

LIKE SITTING DUCKS

By
Stephen Wagner

LIKE SITTING DUCKS

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LIKE SITTING DUCKS

Like Sitting Ducks was originally produced at Players Theatre in Utica, NY, by Players of Utica, featuring the following cast:

Homer Sadlon.....	Mike D. Burke
Corine Sadlon.....	Rachel Hasenauer
Fred Osterfeld.....	Nicholas Priore
Sue Ellen Osterfeld.....	Michaela Kennedy
Walt Leaky.....	Keith Pomeroy
Denise Leaky.....	Danielle Piazza
Wendell Pervis.....	Andrew Metz
Fiona Pervis.....	Deborah Martin
Officer Gruber.....	Chelsea Burt
Officer Greene.....	Eric Almleaf

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CAST:

HOMER SADLON

Mid-30s, 40s, mild-mannered husband of Corine

CORINE SADLON

Mid-30s, 40s, strong-willed wife of Homer

FRED OSTERFELD

Mid-40s, 50s, gruff but likeable husband of Sue Ellen

SUE ELLEN OSTERFELD

30s, flighty and scatter-brained, but always cheerful wife of Fred

WALT LEAKY

40s, a large fellow, a plumber, subject to frequent urination, husband of Denise

DENISE LEAKY

30s, somewhat goth, always in black, piercings, tattoos, wife of Walt

WENDELL PERVIS

30s, a tense fellow, always on the verge of a nervous breakdown, husband of Fiona

FIONA PERVIS

30s, naïve New Ager, wife of Wendell

OFFICER GRUBER

A police officer

OFFICER GREENE

A police officer

TIME: Present day.

PLACE: Two side-by-side apartments somewhere in the U.S.

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ACT 1

Present day. The living rooms of two fifth-floor apartments in some average-sized American city. The two apartments are next door to each other and are divided evenly on stage by an imaginary wall, possibly indicated on the floor by a 5-inch line. They are both middle-class homes, decorated distinctly from one another, though in layout they are virtually mirror images. Each apartment has a door upstage leading to the building corridor. The apartment stage right has another door u.r. and the apartment stage left has another door u.l. leading to their respective kitchens/bathrooms/bedrooms.

Apartment stage right: There is an afghan draped over the back of the couch. FRED is lounging with his feet up, smoking a cigar and watching TV with the remote in his hand and very little enthusiasm on his face.

Apartment stage left: CORINE is sitting in a chair at right reading a paperback book. She has an ace bandage wrapped around her left wrist. HOMER, wearing a jacket and tie, enters from the hall door carrying a newspaper and a briefcase.

HOMER. Hi, honey.

CORINE. *(Absorbed in her book.)* Mmmmm.

HOMER. How was your day?

CORINE. Mmmmm.

HOMER. Is that so? *(Pause.)* What might be for dinner?

CORINE. It might be lobster tails and fondue... but it isn't. *(Homer lets out a little nervous laugh.)* Then again, it might be whatever you're fixing.

HOMER. Oh, I see... I see. *(Crosses to the TV and picks up the remote.)*

CORINE. Please don't turn that on, Homer.

HOMER. But I'd like to catch the news—

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CORINE. Homer, you can see I'm reading, can't you? You can see that far across the room, can you not? You can be that considerate?

HOMER. Of course, Corine... of course. Sorry to be a disturbance. (*Sits in a small chair near the TV. Long pause.*) Ha! A funny thing happened at work today—

CORINE. (*Not looking up.*) I'm not surprised, considering your position at that company is something of a joke.

HOMER. I can see it's going to be one of those evenings. Corine, I'm just trying to tell you about my day...

CORINE. And I'm just trying to finish my book, but it doesn't seem that you're going to give me the chance. Instead, you're going to drone on with another dull chapter from the endless dreariness of "The Pitiful Tales of Homer" – while I'm sitting here *suffering* with a sprained wrist, unable to work...

HOMER. I didn't mean to—

CORINE. And, incredibly, all you can think about is what I could possibly have whipped up for you for dinner – with one hand – and a magic wand, I suppose.

HOMER. Not at all, Corine. No need to get upset, no need to fret. I'll manage.

CORINE. *You'll manage? What about me?*

HOMER. Of course. I'd be happy to get you something. What would you like?

CORINE. (*Back to her book.*) I already ate.

HOMER. Fine. I'll just go change my shirt. (*Crosses to door u.l.*)

CORINE. Please don't put on the red one! (*Homer exits u.l. while Corine continues to read. In the s.r apartment, SUE ELLEN PERVIS, lively and good-natured, enters from the hall door carrying two bags full of groceries. Fred doesn't even stir. Sue Ellen crosses to Fred.*)

SUE ELLEN. Hi, Freddy. (*Kisses him on the top of the head.*)

FRED. Hello, Sue Ellen. Have a good day?

SUE ELLEN. Oh, you know.... (*She exits u.r. into the kitchen, leaves the bags, then quickly pops her head back into the room.*) Have a good day? Is that what you said, Freddy?

FRED. Yes.

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SUE ELLEN. Oh, you know... (*She disappears back into the kitchen. A moment later she reappears. She waves his smoke away.*) Whew! That's a stinky cigar.

FRED. You bought it for me.

SUE ELLEN. Oh, that can't be true, Freddy. Whatcha watchin'?

FRED. That thing with that guy.

SUE ELLEN. You don't want to watch that. (*She crosses to him, takes the remote from his hand, and changes the channel.*)

FRED. What the hell are you doin'? I was watchin' that!

SUE ELLEN. No you weren't, silly.

FRED. Sue Ellen, I was watching that show, dammit!

SUE ELLEN. But you've seen that before. Here – look at this! Now this you haven't seen, Freddy.

FRED. (*Grabs the remote from her.*) Give me that, you lunatic. (*Changes the channel back.*)

SUE ELLEN. Suit yourself. Watch it for the hundredth time.

FRED. Oh, thank you. I will.

SUE ELLEN. (*She watches for a minute.*) Huh... That isn't even the show I thought it was. Hey, sweet thing, what would you like for dinner?

FRED. Whatever you say.

SUE ELLEN. (*Heads to the kitchen.*) How about a nice meatloaf? (*And she exits before he can even answer.*)

FRED. Sure. (*Pause.*) Oh, jeez, I have seen this a hundred times. (*Changes the channel. Sue Ellen comes back in.*)

SUE ELLEN. Bad news. I forgot the meat for the meatloaf. What else you hungry for?

FRED. Uhh... How about...? Hey, have I seen this one before?

SUE ELLEN. How would I know, sweet thing?

FRED. Uhh... How about that thing you make with the peppers and the sausages? I love that thing.

SUE ELLEN. Comin' right up. (*Exits.*)

FRED. (*Clicking through the channels.*) Jeez, I've seen every one of these damn shows. (*Sue Ellen marches right back in, goes behind Fred, and puts her hands over his eyes.*)

SUE ELLEN. I've got a surprise for you!

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FRED. What? What are you talking about?

SUE ELLEN. *(She takes her hands away and jumps to the side of the chair.)* Ta-da! We don't have any peppers or sausages.

FRED. For cryin' out loud, Sue Ellen! How is that a surprise?

SUE ELLEN. That's not the surprise, silly. The surprise is what we're going to have instead.

FRED. Which is what?

SUE ELLEN. I don't know. If I knew, it wouldn't be a surprise. *(Kisses him on the side of his face.)*

FRED. *(Exasperated.)* Oh my god...

SUE ELLEN. I'll go see what I can find in there. *(Heads to kitchen.)* This is going to be exciting! *(Exits.)*

FRED. Lunatic. I'm married to a complete lunatic.

SUE ELLEN. *(Poking her head into the room.)* Put on Tubi! *(She disappears back into the kitchen. Fred changes the channel.)*

FRED. Tubi...? This is what I was watchin' in the first place!

HOMER. *(Enters wearing his red shirt and an apron and carrying a spatula.)* I'm making a grilled cheese, Corine. Would you like one?

CORINE. How many times do I have to tell you I already ate?

HOMER. Corine, why do you have to be so....

