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*An American Book of the Dead**

The Game Show†

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Also Available
From OWP

King Cat Calico Finally Flies Free!

by Aaron Henne

Ensemble of 11-16 M/F, Double Casting
No Intermission

Synopsis: Heidi Hendrickson is obsessed - she has 150 cats in her eleven hundred square foot apartment, including sixty dead ones in the Frigidaire. She has an especially intimate relationship with the alpha cat, one King Cat Calico, who keeps trying to escape this hellish, tuna tainted, feces stained prison, to no avail. A fun filled exploration of loneliness, possession, and the need to claim one's place in this uncertain world. Featuring a cameo by Rush Limbaugh, singing (literally) the praises of Oxy-Contin, or what he lovingly refers to as his 'little blues.'

Someone's Knocking

an odd little comedy

by Rich Orloff

3 Males, 2 Females, 1 either
(some play multiple roles)

Synopsis: Gladys has everything: a know-it-all husband, an affectionate pet TV set, and a life organized so she'll never have to venture "out there". But when Opportunity knocks on her door - literally - Gladys has to face both her family and fears as she works up the courage to learn about life on the other side of the door.

an american book of the dead*
THE GAME SHOW†
BY PAUL MULLIN

*Not an actual Book of the Dead.

†NOT AN ACTUAL GAME SHOW.

An American Book of the Dead* – The Game Show[†] was originally produced by Circle X Theatre at the Met theatre in Los Angeles, California, opening on April 12, 2002.

Directed By: Jim Anzide and Jonathan Westerberg

Ensemble:

Kim, Isabel, Emily, Ghost:	Wendy Abas
Tonya, Emma Goldman, Farmer, Sylvia:	Rebecca Avery
Spokesmodel, Aisha:	Jaime Bullock
Chin, Farmer, Tom Watson, TS Elliot, Ghost:	Conrad Cimarra
Etta, Bardo Guide, Maddy, Ghost:	Alix Elias
Husband, Hops, Carver, Jimmy, Paulie, Dr. Bill, Sinatra:	Thomas Craig Elliot
Host, Joao, Louis:	Kevin Fabian
Tom Hennessey:	Peter Friedrich
Cooper, Crispus, George, Langston, Ghost:	Yvans Jourdain
Bardo Voice, Harriet Tubman, Florida, Ghost, Sammy:	Ammenah Kaplan
Tim Long, Stonewall, Ezra, Ghost:	Richard Marshall
Announcer, Andie, Hi, Dino:	Michael McColl
Spokesmodel, Molly Pitcher:	Daniele O'Loughlin
Barry, Witherspoon, Jack, Uncle Walt:	William Salyers
Salted Wife, Surge, Jacqui Potts, Microsoft, Keely:	Kellie Waymire
Rev, Brace, Nathan, IBM:	Jonathan Winn

Production Team:

Producer:	Ken Metz
Scenic Design:	Gary Smoot
Lighting Design:	Michael E.R. Habicht
Sound Design & Original Music:	Tim Labor
Costume Design:	Cynthia Herteg & Rosemary Boyce
Stage Manager:	Jenni Weiland

Cast List*:

Announcer	Bardo Guide
Host	Stonewall Jackson
Spokesmodel 1	Harriet Tubman
Spokesmodel 2	Crispus Attucks
Kim	Emma Goldman
Toyna	Audie Murphy
Barry	Jack
Bardo Voice	Jimmy
Salted Wife	Irish Brigade Ghost 1
Salted Wife's Husband	Irish Brigade Ghost 2
Cheek Eye Chin	Irish Brigade Ghost 3
Tom Hennessy	Florida Wilson
Reverend Charles Loring Brace	Paulie Scarola
Hops Farmer	Aisha Houry
Cooper	Hi Pullman
Farmer 1	Maddy Middlebury
Farmer 2	George Jackson
Etta Bartels	Stevie O'Neill
Tim Long	The Gray Angel
Isabel	Walt Whitman
Surge	Tom Watson
Nathan	FDR
Jacqui Potts	Bill Gates
João Nascimento	
Randolph Witherspoon	
John Carver	

**Note that casting can be doubled, tripled and quadrupled such that a troupe of 13 actors could conceivably perform this play.*

ACT I

(House lights fade to half. The stage starts to pulse with bizarre, almost sickening colors. Follow spots chase randomly, while strobes flicker and sirens wail. An oddly insouciant voice exudes over the p.a.)

