sorry I asked.

(*OLYMPIA exits right*)

STEVE: You want to put up the shelves now?

PHILIP: If you don't mind, Steve.

MATTIE: Can I start putting my things in the finished shelf?

(*MATTIE, STEVE & PHILIP exit right*)

DONNA: What was wrong with the garden before, Toni?

TONI: Nothing, Donna. It was beautiful.

End

(REPORTER exits after handshake. Intercom buzzes)

LYMAN: What is it, Lamia?

VOICE OF LAMIA: Lyman, are you ready to hear the day's report now?

LYMAN: Shoot away, Lamia.

VOICE OF LAMIA (Light and sound fade during this exposition): Two hundred pairs of sandals, 76 with straps; assortments of pottery, mainly vases, amounting to 137 pounds; forty eight paintings, half of them for the sepia version of number nineteen; a problem order for frozen yogurt, much too large for us to fill — a rush order from a natural foods cooperative in northern Wisconsin for 500 cases of frozen yogurt, and as you know our total weekly production is 50 cases...

(Lights and sound fade out)

DONNA: Did you ever sit inside the arbor on a hot summer day and eat the grapes right off the vine?

TONI: I guess I never found the time.

(STEVE & PHILIP enter from right carrying a second bookshelf which they assemble along the other wall)

STEVE: Sharon sure does enjoy those kids.

PHILIP: Ever since they started the puppet theater they've been extremely creative.

TONI: No thanks to school.

PHILIP: What do you mean?

TONI: The imagination of an eight year old is unbounded if it's left to develop on its own and not stunted by repressive education and that idiotic television —

PHILIP: It so happens that Alec is an inveterate TV watcher and he's well into his third year in school —

TONI: But Leon and Lisa aren't!

PHILIP: Many of the ideas are apparently Alec's.

TONI: Do you think he learned them in school? What schools produce are — are people like you, Philip!

PHILIP: Thank you.

TONI: You're not actually a good example, since the conditioning is breaking down. And you're not the only one whose conditioning is breaking down. I'll read you something.

(TONI exits right and returns with a copy of the Underground paper's version of the campus paper)

PHILIP: If it's from the underground, you can skip it.

TONI: It's the campus paper; Ben brought it home yesterday. The biggest educator in town quit his job. Listen to this. "Citing what he called the massive dehumanization which distinguishes this and every other university, the 57-year old administrator said he could no longer justify a single day more at the helm of the state's third largest university."

PHILIP: Let me see that.

TONI: He admitted that "the university's real function is the socialization of individuals into unquestioning acceptance of the status quo."

PHILIP *(takes paper and examines it)*: "The repressive power of the system rests on sold labor" — This must be a bluff!

TONI: Who's bluffing, Philip? The only two of us who still sell their labor every single morning —

PHILIP: How often do I have to be reminded? TONI: Are you and Donna.

DONNA: And I'm almost convinced —

TONI: All the rest of us are finding it' possible to get along by contributing as little as possible and if possible nothing at all.

(GROVER enters from left)

REPORTER: Two of the partners established competing empires — LYMAN: In actual fact the competition was minimal. One of the partners set up Alternative Media Enterprises and specialized in all the lines related to self-publishing, but this was at a time when ISC was playing down the share of those lines, and at this point we've gotten out of them altogether. The other partner detached the part of our activity that was inherently non-competitive, namely the educational sector, and that enterprise, the Alternative Schools Corporation, recently merged with an institute of behavioral psychology; as you probably know, their largest contracts are with the Pentagon.

REPORTER: Is it true that both of the successor enterprises are now larger than the original home base?

LYMAN: It depends on what you mean by larger. ISC retains the vast wealth of accumulated tradition, and we continue to have an edge over the other two in the more, shall we say, philosophical and artistic manifestations.

REPORTER: I'm deeply grateful, Mr. Sanders —

LYMAN: On the contrary, the pleasure was all mine. Will I be able to see the material before publication?

REPORTER: I'll see to it. And the typescript?

LYMAN: Yes of course. *(Presses button of intercom)*

VOICE OF LAMIA *(through intercom)*: Yes, Mr. Sanders.

LYMAN: Lamia, would you see to it that the gentleman from the News is given a typescript of the Foundation Tape?

VOICE OF LAMIA: Yes, Mr. Sanders.

REPORTER: Did his wife take over immediately after his demise?
LYMAN: Not immediately. Their son managed the business for a brief period, and I must add, to his credit, that he kept it unified. But in other respects he left a mess by perpetrating innumerable disturbances and untold upheavals with his gang of motorcycle friends.

REPORTER: He was awarded some kind of medal for distinguished service, if I'm not wrong.

LYMAN: That's correct. He did heroic service in the Far East. He died in Iran.

REPORTER: Is it true that he died of a fever contracted from a drinking orgy?

LYMAN: I believe that story is apocryphal.

REPORTER: So the founder's wife salvaged the operation —

LYMAN: I wouldn't put it that way. The founder's wife did step in on two or three occasions during the stormy interregnum that followed the demise of the son —

REPORTER: So the real work of salvage —

LYMAN: That's correct. The real work of salvage is due entirely to the efforts of the three friends — I could almost say kinsmen — of the founder.

REPORTER: Among whom you were the senior member.

LYMAN: Correct again. We established a partnership. However, centrifugal forces soon made themselves felt, and ultimately these forces tore asunder what had once been a unified enterprise.

GROVER: Well! The place is really looking up! *(Picks up the paper)*
Ha! You've seen the gag perpetrated by the local hippies.

PHILIP: I thought so!

TONI: I'd better go help Ben. *(Exits right)*

GROVER: Remember that tax scheme? This lawyer I know had all the details worked out and we were about to get the first check from the state —

DONNA: And what happened?

GROVER: It fell through. Our contact in the government fell with the rest of Nixon's crew. But I've got another scheme worked out which is almost as good — .

(MATTIE enters from right, with tray full of ceramic houses)

MATTIE: Where are your guests, Grover?

GROVER: They'll be here. Ah, Philip, you've been baking houses.

PHILIP: Mattie made those.

MATTIE: Philip watched me but I shaped them myself.

(SHARON enters from right)

SHARON: The puppets are ready now, Philip — Oh, hi Grover. Why do you have to bring people tonight?

PHILIP: We'd better get these shelves filled.

(PHILIP & MATTIE exit right)

GROVER: These aren't just ordinary people, Sharon. I've been telling them about the things we do around here, and they can't wait to see them. And speaking of those things, I don't see any of your new paintings around.

SHARON: There aren't any. I've been spending all my time on the kids' puppet theater. That's closer to my life's dream.

GROVER: Aw, Sharon, I've been telling them how good you were: self-taught artist, a genuine modern primitive or post-primitive —

(BEN & TONI enter from right carrying platters of sliced vegetables and batters, which they distribute on the blanket)

SHARON: I wouldn't have wanted people like that looking at my painting.

GROVER: Get off it, Sharon. All of us want people looking at our stuff, and the more people the better.

BEN: Are you also bringing culinary experts to sample my meal —

GROVER: Ben, I never could understand —

BEN: I agree with Sharon. We've only just started to learn to share as if we mattered to each other, without being creative geniuses entertaining a passive public —

GROVER: What about your paper preaching to masses of passive readers —

(PHILIP & MATTIE enter from right with trays of ceramics, plates, pottery, which they place in the shelves)

BEN: A thousand readers aren't a mass.

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(LYMAN SANDERS, considerably older, sits at the desk, which contains the tape recorder, an intercom box, and of course paper. A reporter, with a pad, sits on the other side of the desk. Both are dressed as befits executives)

REPORTER: So the enterprise remained unified until the founder's mysterious death. Did he simply vanish?

LYMAN: It is believed that the founder died in an accident in connection with his last interest, horses, but the causes are unknown.

TONI: What's the point, Grover? Sharon spends most of her time at Steve's, and I'll be moving out soon.

GROVER: You'll be moving? Where to? TONI: I don't know yet.

DAN: Shall we start the meal?

MATTIE (pacing): For some reason I'm not at all hungry.

(LAMIA & EARL enter from right with a large box)

MATTIE: Aren't those Donna's plants? You're not throwing them away?

EARL: Well we certainly aren't going to keep them. They look like they've been dead for years.

(The lights go out)

14.

TAPED NARRATOR (sound of rewinding, somewhat lengthy. Stop. Then): It began with isolated strangers in the big city, hostile and suspicious individuals surrounded by —

(LYMAN turns off the tape recorder on his desk after the lights go on)

(Same room. The shelves contain sandals, plates, pottery and packaged commodities. The desk no longer contains a typesetting machine. In the place of the picture window there is a wall. A large portrait occupies the center of the wall — a portrait of Philip, somewhat older and in a suit. The remainder of the wall contains the following statements:)

PHILIP: Sour grapes.

GROVER: Hey, those shelves are out of sight. That's a great display. Ben. But it's not for us.