CORINE. *(Slams her book closed.)* So *what*? Why do I have to be so *what*, Homer?

HOMER. It's just that... Since you hurt your wrist I've been doing everything for you, plus the cooking and the cleaning on top of my job. And I don't mind, I really don't, but I'd just appreciate a little—

CORINE. *(Standing.)* Oh, here we go! Poor, Homer! Here I am practically crippled, I've missed three days of work at the bank, and all you can think about is yourself. For example, I asked you specifically not wear that red shirt, and there you are with the red shirt on. I'm completely ignored!

HOMER. What difference does it make? It's my shirt and I like it. It was a birthday present from my sister.

CORINE. I don't care if you got it from the Queen of Mars. It looks ridiculous on you. Do you think I want my husband parading around town wearing that? But no – you never consider *my* feelings.

HOMER. It's just a shirt, Corine.

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CORINE. Oh, it's *just* a shirt. (*Crosses to an end table and takes a scissors from a drawer.*) Well, why don't we *just* take a scissors and *just* cut that ridiculous shirt *just* to shreds!

HOMER. Are you crazy? Put that down!

CORINE. Oh, don't be a baby. I'm not going to hurt you. But that shirt needs to disappear. Tonight it goes in the trash.

HOMER. Corine, if I didn't know any better...

CORINE. I'm sure you *don't*.

HOMER. If I didn't know any better... your attitude.... Be honest with me. Are you having an affair? Are you? Are you seeing another man?

CORINE. *Another* man? And where might the *first* one be?

HOMER. All right, that's it, Corine! I— (*She snaps the scissors a few times.*) Okay... okay.... I'll put the shirt in the trash tonight.

CORINE. Now you're being reasonable. (*Crosses to door u.l.*) Now get ready.

HOMER. Get ready for what?

CORINE. It's Friday, Homer. You have your ridiculous little poker game with those idiot friends of yours and I have my book club. (*Exits.*)

HOMER. Oh, that's right! (*Beat.*) Corine, where's the mail?

CORINE. (*Offstage.*) It's on the telephone stand, where it is every day. Wake up, Homer!

HOMER. (*Crosses to the telephone stand and picks up the mail and a letter opener. Under his breath.*) ... Miserable effin' ... nasty... One of these days... One of these effin' days... (*He holds the letter opener like a dagger, gets a manic expression on his face and looks as if he is about to strike. Corine comes in behind him.*)

CORINE. Homer! (*Homer is startled. The mail and the letter opener go flying.*) Set up the card table! Really, do I have to tell you to do everything? Get ahold of yourself! (*Corine exits u.l. Homer sets up the card table and chairs while... Fred has fallen asleep watching the TV. Sue Ellen enters and stands by Fred's chair and watches the TV. Suddenly she bursts out with a loud laugh, scaring Fred awake.*)

FRED. What!? What's the matter?!

SUE ELLEN. Oh, you missed it, Freddy. It's one of those nature shows. There was this little chipmunk or squirrel or something, and he was sittin'

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there in this tree, but he was so tired that he kept fallin' asleep and fallin' over! (*Laughing, she demonstrates by falling over onto Fred repeatedly.*) Like this! He just kept fallin' over... and wakin' up and fallin' over... and wakin' up --

FRED. Sue Ellen, cut it out!

SUE ELLEN. It's the funniest thing I ever saw. (*Falling on him again.*) Wakin' up and fallin' over...

FRED. Stop it, would ya?

SUE ELLEN. I should have recorded it. (*Suddenly getting serious.*) The poor little guy.

FRED. Sue Ellen, I thought you were making dinner.

SUE ELLEN. You bet, sweet thing. Comin' right up. (*She sets up a tray table in front of Fred.*) I hope you're hungry! (*Exits into kitchen.*)

FRED. She's making me crazy.

SUE ELLEN. (*Enters with a TV dinner and puts it on the tray table with a great deal of flourish.*) Voila!

FRED. A TV dinner?

SUE ELLEN. Sorry, that's all we have.

FRED. Sue Ellen, first of all, this is still half frozen, and second, you just walked in with two huge bags of groceries.

SUE ELLEN. That was mostly cat food.

FRED. (*Getting a headache.*) Sue Ellen... we've been over this a hundred times. We do not have a cat.

SUE ELLEN. Freddy, I know you don't believe me, but I have seen a cat in this apartment. He might not be ours, technically, but he's here. He's orange and white and he's running around the furniture all the time.

FRED. My god...

SUE ELLEN. You've seen him.

FRED. (*Getting up.*) I have *not* seen him. There is no cat!

SUE ELLEN. You don't like the TV dinner? It's Salisbury steak.

FRED. Sue Ellen, we need to talk.

SUE ELLEN. I've disappointed you, haven't I, Freddy. I can see it on your face. You have that look. Ha! You know what you look like? You look like that little squirrel on the TV just before he keeled over! (*Laughs.*)

FRED. It's hopeless.

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SUE ELLEN. *(Sudden realization.)* Oh my god!

FRED. What?

SUE ELLEN. It's Friday! Corine and the girls are coming over for the book club! And you have your poker game with Homer.

FRED. I almost forgot.

SUE ELLEN. *(Picking up the TV dinner.)* I'll save this for you. *(Heads to the kitchen.)*

FRED. Terrific.

SUE ELLEN. I wonder if I can read that book in the next ten minutes. Where did I put it? *(Exits to kitchen.)*

FRED. *(Putting the tray table away.)* I'm sure it won't matter. All right, I'm heading over to Homer's.

SUE ELLEN. *(Poking her head in.)* Good luck, sweet thing. Make sure the cat doesn't get out when you open the door. *(Exits.)*

FRED. *(He looks around, then catches himself.)* For god's sake! *(Exits front door.)*

HOMER. *(Homer has changed his shirt and set up a card table and four folding chairs. He is looking around for something. Corine enters carrying plastic grocery bags filled with potato chips and other snacks.)* Corine, have you seen the poker chips?

CORINE. No.

HOMER. *(Sees the bags.)* Hey, those are the snacks I bought for the game tonight.

CORINE. Well, I promised I'd bring something over for the girls.

HOMER. But—

CORINE. Homer, didn't we just have a conversation about not being selfish and not thinking only of yourself?

HOMER. But—

CORINE. You'll survive. *(Heads to the s.l. front door.)* Don't get into any trouble with those clowns. *(Corine opens the door and Fred is there.)*

FRED. Hi, Corine.

CORINE. Don't get Homer involved in any of your nonsense. *(She pushes past him and exits.)*

FRED. Bye, Corine.

HOMER. *(Sits at the table, calls after her.)* Have fun with your club. *(To*

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himself.) I hope you effin' beat each other to death with it.

FRED. *(Entering and closing the door behind him.)* I see Corine's anger management classes are going well.

HOMER. One of these effin' days....

FRED. Aw, don't let her get to you, Homer.

HOMER. You don't know what it's like, Fred. She treats me like... a pet she doesn't like.

FRED. Yeah, Sue Ellen drives me nuts, too. Hey, Homer, do you have anything to eat? I didn't get any dinner.

HOMER. No, she took all the snacks I bought.

FRED. That figures. There must be something in the kitchen. Mind if I look around?

HOMER. Help yourself. *(Fred exits to kitchen. Sue Ellen's s.r. doorbell rings.)*

SUE ELLEN. *(Offstage.)* Come on in. It's open.

CORINE. *(Enters with the bags of goodies.)* It's me.

SUE ELLEN. Have a seat, Corine. I'll be right with ya. *(We hear some "whacks" offstage.)*

CORINE. I brought some eats. Where do you want 'em?

SUE ELLEN. *(Offstage.)* Oh, just put them anywhere. *(Corine sets the bags down next to the couch and sits.)*

FRED. *(Enters with half a grilled cheese sandwich and a six-pack of beer.)* Homer, all I could find was this half a grilled cheese. Is it up for grabs?

HOMER. Go ahead.

FRED. Hey, Homer, you know you got cockroaches? I saw a big one in the sink.

HOMER. I know. I think they crawl out of Corine's mouth while she sleeps.