ANNOUNCER *(offstage)*: Listen. Relax. Concentrate.

Begin to become one with the Realization that you have very little control over what is about to happen. Think about that for a moment. Face it.

Listen. You're special. You have chosen or been chosen--how ever you choose to look at it-- to be the audience for tonight's round of...

(A spot picks up the Host, Blink Bodie, with two gorgeous, besequined Spokesmodels decorating each arm.)

HOST: An American Book of the Dead!

SPOKESMODEL 1 *(holding up a paper paddle with an asterisk printed on it:)* Asterisk.

HOST: The Game Show!

SPOKESMODEL 2 *(holding up her paddle with an obelisk[']):* Obelisk.

SPOKESMODEL 1: Not an actual Book of the Dead.

SPOKESMODEL 2: Not an actual game show.

ANNOUNCER: Whether you believe it or not, your entire life--

HOST: From the second you popped up in Mamma's oven, to this very instant... right.... NOW!

ANNOUNCER: --Has been a prologue to tonight's experiences.

HOST: Yup, something's about to change your so-called life forever.

ANNOUNCER: Relax.

HOST: It's nothing bad.

ANNOUNCER: It's actually pretty small in the big picture.

HOST: You're gonna die.

SPOKESMODEL 1: Asterisk.

ANNOUNCER: Stay calm. Don't be distracted.

SPOKESMODEL 2: Actual death not guaranteed.

ANNOUNCER: Walt Whitman says: "To die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier."

HOST: And today is your lucky, lucky, lucky, lucky day.

(A jet engine screams closer and closer until it finally explodes in a cacophony of sound and color.

Blackout.

Silence.)

ANNOUNCER: There. Now you're dead. Wasn't so bad, was it?

Now relax. Concentrate. In a moment, you will see the clear light of perfect understanding: your true self. If you can grasp it, become one with it, and understand it as your true nature, you will be enlightened--

(Quick spot up on Spokesmodel 1.)

SPOKESMODEL 1: Asterisk.

ANNOUNCER: And perfect happiness will surely be yours forever.

(Quick spot up on Spokesmodel 2.)

SPOKESMODEL 2: Individual experiences of enlightenment can and do vary.

ANNOUNCER: Relax. Allow no distractions. Center on this last chance to achieve true clarity and peace before all the games begin again.... Get ready. Concentrate.... Remember to focus on the white light and become one with it.

(A blinding flash goes off, then fades to darkness.

Spot up on Blink and the Spokesmodels.)

HOST: Did ya grasp it?

SPOKESMODEL 2: Any audience members achieving enlightenment and not wishing to sit through the rest of tonight's offerings may leave now.

SPOKESMODEL 1: Asterisk. Refunds, full or partial, are not available at this time.

HOST: Anyone at all?... Ah well... Take it away, Don!

ANNOUNCER: Blink, tonight three very, very lucky members of our audience will be selected to play the game.

(Three shafts of light stab suddenly and randomly into the audience.)

ANNOUNCER: Remain calm. It's true: you may be one of the three chosen; but odds are you'll just end up watching. So relax. You're good at that. You'll do fine.

HOST: Woo-ha! I'm pumped! Who do you have for us, Don?

ANNOUNCER: Well, Blink. In Sioux Falls, South Dakota, she worked as a secretary for a corporate real estate broker, with whom she had just broken off an utterly unfulfilling adulterous affair. In this wacky afterlife, who knows what will become of...

Kim Pettit! Come on up and play An American Book of the Dead!

(One of the beams fixes on an attractive but somewhat diffident young woman, who is then led by a pair of firemen up onto the stage.)