(BARRY enters from left)

BARRY: Damn, Grover. Next time you have a lead, check it out before sending someone out on it. (*Goes to right and calls*) Olympia, what should I do with this shit?

GROVER: What happened? The price wasn't right?

BARRY: I got it free and it seems organic, all right, but Jesus, Grover, I'm rushing to get in on things that are happening over here, and this shit is located on the other side of a six foot barbed wire fence, with me and my wheel barrow standing on the wrong side —

GROVER: Ever heard of wire cutters, my man?

BARRY: Sure, if you'd told me ahead of time. I filled the wheel barrow by throwing shovelfuls through the fence and got the stuff all over me; I was sure I'd get caught but I made such a mess on the sidewalk that people crossed the street and held their noses the other way.

(OLYMPIA enters from right)

OLYMPIA: Where is it?

BARRY: Out front, but the drive way is all blocked up; we'll have to take it to the back tomorrow.

OLYMPIA: But I spent all day preparing to get it on the ground today!

BARRY: We can't get through, Olympia.

OLYMPIA: Can't you bring it through here?

BARRY: I guess so, but I'll need a hand —

OLYMPIA: Grover, couldn't you help?

(BARRY, GROVER & OLYMPIA exit left)

MATTIE: I'm starting to feel the way Ben does.

PHILIP: About his paper?

MATTIE: About this display not being for us.

(OLYMPIA enters from left, followed by GROVER & BARRY with wheelbarrow)

OLYMPIA: Don't set your shoe on the blanket, Grover!

(GROVER removes shoe while he and Barry lift the wheelbarrow over the blanket; avoiding a platter, GROVER'S foot slips and the contents spill)

OLYMPIA: Oh my god!

GROVER: Looks like a little accident. SHARON: Barry, you bas —

BARRY: If you'd waved your arms a second sooner, Sharon, you could have kept it from spilling.

(Doorbell rings)

GROVER: Good, here they are — and not a second too soon.

TONI: Wouldn't. He said he felt guilty and didn't want to infect us with his guilt. He also said he was writing her a memorial of his own.

SHARON: What else?

TONI: He said we couldn't go back to the origin because there was no origin. We had started something beautiful — but none of us knew it, none of us supported it, none of us protected it and none of us developed it; we had involved ourselves in a project, but none of us carried it — “except maybe Sharon and Donna,” he said. Donna carried it in her eyes, she tried to speak to us with her eyes, with the smile in her eyes, but none of us knew how to hear her. It sounded mystical to me when Ben said it.

SHARON: Ben didn't know how to hear her either, did he Toni? Steve did. And I took Steve away from her.

(Doorbell rings. GROVER opens door. LAMIA & EARL enter with suitcases)

LAMIA: I hope I'm not imposing. I'm sorry to do this when Olympia and Philip are away, but it was my only free night.

GROVER: What are you about to do?

EARL: Lamia has the intention of moving into one of the empty rooms. I believe this was all arranged.

GROVER: Beats me. *(LAMIA & EARL exit right)*

GROVER: Is that woman moving in here?

TONI: Looks like it.

GROVER: Was this brought up at a house meeting?

STEVE: Maybe.

SHARON: I thought he knew everything when he first brought me. I was all excited and afraid. He told me police sirens would wake me in the middle of the night, and their guns would shoot holes in the walls, and I'd have to run down through the secret passageway and then through the city's sewers with my machine gun.

TONI: Did you really believe that?

SHARON: I couldn't get over how peaceful you all were, how quiet the house was. I tried to put it all in my painting because I couldn't say it in words. What I expected and what I found and what I had wanted but no longer did because I knew I'd hate it when I got it.

GROVER: Hell, I remember that painting. That was the best —

SHARON: I don't think you ever saw my painting, Grover. I think only Ben understood the things I was trying to say. They're the kinds of things Steve and I can talk to each other about, sometimes without even saying any words, sometimes by deciding to go out and eat sometimes only by looking at each other. I never dreamed my painting would be graded without anyone seeing it, like I was in school: C for grammar and E for punctuation; I thought I had quit school.

TONI: Ben said something similar a few days ago.

DAN: Did you see Ben?

TONI: I finally reached him by phone a few days ago; I tried to talk him into coming to our "memorial for Donna."

DAN: And he couldn't?

BEN: This is it for me. Never again.

(BEN exits left, leaving door open. Action freezes)

8.

TAPED NARRATOR: On the very night when the lowest point was reached and the commune was on the verge of disintegrating altogether, a new spark of life was injected into it, and it came from the larger community.

(Action unfreezes)

GROVER *(at door)*: Well come on in. I'll introduce you to my friends.

VOICE OF ANASTASIA: I see we didn't wear the right clothes.

GROVER: Don't worry about that. These people won't even see what you're wearing so long as it's not a priest's smock or a nun's habit.

(LYMAN & ANASTASIA enter, wearing nightclub clothes)

BARRY: What do we do now?

OLYMPIA: Let's carry the whole thing out.

(BARRY & OLYMPIA raise the blanket)

BARRY: We'd better remove the plates and silverware before dumping it.

(BARRY & OLYMPIA exit right with blanket)

GROVER: Lyman, Anastasia, I'd like to introduce you to my closest friends. That over there is Toni, the one picking up the pillows. Her specialty is —

TONI: You leave me out of this, Grover.

GROVER (shouting to right): Hey, Olympia. I'd like to introduce you to my friends.

VOICE OF BARRY: Bad timing, Grover.

DONNA: I'm going to the bar.

GROVER: For Christ's sake, what's the matter with everyone tonight? I thought we could all display some of our things for our friends here —

DONNA: I don't have anything to display.

GROVER: Aw, Donna, set a couple of your plants in those shelves for decoration; they'll go for that.

DONNA: Nothing of mine will ever be in these shelves.

(DONNA exits left. OLYMPIA & BARRY enter from right)

ANASTASIA: You must be Olympia. Grover has been telling us about the wonderful set of alternative institutions you run in this house and —

OLYMPIA: Then Grover's been up to his usual fibs. I personally don't run anything —

GROVER: Yea, she was a good kid. I know this one woman who had an accident when —

TONI: Oh shut your trap, Grover!

VOICE OF LEON: It's almost over!

MATTIE: Aren't we trying to do the same thing they did at their Expo?

DAN: Only we don't have a Lamia.

GROVER: Hey wait a minute! This isn't —

TONI: It isn't, Grover. We're trying hard, but we're not succeeding. We cooked Ben's meal, but Ben won't help us eat it.

SHARON: Alec was eight, Leon was seven and Lisa was six when we made that stage. I had just turned nineteen, but I was the youngest of the four.

MATTIE: Donna's "gosh" is in the air and I keep looking around for her.

TONI: Philip accused me of "politicizing" her death by calling it suicide.

STEVE: Does Barry know?

TONI: He was already on his trip when it happened. Poor Barry.

SHARON: Misplaced pity.

TONI: I'm not sure. He kept talking about having this base to come back to. Maybe he was just trying to be sure it was still there when he came back, only he didn't know how to do that.

VOICE OF GROVER: I'm on my way.

TONI: I bet!

(GROVER enters from right)

TONI: And the kids?

GROVER: Well Leon got us started watching this program, and we got all engrossed —

SHARON: And the play?

GROVER: Oh Christ, the play! You know I could do this gag I did once when —

DAN: Skip it, Grover.

TONI: Leon!

VOICE OF LEON: Coming!

TONI *(lights joint)*: Maybe this'll give us an appetite.

MATTIE: I sure need one.

STEVE: When Ben first came here she called him the Underground.

SHARON: Ben thought she was an heiress, can you imagine?

STEVE: She told me he made her feel like an heiress, made her feel like giving her fortune to some cause, only she never had a fortune.

SHARON: He thought she was renting him the maid's room.

LYMAN: Please don't misunderstand us. Grover made it perfectly clear that each activity is altogether spontaneous, initiated and organized at the grass roots level by the participants themselves.

PHILIP: That's very well put.

OLYMPIA: I guess I did misunderstand your statement.

ANASTASIA: Anastasia.

OLYMPIA: Welcome to our commune, Anastasia.

ANASTASIA: What I find hardest to believe are the things you do with children.

OLYMPIA: That's the same as our other activities. You see, we don't believe in one person running things, and we're convinced such a variety of different activities could never arise if one individual —

GROVER: *(To Sharon & Steve, who are moving toward the door)* Hey, you two aren't leaving, are you? You haven't even met —

SHARON: We're not in the right mold to meet anyone, Grover.

PHILIP: And the puppet show?

(SHARON waves her arms; she and STEVE exit left)

LYMAN: Do you mind if I examine some of this pottery?

PHILIP: Not at all. Some of it is Mattie's.

TONI *(to right)*: The show is off, kids! *(She exits right)*

LYMAN: Anastasia, have a look at this. I believe nothing like it has ever been exhibited.