FRED. *(Sits at the table opposite Homer.)* Aw, Homer... *(He eats.)*

CORINE. *(Hearing more "whacks" from offstage.)* What on earth are you doing in there, Sue Ellen?

SUE ELLEN. *(Appears in the doorway with a fly swatter.)* Did you see a fly come in here?

CORINE. What?

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FRED. Those roaches are nasty little creatures. Hard to get rid of.

SUE ELLEN. A fly. It's about this big, wings, buggy eyes, annoying buzzing noise...

HOMER. Nasty, hard to get rid of. Sounds like Corine.

CORINE. Buggy eyes, annoying noise. Sounds like Homer.

SUE ELLEN. *(Sits on couch.)* How is Homer, Corine?

FRED. *(Opening a can of beer.)* How ya doin' there, Homer?

HOMER. Miserable.

CORINE. He's a miserable little man.

CORINE and HOMER. One of these days...! *(Sue Ellen's s.r. doorbell rings.)*

SUE ELLEN. Must be the girls. *(Crosses to s.r. hall door.)*

HOMER. *(Homer's s.l. doorbell buzzes.)* I'll get it. *(Crosses to s.l. hall door. Sue Ellen answers her door, and entering are DENISE and FIONA. Denise has a bottle of vodka, is dressed all in black, wearing Birkenstock boots, and sporting a nose ring and tattoos. Fiona has brought a bottle of wine and a bowl of hummus; she wears a colorful, flowing New Age type dress. Homer answers his door, and entering are WENDELL and WALT. Wendell, thin, is dressed in a sport jacket and turtleneck and carries a box of wine. Walt, somewhat portly and disheveled, in his plumber work clothes. They all ad lib brief greetings. Wendell puts the box of wine on the side table.)*

WALT. *(Fidgeting.)* Homer, can I use your bathroom?

HOMER. You know where it is, Walt. *(Sits at the table, forlorn. Walt exits to kitchen.)*

DENISE. Sorry we're late. We had to stop three friggin' times to find bathrooms for Walt. I brought some vodka.

WENDELL. Sorry we're late, Homer. You know Walt.

FRED. Poor Walt. I suppose it's appropriate he's a plumber since he's around the "facilities" so much.

WALT. *(Offstage.)* I heard that!

FIONA. I brought some wine and some homemade hummus.

CORINE. Of course you did.

FIONA. Your apartment is giving off strange vibrations tonight, Sue Ellen.

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CORINE. Oh, jeez. Don't start, Fiona.

SUE ELLEN. Really, Fiona? I'll bet it's— *(Quickly exits to kitchen.)*

WENDELL. *(Crossing down to Homer.)* What's the matter, Homer?

FRED. Homer's got the harried husband blues, Wendell.

WENDELL. What happened? Did Corine lock you in your room again, Homer?

HOMER. I don't want to talk about it.

FIONA. You seem to be in a funk, Corine. Would you like me to cleanse your aura.

CORINE. You try to cleanse my aura and I'll clean your clock!

DENISE. What the hell's got your panties in a twist?

CORINE. Homer. He's driving me nuts!

WALT. *(Enters, drying his hands on his shirt.)* Your bathroom sink's got a leak, Homer.

FRED. I think you're the one who's got the leak, Walt.

WALT. Don't start on me, Fred.

WENDELL. Corine locked Homer in his room again.

HOMER. No, it's not that....

SUE ELLEN. *(Rushing in.)* Are you still feeling that vibration, Fiona?

FIONA. Well....

SUE ELLEN. Because I thought it might be the cat. Sometimes it gets stuck in the refrigerator.

DENISE. You have a cat?

SUE ELLEN. Well, Fred claims we don't.

FRED. Ah, forget it. Let's just play cards. Have a beer, Wendell.

WENDELL. I brought a nice box of chardonnay. Do you want me to get the chips, Homer?

HOMER. Sure. *(Wendell crosses to small table s.l., pours himself some wine in a plastic cup and looks for the poker chips.)*

DENISE. I don't understand. Do you have a cat or not?

FIONA. *(Covering her mouth.)* Oh, goddess! A cat? I'm allergic!

CORINE. She doesn't have a cat.

SUE ELLEN. I might. I'll check the oven. *(Picks up Corine's bags and exits quickly.)*

WALT. I could look at your sink, Homer. I've got some tools in the car.

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FRED. Get your mind out of the bathroom for a minute, Walt. Have a beer and let's play cards!

WALT. I better not. It goes right through me.

WENDELL. I found the cards, but I'm not seeing the chips, Homer.

(Homer crosses to the small table.)

FIONA. I can't be around a cat.

CORINE. She doesn't have a cat!

DENISE. How do you know?

CORINE. Because if Sue Ellen had a cat it would either be frozen in the refrigerator or baked in the oven by now.

HOMER. She must have hid them.

WALT. Who?

HOMER. Corine. She hid the chips.

SUE ELLEN. *(Poking her head in.)* You gals want snacks?

FIONA. I brought hummus. Do you have any pita bread?

DENISE. Open the vodka. *(Sue Ellen disappears into the kitchen.)*

WENDELL. Why in the world would she do that?

HOMER. To mess with me, that's why!

FRED. I think you're getting paranoid, Homer. I'll bet they're around here somewhere. *(They all, except for Homer, look around the apartment.)*

SUE ELLEN. *(Enters with a bowl of potato chips and a box of poker chips.)* No pita bread. But Corine brought potato chips.

DENISE. Potato chips? Who do you think we are, the guys? *(Sue Ellen puts the bowl of potato chips on the coffee table and the poker chips on the back table.)*

HOMER. You're wasting your time. They're gone. She threw them out or something.

WALT. Should I check your garbage can?

WENDELL. Oh, if they've been in the garbage can, I can't play.

HOMER. They're not in the garbage.

FRED. Forget the chips. We'll play with pennies. What have you got? *(They all, except for Homer, check their pockets.)*

DENISE. *(Picks up the box of poker chips and looks at them.)* Aren't these the chips the guys use for their game?

SUE ELLEN. *(Gasps, runs over.)* Oh my gosh! Are they? Are these their

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poker chips?

CORINE. Could be.

WENDELL. I have three cents. I mean, who has pennies anymore?

WALT. I have two pennies and four washers.

FRED. Great. I've got a nickel.

HOMER. She probably threw them in the effin' river or melted them down – just for fun.

DENISE. Did you take their chips... on purpose? Seriously?

CORINE. They'll survive.

FIONA. Oooo. Bad karma.

FRED. So we'll play without chips.

WENDELL. *(Taking out his smartphone.)* Hold on....

SUE ELLEN. *(Taking the poker chips.)* I'll run them next door.

CORINE. Don't!

DENISE. Why?

WENDELL. Maybe I can keep track on this app.

CORINE. They can play without chips.

DENISE. *(Taking out her smartphone.)* I'll ask Walt if they need them.

CORINE. No – we agreed, no texting when we get together. Don't be an enabler. They're big boys.

DENISE. *(Putting the phone away.)* Can they play without chips?

WALT. We can't play without chips.

WENDELL. This app's not going to work. But playing without chips – that makes me feel weird.

FRED. What the hell are you talking about?

SUE ELLEN. It'll take two seconds. Right next door.

WALT. *(Starting for the kitchen door.)* I'll check the garbage can.

CORINE. Forget the chips!

FRED. Forget the chips. Let's just play. Wendell can use his app.

WENDELL. It doesn't seem to have the proper functions.

CORINE. Come on, let's talk about the damn book.

SUE ELLEN. *(Puts the chips down.)* I think I left my book in the kitchen.
(She exits.)

WENDELL. Homer, why don't you text Corine and ask her if she knows where they are.

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FRED. Come on, we don't need the chips. And we're not going to be texting our wives every five minutes. We have this game to get a break from them once a week.

WALT. Hey, I've got an idea. I have some Necco Wafers. *(Produces two rolls from his pocket.)*

FRED. There ya go. Walt comes through with some forty-year-old candy.

WALT. I just bought them at the dollar store.