HOST: Christ! This is exciting! Who's next?

ANNOUNCER: Before his untimely demise, our second contestant was a software tester from Palo Alto, California.

Barry Schroeder, come up and play An American Book of the Dead!

(The light finds a bearded, somewhat dumpy fellow in his forties who is escorted to the stage by two police officers.)

HOST: Holy crap! I'm losing it! I'm completely losing it!!! Do we have one more?!

ANNOUNCER: That's right, Blink, she was a doctoral candidate in political science at Columbia University. Now she's getting her Ph.D. as in "dead"! How 'bout a big hand for Tonya Rey: come up and play An American Book of the Dead!

(The last shaft of light lands on a feisty young woman, who stands and struggles with the two E.M.T.'s who do their best to guide her onstage.)

ANNOUNCER: And now... Ladies and Gentleman... it is my unspeakable pleasure... to give you... your host... Blink Bodie!

(A follow spot lands on Blink.)

HOST: Thanks, Folks. Thank you! You're the most. Thank you.... Quit it!... Thank you! You're too much. STOP!

Folks, I gotta tell ya: what a threesome have we got for you tonight! Check out these contestants. Are ya kidding me? I smack damn guarantee ya we're in for a rockin' roller-coaster ride of the extra ordinary. I just can't wait. Can you?

EVERYONE: NO WAY, BLINK!

HOST: Well, then let's jump to it! What do you say!?!

EVERYONE: SOUNDS GREAT, BLINK!

HOST: Kim Petit.

KIM: Uh... hi.

HOST: Missy Kim, from Sioux Falls!

KIM: Uh... that's right...Blink.

HOST: Do you prefer Kim or Kimberly?

KIM: Well, it's funny. I do think Kimberly's prettier. Um... I mean, I probably prefer it. But you know, everyone calls me Kim. So.... Kim's easier I think. Don't you? Um... but... Kim's fine. I like Kim. I prefer Kim.

HOST: Kim, sweetie, focus up. What do you know about the rules of the game?

KIM: Um... nothing?

HOST: Well then, whaddya say we run through 'em for you, your opponents, and all those other fresh corpses you left out there in the audience?

KIM: Uh... sounds great to me, Blink.

HOST: Kim... Barry... Tonya... each of you is about to begin a series of lifetimes, during which you'll be trying to achieve something, some objective of your own choosing. Here at "An American Book of the Dead"--

SPOKESMODEL 1: Asterisk.

SPOKESMODEL 2: Obelisk.

HOST: -- We like to call it your soul-goal. The first person to reach their soul goal wins the game, and the grand prize.

Don, tell us a little something 'bout that grand prize.

ANNOUNCER: Well, Blink, the winner of tonight's game will receive complete, perfect, and instantaneous enlightenment!

That's right, folks. Picture yourself slipping into a state of imperceptible bliss as you come to the perfectly crystalline understanding of the entire truth of all existence. You'll be the envy of all your friends with your utterly unwavering knowledge that emptiness is form and form emptiness; that there is no such thing as birth, growing old and dying, and no end to birth, growing old and dying, no suffering and no end to suffering. Indeed, no enlightenment to be attained and no end to attainment.

HOST: Sounds great, Don. And what's second prize?

ANNOUNCER: An all-expenses-paid trip to Cabo!

HOST: Great. So really either way you're golden.

But first you gotta pick a soul goal. It can be anything. It can be--

SPOKESMODEL 1: To have a million dollars.

HOST: Or to have a *ménage a trois*.

SPOKESMODEL 1: Or to be a supermodel.

HOST: Or to be in a *ménage a trois* with a supermodel.

SPOKESMODEL 2: Or to write a play.

HOST: Or to write a play that people actually come see.

SPOKESMODEL 1: Or to be a Supreme Court Justice.

SPOKESMODEL 2: Or to be Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia.

HOST: Or to be in a *ménage a trois* with Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia.

SPOKESMODEL 1: To break the chains of slavery.