OLYMPIA: Really? We all consider Philip extremely original, but I never thought —

(DAN enters from left, with the sign “Illyria Street Commune, Everyone Welcome)

DAN: This was on the ground; I guess it fell off.

OLYMPIA: Oh, that sign. Throw it out. I’m sick of looking at it.
(DAN props it up)

GROVER: Meet our new friends, Dan. Lyman, Anastasia, this is Dan, the typesetting man.

DAN: Pretty fancy get-up.

GROVER: Yeah, they’re on their way back from a costume party this other friend of mine was giving and —

MATTIE: What took all day, Dan?

DAN: Strangest meeting. They decided to dissolve the group, and half of them are going to do a critique of political organizations; I said I’d typeset it.

ANASTASIA: Politics is something I could never understand.

PHILIP: Neither could I.

GROVER: Say, Dan, you’ve been turning down everything I’ve been sending your way.

DAN: I’ve decided not to type any more papers for profs, Grover, but I appreciate the effort you went to. It’s too much like a job.

MATTIE: You two be sure to drop over, you hear? I’m home just about all the time. It would be such a shame to let everything die out —

SHARON: We will, Mattie, but it’ll have to be on a weekend. We’re both working now.

MATTIE: So’s Dan. He’s typesetting books now. It’s a lot more interesting than his previous two jobs.

STEVE: That can be a trap too.

MATTIE: In what sense, Steve?

STEVE: Well, it’s interesting, but it’s not your interest; it’s good enough, but it’s not good — and you keep on doing it.

(TONI & DAN enter with bowls of batter, dishes)

DAN: I think we’re ready.

TONI *(to right)*: Grover! Leon! Rose Anne! Supper’s ready.

VOICE OF GROVER: We’ll be right down! MATTIE: Did they exclude you, Sharon?

SHARON: I didn’t want to be in it. Without Alec or Lisa it’s not the same.

MATTIE: Lisa just insisted on going to her girlfriend’s; I’m sorry.

SHARON: Don’t be. Lisa is so much older now. I’d feel embarrassed.

TONI: *(to right)* Grover! For crying out —

13.

TAPED NARRATOR: (*Sound of tape rewinding. Theme*) ...like bees to flowers. The ice was broken. Two members of the community joined us, then a — (*Stop*)

(*MATTIE enters from right with a tray full of ceramic houses and some plates. She dusts them and slowly places them in the shelves*)

(*TONI enters from right, arranges a blanket and eight pillows in the center of the room. DAN enters from right with trays of vegetables, which he places on the blanket*)

MATTIE: I can't get over it. How can someone build all that and then smash it — all those friendships, all those dreams, all that work?

DAN: I read about this monarch who had his eye cut out, his collar bone fractured, his hand and leg mutilated —

TONI: I heard about a woman who did everything for her kid until he started to become independent — then she hacked him to death.

(*DAN & TONI exit right. MATTIE wipes. SHARON & STEVE enter from right carrying the components of the puppet stage. Sharon borrows a rag from MATTIE and starts to dust them*)

MATTIE: Something's missing, isn't it?

SHARON: Steve went with her once, you know. She was younger than I am, but married. How does this joint fit, Steve? — Oh, I remember.

GROVER: Isn't that like cutting off your nose to —

DAN: Maybe it is, Grover. But I'd rather stick to stuff that interests me. We got this place together so as to get away from that crap, and then I started to bring the crap inside here —

OLYMPIA: You're starting to sound just like Ben.

LYMAN: I take it the designs on these plates are all your own originals?

OLYMPIA: Philip's.

LYMAN: They're simply marvelous. Don't you agree, Anastasia? Grover tells me you melted down the objects displayed in your first brochure. What a shame.

PHILIP: They were just experiments.

GROVER: While we're on the brochure business, Lyman here was asking me if we'd be into making a second brochure, only this time the pictures would show things that are actually available —

OLYMPIA: That's an excellent idea; we were so together when we did the first one.

GROVER: In this time we could run several thousands instead of a measly two hundred —

MATTIE: Why in the world would we need that many?

LYMAN: You don't seem to understand how much potential interest there is in the creative work you've been hiding behind these walls.

GROVER: There's a hungry public out there, Mattie, just begging to see this stuff. Could you see your way to typesetting it, Dan?

DAN: I guess so.

MATTIE: I'm not sure Ben would be willing to write the texts.

GROVER: That's a shame. But Lyman here can compose a snappy text or two.

DAN: Who'd want to print thousands?

OLYMPIA: I'd gladly do the printing, if Barry agrees to work with me.

BARRY: Any day, Olympia. Man, I'd really like to make some of this stuff.

OLYMPIA: I'm sure Philip would be glad to show you.

BARRY: These plates really are out of sight, Philip. I never really looked at this shit before.

ANASTASIA: This — ?

GROVER: Oh, that's just a commune expression, a type of shorthand.

LYMAN: You certainly don't have the best light for looking at it.

OLYMPIA: Grover has mentioned that several times. We're working on the lighting.

LYMAN: Have you ever thought, Philip, how much you might want to charge for one of these yeses?

(SHARON & STEVE exit left, their arms around each other)

12.

TAPED NARRATOR: (*Sound of rewinding tape. Then:*) ...hostility still survived, it was only a diminishing residue. At last the isolated fragments were unified into a community, a (Stop)

(Phone rings. TONI enters from right)

TONI (*on phone*): Yes — Yes, I'm her sister — What hospital? —

Oh my god! — Wait while I get a pencil. Could you tell me the wing and room number again? I'll be right there. (*hangs up. Shouts to right*) Olympia!

VOICE OF OLYMPIA: Telephone for me?

TONI: No, it's Donna. She's in the hospital. She was hit by a car.

VOICE OF OLYMPIA: Really?

TONI: She tried to commit suicide!

VOICE OF OLYMPIA: I'll tell Philip. Maybe he'll be interested.

(*TONI throws pencil at picture window and exits right*)

DONNA: Why didn't you tell me you were doing the planting last Sunday?

OLYMPIA: Didn't anyone tell you?

DONNA: You had to tell me, Olympia, since you decide —

OLYMPIA: Donna, how can you expect people to keep telling you about events if you never show up at any of them?

DONNA: I haven't missed a single planting, ever, since I bought the house ten years ago; I look forward to it all years long —

OLYMPIA: None of us can tell what you look forward to, Donna, since none of us are mind readers. I personally know that you were told about at least five work sessions, and there was neither hide nor hair of you at any of them. How can you expect us to keep considering you a working member of the commune? Admittedly you still live here, but you've become marginal.

DONNA: Me, marginal?

OLYMPIA: Maybe that's not the word. But I don't see how you can blame me. Honestly. You go to the bar whenever you feel like it; you're not obliged to tell me or anyone else. And I do my gardening whenever I feel like it —

(DONNA runs out right)

OLYMPIA: As if I were under some kind of obligation to tell her when I intended to brush my teeth or make my bed.

(OLYMPIA & BARRY exit left)

SHARON: (to the closed door) Everything we built together is your garden now, isn't it Olympia?

PHILIP: You mean moneywise?

DAN: Hey wait a minute! Are all these things in shelves because they're for sale?

MATTIE: That wasn't my idea when I helped put them there only an hour ago.

OLYMPIA: I don't see what's gotten into you two.

DAN: Maybe I sound like Ben, but I have a feeling that something I don't like is creeping all over me.

BARRY: So do I, but I know what mine's from.

DAN: I thought we'd never reach the point of actually selling our stuff —

OLYMPIA: Don't be a bore, Dan. We settled that question years ago and you're being hypocritical —

DAN: What did we settle years ago?

OLYMPIA: Please don't play the fool, Dan. You're the one who argued most loudly against Ben on the question of selling the typesetting.

Do I have to remind you that Toni's birth center, the garage, your own typesetting co-op —

DAN: All revolutionary businesses.

GROVER: I need a drink. *(Exits right)*

OLYMPIA: Call them what you like. They were set up to cover their own expenses and support the people engaged in them so that those people could be liberated from the mindless jobs done for poisonous corporations —

BARRY: Unreported to boot, so that we could draw unemployment and welfare while earning —

DAN: It's no liberation if we transform this space into a poisonous —

OLYMPIA: You're being so narrow, Dan. Why is something cool when you and Toni do it, but not when Philip or I do it?

DAN: All the shit I brought here in trickles, you're proposing bringing in by truckloads —

LYMAN: Do you often have political arguments?

DAN: What do you call political? I'm talking about our fucking lives!

OLYMPIA: Dan, do you need to shout at our guests?

DAN: Sorry, I thought I was asking a question.

LYMAN: You'd easily win with me, Dan, since I couldn't put up a fight. I've never been able to wind my way through the contorted mazes of a political labyrinth.

PHILIP: That's a good word for it.