WENDELL. Oh! I like Necco Wafers. I didn't know they still made those things. Haven't had them since I was a kid. How about you, Homer? Since you were a kid?

HOMER. Whatever.

WALT. I rarely go to the dollar store. No men's room. *(The boys get the table set up for the game. Walt takes off his shoes.)*

FIONA. *(Hesitant to sit, as Sue Ellen enters.)* Does the cat lay on this couch, Sue Ellen?

SUE ELLEN. Only when no one's around.

FRED. Come on, snap out of it, Homer.

HOMER. I can't effin' stand it anymore.

FIONA. I don't want to break out in hives.

CORINE. I'm surprised you don't break out in rainbows and little unicorns.

DENISE. Enough, Corine.

FIONA. *(To Corine.)* May the Goddess bring you love and light. *(Corine just holds up her hand to make it stop.)*

WALT. I get 'em at that dollar store on Fairfax. Good candy aisle, but no men's room. The one on Latimore Street has a men's room, but their candy aisle is lacking.

WENDELL. What can't you stand anymore, Homer?

HOMER. Corine. It's too much. This week it's the chips. Last week she emptied a bottle of effin' Elmer's Glue into our deck of cards.

WENDELL. Oh yeah... You know I'm using that as a door stop in my tool shed? So not a total loss.

SUE ELLEN. It's really frustrating because Fred – Well, it's not really our cat.

DENISE. Whose cat is it?

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CORINE. The Invisible Man's.

SUE ELLEN. You think so? That might explain a lot!

FRED. Give it a rest, fellas. Let's get on with the game already. And would everyone please just turn off your damn phones so we're not disturbed. (*Wendell and Walt do so.*)

WENDELL. You're asking a lot, Fred. Cutting us off from the outside world.

FRED. That's the point.

CORINE. Can we discuss the damn book please?

SUE ELLEN. Did ya hear that? The cat's in the dish cupboard. (*She runs out. The other women take seats.*)

FRED. So here's what we'll do. The white Necco Wafers are worth five, the pink ten, the chocolate twenty-five, and the licorice fifty.

WALT. Wait a minute, wait a minute. Why is the licorice worth fifty? Shouldn't the chocolate be fifty since chocolate is worth more?

WENDELL. Yeah, I don't like licorice so much.

FRED. What difference does it make?

CORINE. Who wants to start?

FIONA. Shouldn't we wait for Sue Ellen?

CORINE. What's the difference? She'll catch up.

DENISE. She'll be out in a minute.

WALT. Chocolate is more expensive. It's a fact. The price has gone up. Global warming or something. The chocolate ones should be worth more than the licorice.

WENDELL. Licorice I could do without entirely. Strawberry – now *there's* a flavor.

FRED. Well, there aren't any strawberry Necco Wafers.

WENDELL. I know. But if there were, why they'd be worth a hundred. What do you think, Homer? Wouldn't strawberry be worth a hundred?

HOMER. I don't care.

SUE ELLEN. (*Bursting in.*) Well, I went through all of the cupboards and then realized I couldn't remember what I was looking for. What was I looking for?

DENISE. The cat.

SUE ELLEN. Right! The cat. (*She starts to head out again.*)

LIKE SITTING DUCKS

CORINE. Sue Ellen, never mind the cat! Let's just get on with the book.

SUE ELLEN. But—

CORINE. Sit!

SUE ELLEN. But—

CORINE. Sit! *(Sue Ellen reluctantly sits.)*

WENDELL. *(As Fred doles out the Necco Wafers.)* Also, personally, I think the pink should be worth five and white ones ten.

FRED. What?

WENDELL. The white ones taste better.

CORINE. Who wants to start? *(The women look around at each other, waiting.)*

FRED. What are you—

WENDELL. *(To Fred.)* Here, taste a white one.

FRED. *(Knocks it out of his hand.)* Will you put that down! What's the matter with you?

WALT. Aren't the pink ones strawberry?

FRED. *(Burying his head in his hands.)* Oh my god...

WENDELL. If they are, they're worth a hundred. *(Pops a pink one in his mouth.)*

DENISE. Okay, I'll start. To me, the most interesting part of the story is when Gwendolyn first suspects that her husband has a deep secret.

SUE ELLEN. Oh, yeah! That was good! The secret! *(Corine looks through her book.)*

WENDELL. Well, it ain't strawberry. I don't know what flavor that's supposed to be.

FRED. Never mind!

WALT. Let me see. *(He tastes one.)*

CORINE. Gwendolyn? Who the hell is Gwendolyn?

DENISE. Gwendolyn Roberts. The heiress.

WALT. It tastes like.... I can't tell. It just tastes like a Necco Wafer.

WENDELL. Then maybe it shouldn't be worth anything.

FRED. It has to be worth—. Look, why don't we just leave the values as I said them in the first place?

CORINE. There's no Gwendolyn in this book. What are you reading? *(She grabs Denise's book.)*

LIKE SITTING DUCKS

WALT. Then deal me out.

FRED. Walt!

CORINE. “Sandals and Slippers”? This isn’t even the right book. We’re supposed to be reading “Avalanche of Tears.”

DENISE. (*Grabs Corine’s book.*) What are you talking about?

WALT. It’s a matter of principle.

WENDELL. You know, he’s got a point there. Good point, Walt.

DENISE. “Avalanche of Tears”? I’ve never even heard of this book.

CORINE. We all agreed on “Avalanche of Tears” for this month. (*To the others.*) Didn’t we? (*Sue Ellen and Fiona hold up their copies of “Avalanche of Tears”.*)

SUE ELLEN and FIONA. Yup, yes. “Avalanche of Tears.”

FRED. Are you telling me that you’re going to hold up this poker game because white Necco Wafers taste better than pink ones?

WENDELL. And chocolate’s more expensive than licorice. Isn’t it, Walt? Definitely worth more.

DENISE. Well, then, I’m just a horse’s ass. Sorry. I’ll just listen, then, and catch up next week.

FRED. Homer, help me out here.

WALT. Are you sure we can’t just find the poker chips, Homer? That would solve everything.

HOMER. They’re gone! Forget it! Corine effin’ destroyed them!

WENDELL. See! Blame Corine, not us. Right, Walt?

CORINE. Go ahead, Sue Ellen. What’s your take on the book?

FRED. Well, we could use the Necco Wafers if you guys would stop being babies about it. And stop blaming Homer’s wife.

SUE ELLEN. Ummm. Hey, I forgot the drinks. I’ll be right back. (*Rushing out.*) Don’t go over any of the juicy details without me. (*Exits.*)

WALT. But it’s her fault. Every week she does something to disrupt our game.

WENDELL. Walt, I think you’re upsetting Homer. Are you upset, Homer? He didn’t mean it.

SUE ELLEN. (*Poking her head in.*) Iced teas all around? (*Before they have chance to answer.*) Cool! (*Exits.*)

DENISE. We brought wine and vodka, Sue Ellen!

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SUE ELLEN. (*Offstage.*) Ha! Iced tea! Cool! Get it?

WALT. Hey, Homer, I didn't mean to...

FRED. Nice going, Walt. Never mind him, Homer. Corine might be, shall we say, a bit headstrong, but she is your wife. Walt, I should knock your block off.

WALT. You wouldn't! Uh-oh.... Homer, I have to use your bathroom again. (*Hurries out.*)

FRED. This is just great. (*Fred shuffles the cards while Homer continues to fume.*)

SUE ELLEN. (*Enters with a single large glass of iced tea.*) I only have enough for one big glass, but we can share, right? Okay, Fiona, go. (*Denise gets up and gets the bottle of vodka and brings it back to the group.*)

FIONA. Me? Oh, okay, uh... I think, uh, "Avalanche of Tears" is a highly provocative tour de force sure to challenge traditional notions of how women and men relate to one another in the twenty-first century...."

CORINE. Fiona....

FIONA. "Author Camilla Mathews knows how to stir the pot in this delicious potboiler--"

CORINE. Fiona – you're just reading the blurb on the back of the book.

FIONA. Yes... but I agree with it.

FRED. The nerve of that guy. One minute he insults Homer's wife right to his face, and the next second he wants to pee in his toilet.