SPOKESMODEL 2: To live a life fulfilled.

HOST: To live a life for Phil Donahue.

SPOKESMODEL 2 (*reading from a slim, well-thumbed volume*): To live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to put to rout all that is not life, and reduce it to its lowest terms and if it proves to be mean, why then to get to the whole and genuine meanness of it; or if it proves sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in your next excursion.

HOST (*holding out his hand for the book*): Thank you.

SPOKESMODEL 2 (*handing it over*): Sorry.

HOST: No, really, thanks, Puddin'. Totally inspiring. Though, next time let's do more of our own work, and not crib so completely off ol' Hank Thoreau, 'kay?...

'Kay... Where were we?

SPOKESMODEL 2: Soul goals.

HOST: Right... Don?

ANNOUNCER: Yeah, Blink.

HOST: Anything else?

ANNOUNCER: Well, Blink, just that time and space are open to the contestants in pursuit of their soul-goals, so long as they stay within the limits of the history of the United States.

HOST: Right. After all this is an American Book of the Dead.

SPOKESMODEL 1 (*raising her paddle*): Star.

SPOKESMODEL 2 (*raising hers*): Dagger.

HOST: My only word of warning is that your soul-goal better be something you really, truly want, or I can pretty much flat out guarantee you won't get it. Now... Kim!

KIM: Yes?

HOST: You first to choose a soul-goal.

KIM: Gee, Blink, I-- I'm not sure I--

HOST: What is it you want, Kimmy?

KIM: Well...

HOST: Something you'll die happy having achieved... though I can pretty much guaran-damn-tee ya you're gonna die more times than you'd care to count before you get it, if you get it.

KIM: Oh, I don't know.

HOST: Oh, but you do.

KIM: Not really.

HOST: Kimberly, what keeps you up nights just from the longing for it? What is it you'll keep dying and coming back to find?

KIM: Um... love?

HOST: Is that an answer or a question, Kim?

KIM: Love.

HOST: I can't hear you.

KIM: Love!

HOST: What kind of love?

KIM: True love.

HOST: What kind?

KIM: True love!

HOST: True love, it is then. Good luck. Jasmine'll show you over to your isolation booth, but don't climb in just yet. We're not quite done with you, Kimster.

(Spokesmodel 1 guides Kim over to a gold colored booth while Blink moves down the line to Barry.)

HOST: Barry!

(Barry just stands grinning, shaking his head.)

HOST: Barry extra-ordinary Schroeder.

BARRY: Hi, Blink.

HOST: So tell me, Bare. Did you have any idea what you were in for when you came to the show tonight?

BARRY: Gosh, Blink, I uh... no. No, sir.

HOST: Did you think you'd die?

BARRY: Eventually. But not tonight.

HOST: Exactly! Now, Barry it says here, you've got two kids, a girl, nine, and a little boy, five years old.

BARRY: That's right, Blink.

HOST: That's great. I mean, they're orphans now, but still... you gotta be proud.

BARRY: Oh, yeah. Absolutely.

HOST: Bare Boy, give us a soul goal.

BARRY *(grimacing stupidly)*: I'm uh... I'm drawing a blank.

HOST: Well, what do you love?

BARRY: Oh... well, of course I love my kids...

HOST: Goes without saying.

BARRY: I love... uh.... I love... uhhh....

HOST: Got any hobbies?

BARRY: Well, yeah, I'm an avid reader. Uh... I'm interested in very large prime numbers. Uh... I'm a re-enactor with the Palo Alto chapter of the New York Fourth Battery.

HOST: Come again?

BARRY: I'm a Civil War re-enactor.

HOST: "Re-enactor"

BARRY: I'm part of a group of men who dress and act exactly like a company of cannons who fought for the Union during the Civil War. And... you know what, Blink? I think I know what I want for my soul-goal.

HOST: Hold up for a second. You dressed up like Civil War guys and what? Pretended to--

BARRY: Well, we re-enacted battles sometimes. You know, fire the cannon... stuff like that, though it's never actually loaded of course. Mostly we tried to replicate as best we could the way these brave men lived, fought and died.