LYMAN: If you don't mind my changing the subject, Philip, I wanted to ask about these house-shaped ceramics.

excluded all relevance, squelched all critique. You've got so much politics the whole house reeks of it. Principles are what you and Philip don't have. Why not call things by their names? What Philip can't stand about Dan or Toni or the rest of us is that there are certain things we won't sell, for any amount of money.

OLYMPIA: Are you done? I promised to meet Philip.

BEN: Almost. I'd like to ask a favor. If you continue not to see the difference between a welfare check and a state grant to an art bazaar, between a commune and a merchandising mart, between a relatively free human being and a salesman, forget that I was ever a friend of yours. That's the favor. Because I intend to forget that you were ever a friend of mine.

(BEN walks toward archway)

DONNA: *(weakly)* Ben?

BEN: Donna. I'm exaggerating. It wasn't all hell. I won't ever forget the moments I spent with you. But by staying on here you'll just get — oh hell, you've got to figure that out for yourself.

(BEN exits right)

DONNA: *(to the empty archway)* You'll never make it all alone, Ben. Take me with you.

BARRY: Man, what a stuffed shirt he's become.

OLYMPIA: He's no great loss either. Let's go.

DONNA: Olympia?

OLYMPIA: What is it, Donna? I'm in a hurry.

Artists' Commune. Just a commune. We only wanted to be human beings to each other. We each had something to give, but nothing to sell. At least nothing to sell voluntarily. We accepted paychecks and welfare checks because otherwise we couldn't survive in the prison we're still in. You used to know that, Olympia. I fantasied that we didn't create this commune as a further extension of that prison, but as a break from it —

OLYMPIA: That wasn't a fantasy, Ben. That's truer now than it ever was.

BEN: I fantasied that we didn't want to sell our creations, our ideas, our dreams as if they were merchandise, and that this was the free space where we didn't have to do that, the free space where we didn't have to do pottery displays or art shows or whatever the contract called for, the free space where we could share what each could give. But that was just my own private fantasy.

OLYMPIA: How can you say that, Ben? Barry and Philip and I have lived by those principles.

BEN: Philip's principles came out of his mouth this afternoon. If he didn't sell himself before, it was only because there weren't any buyers. If he treated us as human beings, it was only because he hadn't met the better set yet. As soon as the first opportunity appeared, Philip was ready to sell himself and the commune and to throw the rest of us in on the bargain — or else to dispose of us as trash.

BARRY: You're raving, Ben. You couldn't be more wrong about Philip.

BEN: I don't know where you're coming from, Barry, nor where you're going. I was talking to Olympia. Sure I'm raving. Weren't we called cranks this afternoon? Isn't that what cranks do — rave? Dan was right, Olympia. You and Philip don't reject politics. You chaired the meeting, intimidated the opposition, determined the agenda,

ANASTASIA: They certainly do look out of place in the midst of all those expressive motifs —

LYMAN: It's not that they lack originality —

OLYMPIA: Those aren't Philip's.

MATTIE: Let's go, Dan. I see that standards are being set, judges are being appointed, and it's a contest I never agreed to be in.

(MATTIE exits left)

DAN (shouts to right): Lisa! Rose Anne! We're leaving.

VOICE OF LISA: Just a second!

(DAN exits right)

ANASTASIA: What I found most exciting of all that Grover told us was the educational experiments you've been carrying out with children.

OLYMPIA: I don't know as I'd call them experiments. The kids are into their own things, just like the rest of us.

ANASTASIA: That's exactly what I mean.

OLYMPIA: I don't know what we could show you. That's a puppet stage Philip helped the kids design and build.

ANASTASIA: You certainly are a mine of original ideas, Philip.

PHILIP: Actually, the kids had the ideas.

ANASTASIA: Are any of the kids here?

OLYMPIA: I think two are about to leave, but maybe we could introduce you.

BARRY: Come on up.

(BARRY, ANASTASIA, LYMAN exit right)

PHILIP: I think I've reached a decision.

OLYMPIA: What is it, Philip?

PHILIP: I've decided to give my notice at the shipping department.

OLYMPIA: Philip, congratulations! I must say it's about time.

PHILIP: That way I could devote more of my time to my work.

(OLYMPIA picks up the sign; she and PHILIP exit right)

(Puppet stage, etc., have been gradually removed)

OLYMPIA: Of course I know. We all know. You've collected monthly welfare checks from the State ever since I've known you. You haven't drawn a pay check for the past eight years —

BEN: If you don't know, or no longer know the difference —

OLYMPIA: Of course, Ben. Your illness. No one can reproach you with that. What I don't understand is how you can sit there and lecture to us about how evil we would be if any of us ever accepted a check like that.

BEN: Can I talk now?

OLYMPIA: Of course, Ben. I asked for your opinion.

BEN: I've been postponing a decision for a couple of years. I finally made up my mind this afternoon, while Grover was demolishing the wall and the front window. I'm going to leave this house as soon as I get my suitcase packed —

OLYMPIA: Surely you don't think we were trying to push you —

BEN: I'll be moving to Kentucky — not to a commune, not to join striking miners. Just a shack with a yard.

OLYMPIA: What about your paper?

BEN: Thanks for your concern, Olympia. The paper can survive without me. Some six years ago this place, the commune, became my main commitment, but that ended some time ago. I'd like to make sense out of what happened to us during the past eight years, to figure out how much was real and how much an illusion I kept reviving in my own mind. I don't think it was all illusion. I'm fairly sure that not a single one of us, except maybe Philip, started out wanting to be a potter or a painter or a writer or any other thing that fits into the slots of this society. We didn't start out being an

OLYMPIA: And good riddance.

BARRY: People who never do anything around here come up with the most brilliant critiques —

BEN: You've got a bucket of shit in your mouth, Barry, and you know it.

BARRY: You know something? I've been asking myself all afternoon: What's Ben doing at this meeting? You announced years ago you didn't want anything more to do with this place.

BEN: Why do you say that with such glee? If you're thinking "good riddance" why are you pretending to reproach me with it? And why don't you bother to remember the circumstances in which I said that? You had spilled shit all over —

BARRY: You're not going to dig up that little accident again!

BEN: Maybe it's because of little accidents that so many people are turned off from working here.

OLYMPIA: Why bring up the past? Can't we just let bygones be bygones? We've always had respect for you, Ben, all of us. We respected your opinions even if we didn't always adopt them, and whether or not you helped with the work. I personally was almost heartbroken when you turned against the community. If you'd stayed with us, we would never have waded through a mass of bureaucratic forms to apply for a State grant, because you would have made the implications of such an application perfectly clear to us. I'd still like you to clarify some things for me. Every person in the commune has accepted checks from the State. If I'm not mistaken, even you —

BEN: You know damn well —

9.

TAPED NARRATOR: The larger community became increasingly involved in the activities of the commune, giving rise to new projects and enlarged perspectives, while old members, whose participation was ever more marginal, resisted the changes with a growing ferocity. Something like a fight to the death began between the dynamism of the new people intent on pushing the commune in new directions and the stultifying negativism of the freeloaders intent on bringing all activity to a dead halt. This was one of the historical instances when the living were not crushed under the weight of the dead.

(OLYMPIA enters from right, removes a plant from the picture window. DONNA enters from right)

DONNA: Please be careful with that one! (*Donna takes down another*)

PHILIP (*enters from right, removes a plant*): This is the greatest move we've made in years.

OLYMPIA: Where do you want them?

DONNA: Just set them on the floor. I'll arrange them later.

(*OLYMPIA exits right with plant*)

DONNA: Philip, please do be careful. (*Exits with plant; then PHILIP*)

(BARRY enters from right with pail, starts cleaning the cleared portion of the window)

BARRY (shouts to right): I never even knew there was glass here!

(OLYMPIA & PHILIP & DONNA return from right, repeat plant removal)

OLYMPIA: Oh, wow, what a workroom! No painter's studio could be brighter than this.

PHILIP: Give people a chance to actually see what we do here.

BARRY: Anastasia and Lyman said they'd be here about now.

PHILIP: Maybe something came up. They've sure made a lot of useful suggestions.

OLYMPIA: What I'd like to know is, where are the other people who are constantly talking about improving this place?

PHILIP: Who else knew about this?

OLYMPIA: Grover, for instance.

BARRY: Yea, Grover has a big mouth, but when it actually comes to doing the work he's fifty miles away turning someone else on to a project.

DONNA: There won't be enough sun in my room to keep all these plants alive.

OLYMPIA: You could get one of those lamps.

PHILIP: You're not changing your mind, are you?

DONNA: No, Philip. It's the first house-decorating idea you've had since you've been here, and I agreed.

(OLYMPIA, PHILIP & DONNA exit right with plants. MATTIE enters from right)

(TONI exits)

DAN: Toni said it! You and Philip have been throwing the word politics in my face for years, but I've never in my life seen a dirtier pair of politicians than you two, I've never been to a political meeting where I've felt more manipulated than at this afternoon's wall-moving session, I've never seen one person wind up another the way Grover was wound up. Machines that liquefy walls! Jesus! Now that you and Philip —

OLYMPIA: Is this what I stayed to hear? Have I really been throwing things in your face for years?