WENDELL. Well, Fred, when he's got to go he's got to go.

CORINE. You didn't read it either, did you?

FIONA. I started to, but—

CORINE. Sue Ellen?

SUE ELLEN. Well, the truth of the matter is, I'm not sure if I read it or not. I mean I might have. It sounds familiar from Fiona's description....

CORINE. So nobody's read it?

FRED. Walt! Hurry up, will ya! Jeez, how much can that guy hold?

WENDELL. Not much, apparently.

DENISE. (*To Corine.*) Have you read it?

CORINE. I've read more of it than anyone else here.

DENISE. So you haven't.

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HOMER. Walt's right. It is her fault. Corine is a monumental effin' pain in my neck, a bag full of needles, a deliberate stab in the kidneys. And it's high time I did something about it.

CORINE. Look, not only have I had to cope with this bum wrist all week, I've had to cope with that bum husband of mine who does nothing to help.

FRED. Homer, you've got a funny look in your eye.

WENDELL. He looks strange. Homer, you look strange.

SUE ELLEN. Homer?

CORINE. No, my *other* bum husband. Yes, Homer!

SUE ELLEN. Oh, I like Homer. He's a sweetheart.

FIONA. Sue Ellen, is this the chair the cat sleeps on? I'm starting to itch.

SUE ELLEN. (*Panicked.*) Maybe you're sitting on the cat! (*Fiona jumps from the chair. They look around for it.*)

HOMER. I'm tired of bowing and scraping to her... towing her line... that's all I do. I have to make it stop.

WENDELL. Bowing's okay. Scraping not so much.

CORINE. (*To Sue Ellen.*) What's to like about Homer? He's spineless, can't make a decision on his own....

HOMER. I've decided. I'm going to get rid of Corine.

FRED. Divorce is a big deal, Homer.

HOMER. I'm not talking about effin' divorce.

FRED. Oh, come on, Homer. You don't know what you're saying.

WENDELL. How do you plan to do it, Homer?

FRED. Wendell!

DENISE. Oh, stop it, Corine. Homer's not that bad. If anything, he's sweet and harmless.

FRED. Get serious, Homer. Like you would really murder Corine.

WENDELL. Murder! Oh, I don't like that word – murder!

CORINE. Sweet like a toothache.

FIONA. What you need are some coping skills, Corine. I can teach you some aurora meditations.

CORINE. Oh, go look for the cat, will you?

HOMER. I don't care what it's called or how I do it, but I know it has to be done.

FRED. Homer, you do know that murder is usually illegal, right? And that

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people who commit murder get sent to prison?

WENDELL. Prison! Oh, I don't like that word either.

SUE ELLEN. (*Quietly to Fiona.*) Is she saying that I really do have a cat?

CORINE. I swear... if I thought I could get away with it, I'd....

WALT. (*Entering.*) Prison? What are you talking about?

WENDELL. Homer's going to kill his wife.

WALT. What's been going on in here!

DENISE. Well, you couldn't get away with it. You're being ridiculous.

CORINE. Am I?

HOMER. I mean it, fellas. I'm being completely rational about this. You know what Corine is like.

CORINE. Don't be so sure. I've about had it with that little hairless primate.

HOMER. You don't understand. You guys are lucky. You don't have the same kinds of issues with your wives.

FRED. Of course we do, Homer. Maybe not exactly, but our wives drive us nuts, too, in their own way. It's natural. And sure, like all red-blooded guys, we all have our little fantasies about what our lives would be like if they were out of the picture.

DENISE. You've got to chill out, Corine. You're going to give yourself an embolism.

CORINE. Easy for you to say. None of you have to put up with his nonsense.

HOMER. With Corine out of the way, I'd be able to do whatever I want whenever I effin' want. I could do things my way.

WENDELL. Hey, that'd be nice, wouldn't it? Do whatcha wanna do?

FRED. You're dreamin', Homer.

WALT. I don't like this. Come on, let's play cards.

CORINE. Besides, no offense, but none of your husbands are prize-winners either.

SUE ELLEN. Not true! My Freddy won six dollars in the lotto scratch-off just last week.

CORINE. My point exactly.

FRED. My point is, Homer, that we all have our little... challenges with our wives, just as I'm sure they do with us, but it always blows over.

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That's just part of being married. Maybe you just need to stand up to Corine a little. I think she'd respect that.

WENDELL. Walt, can I have one of these Necco Wafers?

WALT. Sure. Hey, give me a chocolate one.

WENDELL. Worth a hundred, right?

DENISE. Are we going to talk about the book or not?

CORINE. No one's read it!

FIONA. *(Scratching.)* Sue Ellen, do you have any Benadryl? The cat is really getting to me. *(Sue Ellen runs to the kitchen.)*

FRED. What I'm saying is, you're not alone, Homer. I'll prove it to you. What's the worst thing Corine has ever done to you?

HOMER. You mean besides marry me?

WENDELL. Heh! That's a good one, Homer! "Besides marry me!" Heh! That's a good one!

CORINE. Do you mean to tell me that you all don't think you'd be better off without your husbands?

HOMER. *(Stands.)* Okay, listen to this.

CORINE. *(Stands.)* Just listen to what Homer did last week.

HOMER. Last week, just after she sprained her wrist, I offered to make something special for dinner for her...

CORINE. I had just fractured my wrist, so I was in a lot of pain, and after practically begging him, he reluctantly agreed to make me something to eat...

WENDELL. Was it beef stew, Homer? I'll bet it was that canned beef stew. That's easy.

FIONA. Homer's a good cook, isn't he?

HOMER. No, I made her my lasagna. It took hours.

CORINE. Hardly. After what seemed like forever, he brings out this platter of hard noodles and bad cheese doused in ketchup.

HOMER. Homemade sauce. It's my mother's recipe and it's Corine's favorite.

CORINE. He has the nerve to call it lasagna – and I hate it! His mother used to make the same awful stuff. I think that's what killed her husband.

HOMER. She takes one bite, spits it out, takes it into the kitchen, and scrapes it into the garbage disposal. Then she says it's probably what killed

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my father!

WENDELL. Oh, that wasn't nice. Even if it was death by lasagna.

WALT. Garbage disposal workin' ok, Homer?

CORINE. I couldn't eat it!

DENISE. Well, at least he tried.

CORINE. Don't you see what he did? It was intentional! He resented having to make me dinner because of my crippled condition and intentionally tried to make me sick.

SUE ELLEN. (*Popping her head in.*) Sicker! (*Back out.*)

CORINE. Yes! Sicker!

WENDELL. That's sick.

HOMER. I go out of my way to take care of her, and she practically spits in my effin' face.

CORINE. It's a deliberate slap in the face.

FRED. So that's the worst thing?

HOMER. Recently. The worst thing *recently*.

DENISE. So he's not a good cook. So what.

CORINE. You don't get it.

FRED. I gotta tell ya, Homer. That's not so horrible. I think the rest of us have put up with stuff just as bad – maybe worse.

SUE ELLEN. (*Charging in with a bunch of grapes. To Fiona.*) I can't find the Benadryl, but I have these.

FIONA. (*Still scratching.*) Grapes? What good will those do me?

SUE ELLEN. Well, Benadryl is grape favored, isn't it?

CORINE. Just take some imaginary Benadryl for the imaginary allergy to the imaginary cat!

SUE ELLEN. (*Quietly to Fiona.*) I don't have any of that either. (*Fiona sits and begins eating the grapes.*)

FRED. Tell him, Wendell. Tell Homer what it's like for you.

WENDELL. Well, Corine's never done anything like that to me, Fred. I don't know.

FRED. Not Corine, you dope. *Your* wife. Never mind. Walt, I know you and Denise must have issues.

CORINE. Denise, come on, be honest. Are you telling me that you and Walt don't have big problems?

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WALT. Well....

DENISE. If we do, that's none of your business.

CORINE. Aha! So there is something.

FRED. Come on, Walt. I mean, you and Denise? Forgive my saying so, but you two don't look like you're from the same planet, never mind married. Out with it. Homer needs to know.