HOST: Why?

BARRY: Well... I guess.... if I had to put it in one word, it'd be "honor".

HOST: "Honor."

BARRY: That's right.

HOST: 'Kay. So I gotta know: how did you find time to do all this... reenacting? Didn't you have a job?

BARRY: Mostly we got together on the weekends. About thirty weekends a year.

HOST: Thirty weekends!? What did Mrs. Barry think of all this?

BARRY: Well, uh... we're separated.

HOST: Ah. Right. Okay.

BARRY: Two years now.

HOST: Sorry to hear that. So. Barry. You're sort of a Civil War nut.

BARRY: Uh... buff.

HOST: I'm surprised I didn't get that on my card. Gotta talk to those bozos in research.

(He tosses the card over his shoulder.)

HOST: So tell me: who's your favorite... you know, Civil War guy?

BARRY: Oh, well... I'd have to say Stonewall Jackson.

TONYA: Uh, sorry, but didn't he fight on the wrong side?

HOST: Uh, sorry Tonya, but shouldn't you wait your turn? Barry, did this joker Jackson fight on the wrong side?

BARRY: Well, he did fight for the Confederacy, Blink, but he was a man of... of great honor in addition to being this like incredibly talented warrior. See, he believed he was doing the right thing. A lot of Southerners thought slavery should be abolished eventually, but they didn't think the North had the right to invade the South to make it happen. Stonewall even built a Sunday School for slaves.

TONYA: That was mighty white of him.

HOST: Tonya! Zippedy zip! Not gonna tell you again, 'kay? So, Barry, you said you had a soul-goal in mind.

BARRY: That's right, Blink.

HOST: Well, give it up, Care-Bear.

BARRY: Well, you said we could go back in time, right?

HOST: Backwards, forwards: all depends on the karma, baby.

BARRY: Well, for my soul-goal, I'd like to fight in the Battle of Gettysburg.

HOST: The Battle of Gettysburg.

BARRY: That's right.

HOST: For all the marbles.

BARRY: Unh-hunh.

HOST: Well... good luck, Barry. Josie here will help you to into your booth.

BARRY: Thanks, Blink.

(Spokesmodel 2 helps Barry into a blue colored booth, while Blink hops to Tonya.)

HOST: Ah, now, Tonya Rey. My little over-eager beaver.

TONYA: Sorry, I have trouble keeping silent in the face of hypocrisy. In fairness, I should tell you I have an advantage, since I've already done extensive past lives work.

HOST: Is that a fact? Do tell, Ton-ton.

TONYA: Well, Blink, the fact is my last life was as George Jackson, author of Soledad Brother, which is *the* primer of Black Militancy and prisoner advocacy in America. I knew even then I'd be back. In my book I said, "The monster they've engendered in me will return to torment its maker from the grave. Hurl me into the next existence, I'll crawl back to charge them reparations in blood. War without terms. This is one nigger who is positively displeased."

I'd already served ten years for a 70-dollar robbery, when the Man shot me in the back, claiming I was trying to escape. Then, seven and a half months later, I was reborn, Tonya Rey. Premature: overeager, as you say, to exact my revenge.

HOST: Wow!... That's... amazing, and... strange! I have it on my card here that your last go was as Mrs. John Middlebury of Jefferson City, Missouri, devoted wife of a dry goods wholesaler. Says right here: three handsome daughters, and a wonderful high-yellow maid named Henrietta, whose diligent service allowed you time for pursuits outside the home like vice-chairing the local chapter of the D.A.R. and organizing a trip to the 1964 World's Fair for the Jeff City Symphony Boosters.

TONYA: What?

HOST: But, who knows--

TONYA: That's crap!

HOST: Well, you know, what can I say? Bozo's in research. Prolly just a screw-up.

(He tosses the card over his shoulder.)

HOST: Anyway, that's just bridge water. All we need from you, Tonya, my Soledad Sister, is a soul-goal.