DAN: Now isn't the best time for you and Philip to denounce politics. You'd learn to cover your game better if you studied a little politics. Like the politics of Friends —

OLYMPIA: Please leave our friends out of this; it's no secret you have no great love for them.

DAN: I'm about to split, Olympia. But first I'd like to tell you something I read about the politics of friends. Long ago the members of ancient Macedonian tribes called each other friends. Later each tribe started to have a matriarchal chief, and her advisers were called the friends of the tribe. Finally one of the chiefs became queen, and her consort became king, and the top officials of the court were known as the friends of Macedonia. Friendship wasn't a personal relation any more; it became an office to which you got appointed by the queen or her consort. If a friend was ousted, he was considered an outsider, a traitor, a crank. Your namesake was the most famous of the Macedonian queens; she went through friends the way we go through kleenexes; she blew her nose in them and threw them away. That's about all I had to say. Good bye, everybody.

(DAN exits left)

DAN: It's what Ben was trying to say. You get so you depend on the State to support a community independent of the State, and finally you make friends with bureaucrats like these two dudes to help you apply for larger grants.

PHILIP: I won't have you insulting our friends, Dan. They have as much right in this community as you do, and it so happens I've felt more comfortable working with them than I ever felt with you.

TONI: When will you introduce us to the rest of your community, Philip — the politicians on the city council, the corporation directors?

PHILIP: I haven't met any of them yet.

BEN: But you'll call them the community as soon as you meet them.

PHILIP: I'm not able to contend with this harangue of political rhetoric, and its volume hurts my ears. I take it that the meeting is over.

(LYMAN, ANASTASIA, EARL & LAMIA exit left)

PHILIP *(at door)*: Are you coming, Olympia? Barry?

OLYMPIA: I'd like to get to the root of these rumors being spread behind my back. People should really have come to me first.

PHILIP: We'll be at Lyman's.

(PHILIP exits. TONI gets up and follows him, shouting)

TONI: You asshole. It's your ignorance that makes you shout about politics as if it were something you didn't do! You and Olympia are the biggest politicians here!

MATTIE: Do you know where iodine and bandages are kept, Barry?

VOICE OF OLYMPIA: They're in the bathroom cabinet.

BARRY: Cut yourself?

MATTIE: Rose Anne bruised her knee climbing to the tree house. Spring cleaning?

BARRY: Sort of. We're removing the plants.

MATTIE: Permanently? But that window is such a perfect place for them; they get sun during most of the day —

BARRY: Yea, but look at the landscape you can see now.

(OLYMPIA, PHILIP & DONNA return from right, remove last plants)

MATTIE: The landscape! Is that why you're doing this? You can see the same landscape by opening the front door, by sitting on the lawn, by walking — I'm sorry to see those plants go, especially now that I've finally gotten Rose Anne to stop trying to pull them down.

OLYMPIA: If you like them so well, Mattie, why don't you put some up in your living room.

MATTIE: Thanks for the suggestion. Maybe I'll do that. *(Exits right)*

OLYMPIA: What a crock that is. She doesn't only stay away from the work, but she's full of good ideas about how I ought to do my work.

PHILIP: It's true that Mattie hasn't been very cooperative lately. She used to be so interested.

DONNA: Do you ever wonder why, Philip?

OLYMPIA: Once this is clean, we'll have to schedule our next steps.

DONNA: All I want to know is when you schedule the planting.

(PHILIP, OLYMPIA & DONNA exit right with plants, DAN enters from right)

DAN: What a change!

BARRY: Yea, you'll be able to see what you're typesetting.

DAN: I suppose so. But I never had trouble before.

BARRY: You too?

DAN: Me too what?

BARRY: Never mind.

(OLYMPIA & PHILIP enter from right, clean with Barry)

OLYMPIA: Dan, I know you're awfully busy, but do you think you'll find the time to fit our brochure in between all those political things you're doing?

DAN: I haven't been doing much of anything, Olympia, and I didn't know you were in a hurry for it. When Philip gave me the manuscript he said he wanted me to look it over.

PHILIP: That was two weeks ago. Did you look it over?

OLYMPIA: Surely you're exaggerating, Philip. But honestly, Ben, your outburst certainly does seem irrational and unmotivated. The fact is, and you know it, we've never received any type of grant from the State and we're not getting such a grant now.

BARRY: Which means, Ben, that there's nothing to discuss, and you've been wasting everyone's time.

DAN: What happened? Did the State turn you down?

OLYMPIA: Why Dan, I don't understand your tone. You thought the grant such a great idea when I discussed it with you.

DAN: I — I hadn't thought out its implications.

LYMAN: Excuse me for intervening on this matter, but this debate seems to be taking place in a vacuum. Many people here seem to be unaware that there are no implications to this grant, there are absolutely no strings attached. And secondly, we did not get turned down. Many of the commune's programs are eligible for funds earmarked for precisely such programs. We didn't receive a grant for this fiscal year only because we submitted the application too late —

BARRY: Lyman, this isn't the time or the place for that —

OLYMPIA: I'm thoroughly confused. Your words to me, Dan — I don't remember them exactly — were: "What's wrong with us ripping off the State for some bread if we can get away with it?"

DAN: I guess the verb tripped me up. I should have asked: What's wrong with us being financed by the State.

OLYMPIA: I don't see the difference.

OLYMPIA: Well, now everyone is acting as if I'm crazy. Dan and Donna seem to have known all about it.

TONI: Who else knew all about it?"

OLYMPIA: Apparently everyone in the community except you, Toni. I myself discussed this question with almost everyone in this room.

BARRY: I don't see the relevance of this discussion.

BEN: Do the world a favor by dropping the word "community," Olympia. Your newest circle of friends, concerned as they are with our displaying and marketing our commodities — that's not community; it's the exact opposite.

OLYMPIA: You're hurting people's feelings, Ben.

BEN: A state subsidized art business — that's not community; that's what tears community to shreds, which has been happening right here; it's like that demolition machine Grover invented earlier.

OLYMPIA: Are you finished?

BARRY: You don't even know what you're talking about, Ben, and this isn't either the time or the place —

TONI: When is?

PHILIP: Labyrinthine, that's what this discussion is. Byzantine. Ben, you sound just like a political crank resurrected from the sixties.

DAN: Yes. I suppose I could start on it next week. When do you want the typesetting done?

PHILIP: What did you think of it?

DAN: Frankly, I liked the first brochure we did a lot better. In spite of his whiney politics, Ben writes intelligent texts and good poetry, whereas your friend Lyman —

OLYMPIA: We're a commune, Dan. When did we start discriminating between your friends, my friends, his friends?

DAN: When didn't we? I can't stand this character and I don't consider him my friend, comrade, fellow communist —

BARRY: You don't even know him, Dan.

DAN: He's a hack, a PR man, an author of advertising copy, and his material stinks; the whole thing reads like an advertising brochure. I thought you might be willing to ask Ben to write the texts.

OLYMPIA: We'll think about it.

(DAN exits right)

PHILIP: I didn't see anything wrong with Lyman's texts.

OLYMPIA: I think they're much more to the point than Ben's were.

PHILIP: Then what's there to think about?

OLYMPIA: Wait. I have an idea.

(SHARON enters from left, in overalls)

SHARON: Has anyone seen the lug wrench? It's not in the garage.

OLYMPIA: Yes, it's in the kitchen; I needed it as a pry bar.

SHARON: What did you do to Donna's plants?

BARRY: What did we — we smashed them, Sharon, that's what we did.

OLYMPIA: Of course you wouldn't know, would you Sharon? Ever since your Hollywood movie romance started you haven't had time to find out what's going on around here.

SHARON: I do my share, and more —

OLYMPIA: Don't we all, Sharon. But we don't all criticize the work other people are doing. Why do you decide you like the window dirty the moment when someone finally starts cleaning it? Why do you decide you're no longer interested in improving this place the moment when people with fresh ideas start making improvements?

SHARON: I — I don't know. *(Runs out left, without lug wrench)*

OLYMPIA: Speak of negative energy! She wants tomatoes in precisely the spot where you're planting parsley, and it you'd put tomatoes there she'd talk your head off about parsley.

BARRY: She's always been like that. I don't see how Steve can work with her.

OLYMPIA: He's another person who's had his head up his ass since that great romance began.

(GROVER, ANASTASIA & LYMAN enter from left)

PHILIP: If this is the beginning of another arid political debate, I'm leaving.

OLYMPIA: Wait a minute, Philip. I'd like to know what Ben learned recently.

BEN: I heard you were applying for a State grant to the arts.

BARRY: Where did you hear that?

DAN: Cut the innocent act, Barry. I heard about that grant over a year ago.