FIONA. It's all right, Denise. You're among friends. *(To Sue Ellen, referring to the grapes.)* Hey, I think these are working. *(Sue Ellen gives her a thumbs up.)*

WALT. Well, sometimes she does make snide comments about my... little problem. But so do you guys!

FRED. But we're your friends. Your wife's not your friend, is she?

WALT. Well.... *(Walt takes a seat to the right, next to the dividing wall.)*

DENISE. Look, Walt and I have been married a long time – fifteen years. People change a lot over fifteen years. *(Denise moves left, right next to Walt.)*

WENDELL. Take your time, Walt. Have another Necco Wafer.

DENISE. You wouldn't know it to look at him today, but Walt was a real bad-ass fifteen years ago. He was in a band – that's how I met him – he rode a motorcycle, he was slim, muscular, handsome....

WALT. I just don't think she looks at me the same way she did when we were first married.

DENISE. He was exciting. He reminded me of Sean Penn.

CORINE. This is Walt you're talking about?

WALT. Sure, I've gained a little weight. I don't have the most exciting job in the world. But I make a good living. I take good care of Denise.

DENISE. And now he just doesn't take care of himself.

WALT. And, you know, people get older.

WENDELL. And of course there's your little problem.

WALT. Yeah, thanks, Wendell.

DENISE. And then there's his little problem he's developed.

WALT. But I can't help that, can I?

DENISE. He refuses to go to a urologist.

HOMER. But you get along alright. She doesn't make you crazy.

WALT. Well...

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DENISE. It's so bad that it's become a problem for both of us. Last March we went to visit my sister in Arizona, and we went up to the Grand Canyon.

WALT. Did I tell you about our vacation to the Grand Canyon last spring?

DENISE. We're there with my sister and her husband and we're looking out over the canyon.... This is going to sound petty of me....

WALT. We went with her sister and her husband and were having a pretty good time, but.... This is going to sound awful of me....

DENISE. Well, sometimes Walt's "condition" is aggravated by running water, right?

SUE ELLEN. Definitely a problem for a plumber.

FRED. Go on, Walt.

DENISE. And there's the Colorado River running at the bottom of the canyon.

WALT. Well, suddenly I needed to go. But I was handling it alright....

DENISE. So Walt starts fidgeting, and I know what that means.

WALT. Then out of nowhere Denise starts going on about the new Sean Penn movie she just saw.

DENISE. And I could tell my sister and her husband were starting to notice, so I tried to distract them by telling them about a movie I recently saw.

WALT. She's obsessed with Sean Penn!

DENISE. I don't even remember what it was.

WALT. Sean Penn! Sean Penn! That's all she could talk about! And I know it was a slight against me because she used to say I reminded her of him. *(Fred, Homer, and Wendell look at each other in bewilderment.)*

DENISE. I mean, how could the river be affecting him? It's a mile down, for crissakes!

WALT. Right in front of her sister and her husband. She knows it pushes my buttons. It was humiliating.

DENISE. And he's fidgeting like he's going to burst and fill up the whole canyon. It was very embarrassing!

WALT. I just wanted her to shut up.

DENISE. I just wanted to die!

WALT. And I had this fleeting thought as she was leaning over the railing

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looking down at the canyon... that all it would take is one little accidental shove... and she'd be quiet... she'd be gone....

DENISE. Or at least be at the bottom of that canyon... in a raft, drifting peacefully away....

WENDELL. I'm dying of suspense. Did you do it, Walt?

WALT. Of course I didn't. But I'll tell you, fellas, in that brief, fleeting moment, in that imagined silence, I felt so free. I even lost the urge to pee.

WENDELL. A little miracle.

DENISE. And I just saw that as the perfect metaphor for how Walt and I have drifted apart. I mean, look at us. Do we look like we belong together?
(She returns to the couch.)

FRED. Ya see, Homer. We're all in the same boat. *(Walt goes back to the table for more Necco Wafers.)*

CORINE. Homer and I haven't been drifting apart. I've been paddling away as fast as I can.

HOMER. We're all in the same boat alright: The Good Ship Miserable.

FIONA. This is getting way too negative.

HOMER. Did you hear what Walt said? Did you hear that phrase he used?

WENDELL. Yes. "Lost the urge to pee."

HOMER. No!

CORINE. Sue Ellen, do you have an ice pack? My wrist is starting to ache like the devil.

SUE ELLEN. Oh! You bet! *(Exits into kitchen.)*

HOMER. He said, "I felt so free." Free! Freedom! Freedom is what it's all about.

FIONA. When you focus on the negative aspects of your life, what you get is negativity clouding your chakras... unhappiness, bad feelings.

CORINE. Oh, stop.

FIONA. I'm serious. You become a prisoner of your own negativity.

HOMER. Isn't that why we arrange this poker game every week? To be free from our wives for a few blessed effin' hours?

SUE ELLEN. *(Bursting in with a frozen TV dinner and a roll of duct tape.)* I don't have an ice pack, but this Salisbury steak will do the trick. *(She takes the dinner out of the box and tapes it to Corine's wrist.)* In fact, this is better. Those frozen mashed potatoes never thaw out.

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HOMER. Isn't that why you come here, Fred?

WENDELL. Not Fred. His Sue Ellen is an angel. Isn't she, Fred? An angel?

FRED. Ha! Let's see, how can I put this...? (*Paces as he thinks it over.*)

FIONA. All that negativity broadcasts to the universe, and the universe says, "Oh, okay. I hear you. That's what you want? That's what you get." And all of that darkness manifests into the physical world. Why do you think you have pain in your wrist, Corine? Your negative feelings about Homer are all bunched up in your wrist. They've made you a prisoner of your negative thoughts. You're shackled – handcuffed – to your unaffirmative well-being.

CORINE. I'm not shackled to my unaffirmative well-being. I've got a friggin' frozen Salisbury dinner duct-taped to my wrist!

SUE ELLEN. Yeah, it'll start to feel better in... (*Checks the directions on the box.*) ... about twenty-two minutes.

FRED. She's insane!

WENDELL. But she's so sweet. Sweet girl.

FRED. She's completely out of her mind – and she's driving me out of mine.

CORINE. How does Fred put up with you, Sue Ellen?

SUE ELLEN. Oh, I'm just a lucky girl.

CORINE. Not that Fred is any prize package.

FRED. I haven't had a decent meal at home in three weeks because all of the groceries she buys are for a non-existent cat.

WENDELL. At least it doesn't eat much.

SUE ELLEN. What do you mean? My Freddie is the best!

FRED. I can't watch a TV show. And do you know what she does with my Popular Science magazines? She takes a magic marker and makes "corrections" to all the articles.

CORINE. The best what?

FRED. For example, did you know that, according to Sue Ellen, the rover vehicles on Mars were "invented" by Bruno Mars?

WENDELL. Really? What a clever guy!

FRED. No, Wendell! I don't know where she gets these ideas, but she gets them in her head and they become facts. Then she ruins all my magazines.

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CORINE. He hasn't had a job in three years, has he?

SUE ELLEN. Well, that's true. He hasn't been working.

FRED. Do you know what she does with my Sports Illustrated magazines – the swimsuit issue – with her magic markers? She doesn't draw clothes on the models, as perhaps you'd expect. She draws blindfolds on them! Now what the hell sense does that make?

WALT. God bless her.

SUE ELLEN. I love my Freddie to death, don't get me wrong. But it is wearing a teensie-weensie little thin that he's not working.

FIONA. Is he looking?

SUE ELLEN. I mean he's not even looking anymore. And I have to work double shifts to pay bills.

WALT. Excuse me, gents! *(Runs off to the bathroom.)*

SUE ELLEN. *(Getting agitated.)* What's the deal with that? He just sits around watching TV re-runs and looking through his magazines! And I have to come home and make him dinner! *(Denise has found one of the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue magazines.)*

WENDELL. Do you know that Bruno Mars song "Just the Way You Are"? I read that he wrote that about his pet ferret.

HOMER. You see, Fred. You're just as fed up as I am.

DENISE. Sue Ellen ... Why do all the half-naked girls have blindfolds drawn on them?