TONYA: Well, that's easy, Blink. My singular aspiration is to tear people's eyes open to the truth and expose the hypocrisy at the heart of the American system, and once exposed, destroy it.

HOST: And that's your soul goal?

TONYA: Indeed.

HOST: Uhh....

TONYA: What?

HOST: Well... it's a little wordy, isn't it?

TONYA: So what?

HOST: Well, we're just worried that you might have trouble remembering it in the heat of the game. Can't you like, you know, boil it down a little? How 'bout something like "To kill America!"

TONYA: Well, it's a little simplistic and pedestrian.

HOST: 'Kay... so... perfect! "To murder America" it is!

TONYA: But you're putting words in my--

HOST: And best of luck to ya!

TONYA: I don't need luck, just courage.

HOST: Fair enough. Good luck finding the courage. Josie here will show you your booth.

(Spokesmodel 2 guides Tonya into a red booth and seals her in over her objections. Blink turns back to Kim.)

HOST: Now, Kim, 'cuz I like you best, I'm gonna give you the first crack at the Bardo Wheel.

KIM: The Bardo Wheel?

(Curtains part to reveal the Bardo Wheel. One Spokesmodel ceremoniously places a Powhatan headdress on Kim and blindfolds her, while the other displays a tomahawk with great flourish.)

ANNOUNCER: That's right, Kim. You're holding in your hand a genuine tomahawk used by the Powhatan Indians.

BLINK: Now Kimmy, I want you to wing this whacker at the Wheel to select your special after-life experience. 'Kay?

KIM: Uh... all right.

(Kim gets ready to throw, then turns to Blink.)

KIM: Um, stupid question?

HOST: There are no stupid questions in this game show, Kim. Shoot.

KIM: What's a bardo?

HOST: Hey, Don. Stupid question for ya...

ANNOUNCER: Kim, a bardo is a layover between dying and living where everyone and every thing is merely a projection of your own disincarnate consciousness. The more clearly you see this, the more likely you'll be to move toward your soul goal. What's more, in the bardo, as in life, you always have the additional option of achieving enlightenment instantly.

On the other hand, if you lose perspective, see the bardo beings as real and start to become frightened by, or worse, attracted to them, well, then you risk slipping way off course.

HOST *(to Kim)*: That clear things up?

KIM: Um... sort of?

HOST: Well? You wanna have a wack at it, Kimmy?

KIM: Do I have a choice?

HOST: Hey, who's holding the hatchet? Ladies, spin that wheel!

(Blink points Kim toward the wheel while the two Spokesmodels set it spinning. Kim then flings the tomahawk, hitting a section of the wheel labeled "The Bardo of the Salted Wife".)

ANNOUNCER: Congratulations, Kim. You've selected the Bardo of the Salted Wife. Get ready. In a moment you'll be going in. Blink?

HOST: Why yes, Don!

ANNOUNCER: You know, if the audience wants to hitch a ride inside Kim's consciousness, they can visit the Bardo as well.

HOST: Hmmm. Sounds interesting. Well, whaddya say, folks? Sound like fun?

EVERYONE: SOUNDS LIKE FUN, BLINK!

HOST: Well, all right! Let's go!

(Everything fades to black except for the yellow light of Kim's booth, and a panel of the Bardo Wheel that glows with the words "Bardo of the Salted Wife" Lights up on a woman, standing on a barrel. Next to her, in the darkness, is another woman who speaks as the Voice of the Bardo.)

BARDO VOICE: Oh free and bravely born, having died and failed to grasp the clear light of reality, which is nothing but thine own nature most true, thou art entering now into the Bardo of the Salted Wife.

Be not distracted. Be not afraid or attracted. Whatever strange terror might become thee here, repeat these words:

(As the Bardo Voice speaks the following, the words flash on a screen.)

BARDO VOICE & AUDIENCE: "Although the clear light of reality dawned upon me I was unable to grasp it, and so I must wander here. Whatever visions appear now, I must accept them as the reflections of mine own nature most true."