OLYMPIA: Ben, you seem so agitated. I've never seen you like this. Are you really so upset about a nonexistent grant, or are there other things?

PHILIP: Perhaps your own political frustrations, Ben?

DONNA: I don't understand what's going on. Olympia, you talked to me about such a grant two years ago. I didn't see what was wrong with accepting it. But why are you three acting as if Ben were crazy?

OLYMPIA: Oh, Donna, I didn't know you were here. Yes, that's just the point. All the people in this room have been talking about that grant for the past two years. That's why I don't understand Ben's surprise, his sudden agitation.

TONI: Two years! Then how come this is the first time I've heard anything about it?

BARRY: Where have you been, Toni?

SHARON: I haven't heard about it either.

TONI: Grover, you are such an incredible bullshit artist —

OLYMPIA: Is that really true, Toni? I hear Grover trying to make the commune's expositions even livelier and more meaningful than the first one —

GROVER: Holy shit! I've got an appointment ten minutes ago! If anyone gets that demolition equipment be sure to let me know; I'd like to be in on that. (Grover exits left)

BEN: That's the sickest farce I've ever seen.

ANASTASIA (*to Olympia*): Who's he?

BEN: Yet another crank, lady. This place is infested.

OLYMPIA: I don't understand what you're calling a farce, Ben. We've been discussing improvements that have been needed for at least five years, and I personally think the various suggestions are creative and exciting.

TONI: Even though you know it's all bullshit.

OLYMPIA: Do you think it's bullshit, Toni, to improve the space where we spend most of our working hours?

BEN: I don't want to get sucked into the debate about the walls; I have my own opinion about its significance.

OLYMPIA: Could you give all of us a glimpse — ?

BEN: No, I couldn't, Olympia. Something else bugs me. I thought there were some things we all took for granted. I thought some things were repulsive to all of us. I thought we made certain compromises only in order to survive. Recently I learned —

GROVER (roaring with laughter, waving a newspaper): Has everyone seen this morning's news? "Easter Canceled. Christ's body found." Look at this picture! "The feet that once walked the Sea of Galilee here protrude from the mud, still showing the nail scars."

BARRY: Let me see that.

PHILIP: We're almost done.

LYMAN: I'm terribly sorry we're so late. Grover's car broke down and —

OLYMPIA: And you probably had to wait for him for an hour. We know Grover. What do you think?

ANASTASIA: It's fantastic!

LYMAN: What a transformation!

BARRY (*reading*): This is a riot!

OLYMPIA: Grover, what do you think?

GROVER: About what?

OLYMPIA: The window!

GROVER: Oh, the window! The vegetation is gone.

PHILIP: Is that all?

GROVER: The thing I like least about plants is that people who already believe God exists point to a plant and tell you it proves he exists; makes me associate plants with religious icons.

OLYMPIA: The three of us have been discussing the exposition you suggested, Lyman, and we don't think we could have it together in less than six months.

PHILIP: We wouldn't want to have it in summer.

OLYMPIA: Barry and I have barely started photographing Philip's new creations, and Philip wants to revise several old ones and make a whole series of new ones.

LYMAN: I didn't have any kind of deadline in mind. The sooner the better, I say.

OLYMPIA: There's a minor bottleneck. Have either of you ever typeset on a machine like this one?

ANASTASIA: Certainly. It's an ordinary office typewriter.

OLYMPIA: I know, but it has some special attachments.

ANASTASIA: It has that device on the right if you want to justify copy; my friend Lamia operates a machine just like this one; she's a secretary.

OLYMPIA: Do you think Lamia could typeset the texts for the brochure?

ANASTASIA: I know she could; she'll be flattered to be asked. I've told her about you and she's absolutely thrilled about your programs. She has an interest in primitive mythology and art, and particularly in modern revivals of ancient forms.

OLYMPIA: That's wonderful. Then there is no bottleneck. (Shouts right) Dan! Could we talk to you for a second?

(DAN enters from right)

DAN: Have you gone out of your mind, Grover? Why are you talking about tearing this place apart three weeks before our party? I thought there were all kinds of other questions —

LAMIA *(to Anastasia)*: Who's that?

ANASTASIA *(whispers to Lamia)*: Another crank.

DAN: Another what?

BEN *(who sits near Anastasia — loudly)*: Another crank!

OLYMPIA: Dan, do you think we should never make changes in the space where we live and work?

GROVER: Somehow we got into this other subject, Dan, and the fact is that Lyman here has a whole theory about that picture window.

LYMAN: I wouldn't exactly call it a theory. It's my feeling that if you're going to use this room as a display area, the presence of that window defeats your purpose.

DAN: If we're going to do what?

GROVER: What Lyman means is this, Dan. With that window there, we can't focus the spectator's eye on our work. Now if I had my business laid out off those shelves, I sure as hell wouldn't want the spectator's eyes wandering off to look at the landscape!

DONNA: But you had them remove my plants because you said you wanted more light.

GROVER: That's right, Donna, but that was years ago, and I forgot it would be natural light that streamed through that window. What art needs is artificial light.

we took care of the kitchen wall we could have light coming in from both sides. Think of all the shelves we could put in — and our work area would still be twice as large as it is now.

(DAN enters from left)

LYMAN: How do you propose to remove this wall, Grover?

GROVER: Easiest thing in the world if you've got the right tools, isn't that so, Steve?

STEVE: I guess so — if you've got the right tools.

GROVER: Mm. Let me see. It shouldn't take but three or four hours to take the whole thing down; patch up the paint and rough spots, and throw out the crud in that room.

LYMAN: But how?

GROVER? How? That's the least of it. Nowadays they've got all kinds of machinery for crap like that. They've got these small bulldozers — isn't that right, Steve?

STEVE: How would you get a bulldozer in here, Grover?

GROVER: Let's see. Ah, that's it. We'd remove the front window. Nowadays they've got demolition units rigged just like those snow removal outfits that melt the snow and cart it off as water. With that kind of unit we could get the wall down in two seconds flat, and then we apply this huge suction unit —

STEVE: And you'll cart it all off as liquid plaster, wood, nails —

GROVER: That's right! And while we're on that front window —

OLYMPIA: Could you return the brochure manuscript to us some-time today? There's no hurry. We've had a change of plans.

DAN: You're going to reconsider the texts?

OLYMPIA: We're going to reconsider everything. We're playing with the idea of having the commune women prepare an exposition.

DAN: The idea seems good.

OLYMPIA: I knew you'd think so. Of course we'll want the women's group to do all the work that's involved.

DAN: I understand. I'll bring the manuscript by after lunch.

OLYMPIA: And the machine is going to be in use some of the time.

DAN: Obviously. I don't have many projects now, so that won't inconvenience me.

(DAN exits right)

PHILIP: A women's exposition?

OLYMPIA: Of course we'll still exhibit your things, Philip, but we'll take care of all the other arrangements, isn't that right, Anastasia?

GROVER: I don't get it.

OLYMPIA: Let it settle gradually, Grover. It's such a beautiful day, why don't we discuss this some more while walking. We should also talk about our schedule for the coming months.

(OLYMPIA, PHILIP, ANASTASIA, LYMAN & GROVER exit left)

10.

TAPED NARRATOR: It took most of a year to get together all the elements required by the commune's first and most memorable exposition. The continuing indifference, and even outright hostility, of the numerous passive onlookers who had nothing better to do with their time than cripple our commune's project, did not help expedite the various tasks. That the event took place at all is almost a miracle, and is entirely due to the profound involvement of the larger community and its devotion to the commune's continuing development.

(DAN enters from left, typesets. TONI enters from right)

TONI: Well, it's Dan.

DAN: Hi, Toni. *(They embrace)*

TONI: You're almost a stranger. Find new friends?

DAN: No I haven't, Toni. But I have felt like a stranger. I couldn't take Olympia or Philip greeting me with another Political Pamphlet Dan. And I didn't want to get in their way.

TONI: That's been Philip's sole concern for the past months — that the commune not get in the way of his Expo.

DAN: I heard it took place this past weekend.

TONI: Didn't they invite you? No, I guess they wouldn't have. They know how you feel about the friends Philip has been waiting for all his life.

DAN: How did it go?

LYMAN: Fine. I'll tell him the commune decided against it.

PHILIP: What's next on the agenda?

TONI: Have you gone off your rockers? Since when do we have an agenda?

LAMIA: Well I've never in my life —

BARRY: I can't imagine what's gotten into you today, Toni. You're so uptight. Obviously there's no agenda. We haven't become a parliament. That was just Philip's way of asking if there were other matters that concerned the whole group.

(DONNA enters from right)

OLYMPIA: We must make a terrible impression, Lamia. We're not usually so rowdy. I hope we don't spend any more time on trivialities. I wanted to bring up a question we've been discussing for years, and one which certainly does concern the whole commune. That's the question of space and light for our work, our displays and even for parties. Several years ago Grover suggested the possibility of enlarging this room. This wall, for instance, blocks direct access from the front room to the kitchen.