FRED. Maybe so, Homer. Maybe so.

DENISE. Your husband's a twisted freak. He's more interesting than I thought.

SUE ELLEN. It is freakish, isn't it? To sit around all day while I work sixteen hours at the department store. He should be fixing me dinner! It's freakish!

FIONA. He needs his chakras re-aligned.

CORINE. He needs a whump upside the head!

FRED. Maybe I need my head examined thinking all this nonsense is normal.

SUE ELLEN. No wonder the cat won't go near him.

WALT. *(Entering.)* False alarm.

HOMER. What about you, Wendell? You and Fiona were even in

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marriage counseling, weren't you?

CORINE. And you, Fiona, despite all your jabber about positive energy, you couldn't possibly be getting along with Wendell.

WENDELL. For a while, yeah... But then she thought that us doing tantric yoga together would rekindle our love life.

FIONA. We're working on it. We're very much into tantric yoga.

CORINE and FRED. What the hell is that?

FIONA. It's a wonderful yoga practice for couples, to help expand the connection and awareness between us.

WENDELL. It's this weird yoga thing for couples that's supposed to mix our energies together or some crazy thing.

SUE ELLEN. Oh, that sounds nice.

FRED. Sounds loopy to me.

FIONA and WENDELL. Oh, it is!

FIONA. But Wendell just can't seem to get the poses right.

WENDELL. This weird Yab Yum pose, I sit cross-legged on the floor and Fiona sits on my thighs.

FRED. Yab Yum? It sounds positively pornographic so far.

FIONA. He's on the floor and I sit on his thighs... but he keeps squirming...

WENDELL. Hardly. It's painful. Plus, with all the squirming around, she keeps breaking my glasses with her elbow!

FIONA. ...fidgeting so much that his glasses get broken.

WENDELL. This is my third pair of glasses this month. And I'm not sure I like these frames. You don't think they make me look too thin, do you, Walt?

WALT. Nice frames, Wendell.

FIONA. And without his glasses he's practically blind, so he keeps knocking me in the nose with his foot.

CORINE. What the hell kind of yoga is this?

WENDELL. What do you think, Homer? Too thin?

HOMER. Finish the effin' story, Wendell.

WENDELL. Well, three pair of glasses! It gets really expensive, you know?

FIONA. So he's stumbling around like a blind mole and I've got a bloody

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nose, and he just ruins the energy of the whole thing.

WENDELL. And I'm not really into it in the first place, and I'm sorry but I start to get p-o'd!

WALT. You, Wendell?

WENDELL. Really p-o'd!

FIONA. I tried really hard to keep myself centered.

HOMER. So you told her off, right?

FIONA. But sometimes Wendell is such a dufuss!

CORINE. (*Mocking.*) Who, Wendell?

FIONA. A damn dufuss!

WENDELL. I just wanted a break from it all, and I remember thinking, "Jeez, I wish she'd go visit her mother for a long stay!"

WALT. See, fellas. That's not as serious as murder.

WENDELL. Oh, yes it is. Her mother's been dead for six years.

FIONA. My mother warned me not to marry him.

HOMER. Aha! You see! Even Wendell wants to be free from his wife!

DENISE. I guess none of us are really happy.

CORINE. Damn straight!

HOMER. I say we take this seriously, to do this. Let's take a vote.

WALT. A vote? On what?

SUE ELLEN. Well, maybe we could all be happier, but I mean it's not killing us, is it?

HOMER. On whether or not we should kill our wives.

WENDELL. Oh, that's right. A vote? Oh, good, good.

CORINE. (*Fussing with the TV dinner.*) Would you get this damn thing off me! (*Sue Ellen helps her get it off her wrist.*)

HOMER. I'll cast the first vote. I say yes. (*Takes a Necco Wafer and throws it into the center of the table.*) Fred?

FRED. (*Throws a Necco Wafer to the center of the table.*) I'm in.

HOMER. Wendell?

WENDELL. Well, wait, let me think....

SUE ELLEN. See that? Mashed potatoes are still as hard as an iceberg.

CORINE. Let me tell you something. Those guys—Hey, my wrist actually feels better.

SUE ELLEN. Hungry Man comes to the rescue.

LIKE SITTING DUCKS

WENDELL. Kill them, eh? I don't think Fiona would approve of that.

FRED. She won't have to approve, Wendell! She'll be on her way out! You won't have to answer to her anymore.

CORINE. Let me tell you something. We'd all be better off without those guys. All of us.

WENDELL. That's right! I won't, will I?

WALT. You guys are out of your minds. Murder? I don't think I could really do it.

FRED. What?

FIONA. This is all devolving into something very, very negative. I'm beginning to sense something strange.

CORINE. Oh, stop it.

DENISE. No, she's right. I'm getting weird vibes, too.

SUE ELLEN. Should I get more grapes?

FRED. Walt, listen to me. Listen. Come over here. (*Fred and Homer walk Walt downstage.*)

DENISE. Something to do... with Walt.

CORINE. What are you doing? (*At Fiona.*) She's supposed to be the wacked-out one!

FRED. Now imagine yourself in Arizona again. You're at the Grand Canyon with Denise. Can you picture it? (*Walt closes his eyes.*)

DENISE. I know, it's really weird.

FIONA. She's picking up my channeling frequency....

SUE ELLEN. Should I get the remote? (*She gets it.*)

FIONA. ... because it has to do with Walt.

CORINE. I knew they were up to no good.

FRED. You're looking out over the beautiful scenery. Suddenly, something dark and gloomy looms over you and hovers over your head. Do you know what that is, Walt?

WALT. Smog?

CORINE. (*Denise starts to tremble.*) What the—!

FIONA. It's ok – she's going into a trance!

SUE ELLEN. (*Approaching.*) Jeepers!

HOMER. No, Walt, it's not smog.

FRED. It's the haunting shadow... of Sean Penn!

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WALT. Sean Penn! Gahhh!

DENISE. *(In her trance.)* Sean Penn....

CORINE. *(Approaching.)* Knock it off, Denise, you're freakin' me out.

SUE ELLEN. *(Pointing the remote at Denise.)* It's not working. She won't shut off.

FRED. Denise is really letting you have it! Sean Penn this—

HOMER. And Sean Penn that—!

FIONA. Sue Ellen, cut it out!

DENISE. Walt... Sean Penn... Walt... Sean Penn...

CORINE. Somebody slap her or something!

FRED. And you've got to make it stop, Walt!

SUE ELLEN. Jeepers creepers! Can you make it stop?

HOMER. And it would just take one little shove over the railing... and she and Sean Penn would be gone forever.

WALT. Forever?

DENISE. No, never....

FRED. Forever, Walt

HOMER. Now get up behind her... *(Fred and Homer get behind Walt.)*

FIONA. Sue Ellen, get something! She's going into shock! *(Sue Ellen fetches the grapes.)*

FRED. Get ready...!

CORINE. Steady, Denise! *(Denise shakes uncontrollably. Corine and Fiona try to steady her.)*

HOMER. Ready!

FIONA. Steady!

FRED and HOMER. PUSH! *(Denise collapses to the floor, bringing Corine and Fiona down with her. Sue Ellen watches in horror, then starts eating the grapes. At the same time, Fred, Homer, and Walt tumble to the floor while Wendell watches helplessly.)*

WALT. I can do it! I did it!

CORINE. Sue Ellen, get some water! *(Sue Ellen dashes to the kitchen.)*

HOMER. You're free!

WALT. I'm free!

WENDELL. Atta boy, Walt! Hey, we should do this every Friday night. It's more fun than poker! *(Sue Ellen returns quickly with a spray bottle of*

LIKE SITTING DUCKS

water and spritzes them all.)

CORINE. What are you doing, you nitwit! Water for her to drink! *(Sue Ellen dashes out. The boys help Walt get up.)*

FRED. Now doesn't that feel good, Walt? *(Sue Ellen returns with a glass of water. Corine takes the glass and tries to get Denise to drink.)*

CORINE. Here, Denise. Drink.

HOMER. The chip, Walt. Throw in your chip!