BARRY: If we could knock a three foot hole through it, and put a doorway right here —

STEVE You'd better not put it there, Barry; that's where the chimney passes through.

LYMAN: What about putting it over here?

GROVER: To hell with a three foot hole! Why aid don't we knock the whole wall down? The room between here and the kitchen serves no other purpose than to accumulate garbage anyway. Once

BARRY: In answer to your question, Earl: No, we've never excluded anyone before. But then, I don't think we've ever gotten that kind of request before.

TONI (to Sharon): How does it feel to be invisible?

SHARON (to TONI): Must be the same as being dead.

LYMAN: Of course my friend agrees to pay whatever reasonable rent we ask, and he also assured me he would rectify any changes he felt it necessary to make.

TONI: Of course.

MATTIE: Do you need the money or something? Why are you doing this? Are you going to become landlords?

PHILIP: No, Mattie, we don't need the money.

OLYMPIA: I personally don't think we should become landlords —

TONI: Then why are we discussing this?

MATTIE (to Toni): I'd better led Dan get in on some of this. I can see I botched something by keeping my mouth shut when it started. (She exits left)

BARRY: We're discussing the principle of excluding someone.

TONI: Oh is that what we're discussing? In that case let me bring up some cases that aren't hypothetical!

OLYMPIA: We haven't settled this matter, although I personally feel that, since we don't need the money —

BARRY: That's true. Philip made a good point.

TONI: I didn't go either, although they did invite me. Have you seen the brochure? (Hands him one from a surface)

DAN: I see they left Lyman's texts. I thought it was supposed to be a women's project.

TONI: That's news to me. I thought it was Philip's coming out party. He acted like a kid all last week; it must have been the greatest experience of his life. Remember when he used to melt down his objects and you could only see them in pictures? That's ancient history. Now he's prolific. He produces art objects by the crate. What are you typing?

DAN: Can't you guess?

TONI: "Another political pamphlet, Dan? When will you political people learn to put your ideology into practice?" That's exactly what she puts into practice: her ideology.

DAN: That's actually more than I've been doing.

TONI: Something happened?

DAN: Not exactly. My unemployment ran out and I had to get a part time job. In a print shop, with no window facing the outside. I really like it here now. I thought there'd be some interesting things to set, but it's all ads. And you?

TONI: The same. I heard that Lisa started school.

DAN: Just this year. And Leon?

TONI: We're still holding out. But it's impossible with no other kids around. Leon has the TV schedule memorized and he's glued to the tube all day. It's ten times worse than school. At least in school you're with others and you can rebel. He just sits and watches.

DAN: What about all the projects he and Alec had going?

TONI: Alec's in boarding school.

DAN: Really? I didn't know.

TONI: Philip didn't want anyone or anything between him and the Expo.

DAN: Did Donna take part in the preparations?

TONI: Are you kidding? Donna's like a ghost. She lives here but no one sees her.

DAN: She used to be such a lively person.

TONI: She was a real trip when I first came here. I'll never forget her "Gosh, is that marihuana? I've heard so much about it — what do you do?"

DAN: That's cute.

TONI: It's true. She used to be excited by everything and interested in everyone. Funny how people change. She still cares for the garden; she comes alive once a year, when the seeds get planted. The rest of the time she goes from her job to the bar and back.

DAN: I remember she was already a little like that years ago, that night Ben wrote a poem to her.

TONI: I remember that night too, and I've always regretted missing Ben's reading because of Grover's antics. At that time I thought those two would make a go of it.

OLYMPIA: I meant all of us.

TONI: What's going on here? I thought we were going to talk about certain critiques —

PHILIP: We've discussed that already.

BARRY: We put our critiques into action, Toni.

TONI: What the hell does that mean, Barry? And what do you mean, You've discussed that already? Did you resolve it all in fifteen minutes? Grover alone —

GROVER: I started to bring it up —

(BEN enters from right)

OLYMPIA: I hope we don't let this meeting degenerate into a shouting match. We were discussing the possibility of renting this room to an artist —

TONI: You can't and that's that. Let's talk about real things now —

OLYMPIA: We can't, Toni? Don't you think it's up to the entire commune to decide that?

EARL: May I ask, have we ever turned anyone down before? I understood that the principle of openness —

TONI: We? Who the hell are you?

OLYMPIA: Oh, I'm terribly sorry. This is Earl. He's gotten deeply involved in the commune and has numerous ideas on how to improve it. Earl, this is Toni. Shall we go around the room saying our names —

MATTIE: I don't believe in it.

PHILIP: It's ten after two.

(GROVER, STEVE & SHARON enter from left)

GROVER: Is everyone here already? I thought we were early.

PHILIP: You're not.

GROVER: Then let's get this show on the road. I take it the purpose of this meeting is to discuss what went down two weekends ago —

OLYMPIA: Is that the purpose of this meeting? (Silence)

PHILIP: There are far more important things to talk about.

GROVER: But I thought —

OLYMPIA: Lyman has a friend, a painter, who was scheduled to have his first show in a downtown gallery. It was to open in a week. But for some mysterious reason the gallery turned him down at the last minute. So Lyman suggested he might be able to rent space from the Illyria Street Commune — only this room, obviously.

MATTIE: (to Grover) But she can't! What about our party?

GROVER: Hey wait a minute. Toni and Donna aren't here yet.

PHILIP: How long are we supposed to wait?

(TONI enters from right)

GROVER: Not long, Philip. Olympia is talking about renting this place —

TONI: Are you crazy? She can't rent it! It's in all our names —

DAN: Ben and Donna? Are you kidding? The radical hippie and the straight secretary?

TONI: It wasn't so ridiculous then.

DAN: I remember she thought him "sweet."

TONI: After her miserable high school marriage, Donna apparently didn't want to get involved. But around the time of Ben's poem, I know she would have accompanied Ben to a farm commune in Saskatchewan or Mongolia. But except for his poem, Ben never made a move nor said a word, and over the years they drifted apart.

DAN: I saw Ben a couple of weeks ago; I had some research to do at the underground paper. I hadn't seen him in over a year. He hasn't changed. He still thinks a revolution would only make things worse, so why do anything? Maybe that's why he never approached Donna, because that's pointless too if you practice the politics of despair.

TONI: At one time I agreed with you, Dan, but now I know you're wrong. I was very close to Ben for almost two years. He's someone who doesn't just talk about independent human beings — he actually believes it. He thinks a revolution will be significant only if it's made by independent individuals who act on their own. If they can be talked into it then they can be talked out of it, and worse, they can be talked into believing they got it when they didn't. That's why he rejects all kinds of propaganda. And that's why he never tried to convince Donna to quit her job or join us in our projects or move to Mount Tabor or wherever. Poor Donna was dying to be convinced, to be invited, but Ben wanted her to decide on her own. His poem wasn't an invitation. It was a gift, a love offering; Donna accepted it as that and disappointed Ben by continuing to repeat her crummy routine. She waited for his invitation to make a move, but the invitation never came. Donna remained the "Cool Lady" to Ben and Ben remained "sweet" to Donna.

DAN: You're a generous person, Toni. I'm sorry I never really got to know either of them. I never even knew about you and Ben.

TONI: We never loved each other. Ben and I are too much alike; we're too movementy for each other's tastes. Ben and Donna loved each other. It's sad.

DAN: When did you break up with Ben?

TONI: I didn't. Ben broke up with the house when the new friends started dropping by. I guess Ben expected me to drop out too, or to spark a confrontation or make a scene or at least let him know he wasn't alone. And I guess I disappointed him the same way Donna did. Nothing was clear to me.

DAN: Does Ben really have nothing to do with the commune?

TONI: It's just a house now, Dan. And it's a hotel to Ben. He leaves in the morning and comes back at night. If he runs into any of us he greets us the way he'd greet the hotel receptionist or elevator operator. It isn't what you call despair. Ben is full of hope, but his hope is constantly disappointed.

(BARRY enters from left)

BARRY: Ah, Dan. Nice to see you're coming around again.

TONI: Yes, we do so much to make our friends feel at home here, don't we?

BARRY: Why so sarcastic on such a lovely morning, Toni?

TONI: Who's being sarcastic? Dan told me he'd heard through the grapevine that a commune event took place last weekend. Thank god for grapevines.

OLYMPIA: Well I'll be out of town this coming weekend. The following weekend then. I'll shift what I intended to do then to midweek —

(OLYMPIA, TONI & DAN exit left)

11.

TAPED NARRATOR: *(Sound of rewinding tape. Then:)* ...expedite the various tasks. That the event took place at all is almost a miracle, and is entirely due to the profound involvement of the larger community and its (Stop)

(OLYMPIA, PHILIP, BARRY, LYMAN, ANASTASIA, EARL, LAMA enter from right, laughing and chatting)

LYMAN: You really ought to attend that fair; I'm sure you'll get some marvelous ideas for your next exposition.