FIONA. A sip, Denise. Just take a sip. *(The girls get Denise to stand; she's still shaky. Walt throws a Necco Wafer to the center of the table.)*

WALT. Three yesses!

HOMER. Three yesses – and one more to go. *(They all look at Wendell.)*

FRED. What do you say, Wendell?

DENISE. What happened?

SUE ELLEN. Your channel frequency went haywire!

FIONA. You went into a trance. Something about Walt and Sean Penn.

DENISE. What? That's nuts!

CORINE. No kiddin'!

WENDELL. I don't know. *(Getting upset.)* Aren't we just fooling around? I mean, you can't be serious. This isn't some game you're talking about. This is murder!

ALL MEN (except WENDELL). Yeah!

WALT. They convinced me, Wendell.

FIONA. *(Getting vibes.)* Something weird is going on here tonight.

SUE ELLEN. I'm getting nervous.

FIONA. Really weird!

CORINE. Oh, great. Now she's starting. *(Fiona starts to meditate.)*

WENDELL. No. Count me out. I don't want anything to do with it. Uh-uh.

FRED. What do you want, Wendell? What do you really want out of life?

WALT. Besides chocolate Necco Wafers.

FRED. *(To Walt.)* Shhh!

WENDELL. Well....

CORINE. Come on, Fiona. We've had enough of this nonsense.

SUE ELLEN. More water, Corine? More water? *(Corine just gives her a look.)*

LIKE SITTING DUCKS

WENDELL. What everyone wants, I guess. Peace... happiness....

HOMER. And do you have any of those things, Wendell?

WENDELL. No....

FRED. And why not, Wendell?

FIONA. It's okay. I know how to control it.

SUE ELLEN. She says it's okay, Corine. She knows how to control it.

HOMER. You know why, don't you, Wendell? Don't you?

FIONA. It's very strong... whatever it is. *(Wendell has been clutching something hanging around his neck.)*

WALT. What's that you're holding on to there, Wendell?

WENDELL. Nothing! *(Moving away from them.)* It's nothing!

CORINE. Oh, it's nothing, Fiona. Come on.

DENISE. No, it's something. I felt it.

HOMER. What is that, Wendell?

SUE ELLEN. What is it, Fiona?

WENDELL. Nothing! *(Moves farther away.)*

FRED. Come on, let's have it.

FIONA. It's getting stronger!

WENDELL. *(Clutching it tightly.)* No!

HOMER. Get him! *(Fiona glides around the room, arms outstretched, trying to envelope the vibrations. Sue Ellen follows her around with the spray bottle at the ready. Fred, Homer, and Walt chase Wendell around the card table, with ad libs, "Get him!" "Don't let him get away!" etc. Fiona stops, honing in on the vibration. The guys finally capture Wendell and pry the thing out of his hand.)*

WENDELL. No! Please no!

WALT. What is that thing?

FRED. What is this, Wendell?

DENISE. What are you sensing, Fiona?

WENDELL. It's my... talisman.

GUYS. Talisman?

FIONA. There's something brewing...

SUE ELLEN. Regular or decaf?

FIONA. No...

WALT. What's a talisman?

LIKE SITTING DUCKS

HOMER. It's a charm – for protection. Right, Wendell? (*Wendell, eyes closed, nods, clutching the talisman tightly.*)

FRED. Protection from what, Wendell?

FIONA. It's the guys – our husbands!

CORINE. I knew it! (*The girls gather around Fiona.*) What are they up to?

WENDELL. From my wife! From Fiona!

WALT. What? What for?

FIONA. Something....

WENDELL. She's--

FIONA. ... something...

WENDELL. She's a witch! (*A collective gasp!*)

FIONA. Something... diabolical! (*A collective gasp. Sue Ellen sprays the air with the water.*)

WALT. What do you mean she's a witch, Wendell?

WENDELL. I mean a witch! A real witch!

SUE ELLEN. Wow... something biological. I can't believe it! Like a poison plant?

FIONA. Not, biological, Sue Ellen. Diabolical! Evil!

SUE ELLEN. Wow... evil plants.

WALT. What do mean a real witch?

WENDELL. If she finds out what we're up to, she'll put a hex on me, or a spell. On all of us!

WALT. Oooo... I have to use your bathroom, Homer. (*He runs out.*)

DENISE. Are you sure, Fiona?

CORINE. What is it? What is it those knuckleheads are up to over there?

FIONA. I'm not sure....

WENDELL. (*Getting hysterical.*) All of us! We're all doomed!

HOMER. Wendell, get ahold of yourself!

WENDELL. DOOMED!

FRED. Wendell! Snap out of it! (*Fred slaps Wendell who screams like a little girl.*)

CORINE. (*Hearing the scream.*) What was that?

DENISE. It came from next door! (*The girls move toward the dividing wall.*)

LIKE SITTING DUCKS

FIONA. That was Wendell! I'd know that geeky scream anywhere.

CORINE. I knew they were up to something!

SUE ELLEN. Maybe he just got a good poker hand.

FRED. Look, your wife's not a real witch.

HOMER. They all just seem like effin' witches. I mean, look at Denise!

WENDELL. (*Clutching the talisman.*) No, no, no...

CORINE. Poker my ass! They're up to no good. They're plotting something. Is that what you're sensing, Fiona?

FIONA. It could be...

DENISE. (*To Corine.*) I thought you didn't believe in any of her powers.

CORINE. Powers or not, I'm telling you, those guys are up to no good!

SUE ELLEN. Who wants coffee?

FRED. All you have to do is vote yes with us and you won't have to wear that talisman anymore.

HOMER. You'll be free, Wendell. Just like the rest of us.

WENDELL. No, I'm scared.

WALT. (*Peeking out from the bathroom doorway.*) Me too!

CORINE. I say we go over there and find out what the hell's going on.

DENISE. Oh, come on. I'm sure it's nothing. We're getting all worked up over nothing.

FIONA. No, that scream meant something.

FRED. Don't be scared. Listen to me. We'll all be helping you. It'll be just like it was in Salem – we're going to get rid of all the witches. We'll be free, Wendell.

WENDELL. But... (*Walt enters.*)

FRED. Walt, get Wendell a glass of water, would you? (*Walt exits. The others try to keep Wendell calm.*)

CORINE. Well, I'm going over there. (*Starts for the door.*)

FIONA. No, wait! There's a better way. If they're really plotting something...

CORINE. Trust me, they are.

DENISE. Like what?

FIONA. If we go over there, they'll just feign innocence and make believe they've been playing poker.

SUE ELLEN. I'll call Freddy. (*Gets her cell phone. Walt enters with a*

LIKE SITTING DUCKS

glass of water and gives it to Wendell.)

FIONA. No, listen. We can stop them – whatever they’re up to – but we have to do it without them knowing.

DENISE. How the heck do we do that?

FIONA. With a spell!

FRED. Free, Wendell. No more spells.

WENDELL. No more spells...

CORINE. A spell? Are you serious?

FIONA. Very. A spell that binds the men and their actions.

HOMER. No more curses.

WENDELL. No more curses....

FIONA. But we have to do it together.

SUE ELLEN. Do we need the grapes or not?

WALT. Free, Wendell.

WENDELL. Free, Wendell...

FIONA. Everyone – form a circle.

DENISE. Is she serious?

CORINE. This is as serious as she gets, I’m afraid. *(The girls form a circle, holding hands.)*

FRED. Come on, men. Get the witches!

HOMER. Get the witches! *(The men form a circle, their hands on each others’ shoulders.)*

WALT and WENDELL. Get the witches!

FIONA. Now repeat with me: Auric Goddess, stop the men!

ALL MEN. Get the witches!

CORINE. This better do something. I feel like an ass.

FIONA. Auric Goddess, stop the men! *(The girls start moving in a clockwise circle. The men move in a counter-clockwise circle.)*

MEN. Get the witches!

WOMEN. Auric Goddess, stop the men!

MEN. Get the witches!

WOMEN. Auric Goddess, stop the men!

MEN. Get the witches!

WOMEN. Auric Goddess, stop the men! *(Their chants continue, increasing in intensity.... End of Act I.)*

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