OLYMPIA: Philip and I are seriously considering it.

BARRY: I'll be sorry to miss it, but I've already got plane tickets for next week.

(MATTIE enters from left)

MATTIE: Oh gee, don't stop. I didn't mean to put an end to the conversation. (Silence)

PHILIP: Those people are always late.

MATTIE: I thought the meeting started at two.

TONI: Some of us have questions that concern you, like critiques of last weekend's Expo.

OLYMPIA: The Expo was the commune's most significant event so far.

TONI: We heard all about it from Grover.

OLYMPIA: What did Grover tell you about it?

TONI: He said it was a seance.

OLYMPIA: He should have talked to me first!

TONI: Why should he? If that type of thing is taking place in this house, we should all know about it and we should talk to each other about it at a meeting where everyone is present.

OLYMPIA: I told you I was in a hurry.

TONI: We'll walk you to the car. Are you afraid to defend your seance —

OLYMPIA: I happen to have nothing to hide. Let's meet tonight to talk about the scheduling —

TONI: We'd like to schedule it right now.

OLYMPIA: Fine. I'm free the day after tomorrow.

TONI: It'll have to be over the weekend; Donna can't meet on weeknights.

DAN: Neither can I.

BARRY: We told you about it, Toni, and you didn't come.

TONI: Did you also tell Donna about it? And Ben?

BARRY: Neither of them has taken part in any commune activities in years, and you know it.

TONI: I bet Sharon would have loved to work on the preparations.

BARRY: Tony, have you ever tried working with Sharon? I tried for years and believe me it's impossible.

TONI: You never had trouble working with Steve. Why was he excluded?

BARRY: Who's excluded, for crying out loud? You're making a political ideology out of your own paranoia. Ever since his great romance, Steve dropped out of everything.

TONI: Mattie worked all right with everyone, she hasn't had a great romance in recent years, and she was really into the pottery for a while; why wasn't she —

BARRY: Is this a third degree? Look, I hate to say this, but Olympia, Philip and I don't enjoy working with Mattie.

DAN: Since when?

BARRY: If you've got to know, it's because she gives off the wrong kind of energy, negative energy —

TONI: So some people are excluded because they're too eager and others because they aren't eager enough.

BARRY: No one's excluded from anything; you've got a butterfly in your noodle this morning, Toni.

TONI: Why did Dan have to learn about the event from the grapevine?

BARRY: This discussion is a waste of time. Look, a couple of people gave a small party for their friends. That's common enough, right? It so happens that Dan wasn't the best friend of some of the friends. For crying out loud, Dan, I thought you couldn't stand Lyman Sanders! Don't you ever give parties? Do you invite everyone you know in the whole city? Look, I've got some work to do. (Exits right)

DAN: I'll be damned.

TONI: Won't we all. Were you calling this a commune?

DAN: How long has this been going on?

TONI: Long, I think. You were still one of the friends when it started.

DAN: You mean when I sided against Ben about the typesetting?

TONI: Even before that, I suppose. But why ask me? I was one of the friends until last week. My work was a bona fide commune project, it didn't interfere with their preparations, and I didn't exude any negative energy —

DAN: You mean you didn't question anything they were doing.

TONI: It can't be that simple, since Mattie didn't either.

DAN: Mattie said something when they were taking the plants to Donna's room, and she knew at the time —

(OLYMPIA enters from right, rushing)

OLYMPIA: Oh hi Dan. Working on another political pamphlet?

TONI: Cripes, Olympia. He's hardly been here for a year.

OLYMPIA: Really? I hadn't noticed.

DAN: Thanks a lot.

OLYMPIA: Oh, nothing personal, Dan. I've been so busy with so many exciting projects and friends —

TONI: Some of us would like to talk to you about those projects and friends, Olympia.

OLYMPIA: I was on my way out, Toni. What is it?

TONI: I don't mean now. I mean when everyone could be present — everyone who wasn't invited to last weekend's event.

OLYMPIA: I don't have time to discuss anything with those people; there's too much else to do in life.

TONI: That's one of thing things we'd like to talk about: how and when some of my friends became "those people".

OLYMPIA: I have no idea what you're hinting at.

TONI: I'm not hinting! What you call "those people" now includes everyone who helped make this place what it once was. And I'm intending to give a party for all "those people."

OLYMPIA: You can give all the parties you want, Toni, anytime you want. How does that concern me?.

TONI: Why we people? Why not everyone who ever related to the commune?

GROVER: That's what I'm talking about. There's got to be some kind of confrontation over this seance business —

TONI: The seance and the selling and the exclusions — Are you still free on weekends?

GROVER: Weekday nights, weekends anytime, but be sure you tell me in advance. *(Exits left)*

TONI: I had an idea when Grover started talking.

DAN: So did I. What's yours?

TONI: It has to do with going back to the origins.

DAN: That's it. We're too Movementy for each other, Toni.

TONI: We could have a resurrection — our version of one. Remember that Japanese meal Ben and I were preparing?

DAN: Sounds great!

TONI: And the puppet play that was never performed, and the alternative to school that never got off the ground, and the commune that almost started to be real, and the —

DAN: Too much has been lost to get all that back, Toni. But I know Mattie will be eager to try; she's literally been doing nothing at all, what with two kids, and Rose Anne home all day long.

TONI: I'm sure Steve and Sharon will be willing, even Ben, and I know Donna is longing to go back to one of the intersections where she failed to make a turn; she's not the only one.

TONI: Is that it? And I always thought Mattie was such a meek person.

(GROVER enters from left.)

GROVER: Man, am I glad it's you two.

TONI: Why us two? Doesn't the whole town love you any more? Cops after you? This is the last place they'd look, you know.

GROVER: Have you heard about the shit that went down last weekend?

TONI: We've been waiting for you to clue us in. But why the sudden fury? I thought you were one of the impresarios.

GROVER: There was all this talk about the women's group doing all the work.

TONI: If it hadn't been for such talk, you would have worked your ass off, wouldn't you, Grover?

DAN: I thought you were one of the women, Grover — you and Philip and Barry and Lyman —

GROVER: How was I to know that Mattie, Sharon and Toni and Donna weren't in on it?

DAN: what happened?

GROVER: Women's art exposition, my ass. It was a religious revival, a mystical seance, and we'd better confront them —

TONI: Welcome to the club.

DAN: A seance? Are you serious?

GROVER: I thought it couldn't be serious. That's why I went along. I kept waiting for the twist, the April fool's joke. But it was no joke. They were serious.

DAN: What kind of seance? I can't believe it.

GROVER: Anastasia brought down these friends of hers: a woman called Lamia, who turned out to be some kind of palm reader, and this dude Earl who's supposedly into self-publishing.

TONI: Presumably you didn't know any of Anastasia's friends when you first brought her here —

GROVER: All I knew was she was into the shit we did here.

DAN: Go on, Grover. The seance.

GROVER: Anyway, Anastasia starts it all up with a rap about this commune being a return to the origin, resurrecting the spirit of our earliest ancestors. I could go along with her shit because I thought it was some kind of poetry. Then she introduces this Lamia as someone with powers to put us in direct contact with the dead ancestors.

TONI: Oh wow, you are serious. And here I was thinking that Sharon and Mattie and Steve would have loved to take part in the preparations. Wrong track again!

GROVER: Candles, burning incense, hands on the table, the whole thing, and Olympia saying "Oh how exciting, I've never contacted an ancestor before." I laugh and ask if there's a translator in the room to tell us what the mummy says. Philip and Barry are sitting there transfixed, like they expect a Neanderthal to walk in any second. Then Lamia gets into this incoherent rap, like she's oh deed on LSD although I didn't see her take anything, and it turns out she's the ancestor.

DAN: Incredible.

GROVER: That's bad enough. But then I start recognizing bits and scraps of her rap, and it turns out it's not even original; it comes out of an old Life magazine article on the Aztecs that I happen to have read. I keep expecting someone to say something. I look at Philip, but he thinks he's seeing Kukulcan on Illyria Street. Finally I can't take it any more so I get up. Lamia snaps out of her trance and says I broke the spell, and the others look at me as if I'd set the house on fire. So I split.

TONY: That's heavy.

GROVER: I phoned Lyman yesterday to ask about the meaning of what went down. Listen to this. "I hope you don't feel embarrassed," he tells me, "not everyone is strong enough to support such an experience." Can you dig that? It turns out that Lamia and this Earl character bought \$500 worth of Philip's pottery, so my splitting didn't break the spell.

DAN: Philip sold his pottery?

TONI: What did you think the Expo was for?

DAN: Then the brochure texts sounded like ads because they were ads.

TONI: It settles slowly, doesn't it?

GROVER: It's not the sale that bugs me —

TONI: That's why we considered you one of them, Grover.

GROVER: It's the religious shit that gets me. Is that what we've been building up to? I think you people in the house had better get it together; I've got to split.