BARDO VOICE: Behold, she stands before thee. Born in Bristol and bred there, she sails for the New World in Sixteen Hundred Ought Nine.

SALTED WIFE: All I ever wanted was to sail the Ocean Sea.

BARDO VOICE: Pitching and plunging over an angry Atlantic.

SALTED WIFE: All my brothers are sailors. All my girl's life, to ride the waves is my only wish, my only hope. I make no bones about this to the man who takes me as wife and takes me across. 'Tis an even exchange. My body and the brood it will bear him buys this journey, not

my soul. The English, so says he, can only claim this land with womanhood. New subjects to the crown do not flower from the mere mud. The female sex itself is the soil of this New World.

BARDO VOICE: Jamestown.

SALTED WIFE: The moment we land my only hope is for us to fail and sail away. Seems likely enough: squalid huts crouched inside ramshackle fort, savages culling us one by one when we stray too close to the forest which holds us forever in its suffocating shadow.

Oh, perhaps tomorrow we'll ship for some place else. Or better still perhaps we'll just keep sailing round and round and round this wonderful globe Columbus found.

BARDO VOICE: It was a hard winter, 1609.

SALTED WIFE: Hard.

BARDO VOICE: Bitter.

SALTED WIFE: Dark.

BARDO VOICE: Contagion.

SALTED WIFE: Starvation. Who'd've thought that in such a terrible time I'd find my love for my husband.

BARDO VOICE: The livestock went quickly.

SALTED WIFE: Too quickly.

BARDO VOICE: So the pets became livestock.

SALTED WIFE: But they only lasted a day or two.

BARDO VOICE: Then it was the rats and mice and worms.

SALTED WIFE: But they weren't enough.

BARDO VOICE: Leather, bark, grass, feces.

SALTED WIFE: Become hungry enough, and suddenly the world surrounds you with food.

(A man appears out of the shadows and moves toward the Salted Wife.)

BARDO VOICE: A few settlers prayed perhaps God would forgive them if they secretly dug into a few of the fresh shallow graves.

And another... well another had yet a fresher meat in mind.

SALTED WIFE: Isn't that strange. I never loved him, not a jot, until one night it all changed, the moment he kissed me on the neck with his razor.

(The man reaches up and slits the woman's throat. The front of her dress runs dark.)

BARDO VOICE: Be not afraid. Be not attracted. Beings in the bardo often do not realize-- as thou dost, as thou must-- that they are dead.

SALTED WIFE: Now my love flows from me with such force that I doubt that I could staunch it if I tried.

BARDO VOICE: He took the rump first, the most obvious meat.

(The man starts to carve the woman into shadows.)

SALTED WIFE: He pays me so much more attention now.

BARDO VOICE: Then he worked his way down the legs: first the thighs, then the calves, then boiled the feet for a bouillon.

SALTED WIFE: He caresses me so tenderly.

BARDO VOICE: He made bacon of her back; rubbed her ribs with salt.

SALTED WIFE: And looks after me so carefully.

BARDO VOICE: Packing what was left of her in a hogshead cask.

SALTED WIFE: It's strange. Something has certainly changed. But I can't put my finger on it.

BARDO VOICE: Because she has no fingers. He's gnawed them to the quick and crunched the bone open to suck the marrow.

By the time his fellow survivors grew suspicious of his queer vigor, all they found of the Salted Wife was her head.

(Tight pin spot on the woman's head.)

BARDO VOICE: They killed him of course. And thou canst hardly doubt they let him go to waste.

SALTED WIFE: With my husband's love, I dream anything is possible.
Now I am sure I could become the mother of a nation.

(The Salted Wife disappears.)

BARDO VOICE: Thou hast journeyed past the Salted Wife. Go now.
Leave this Bardo quickly. But know thou never canst forget her, for she
is nothing but thee.

*(Lights fade to black but for the glowing yellow of Kim's booth.
Lights up on an Irish looking fellow, sitting on the ground. A
Chinese man enters and squats nearby.)*

CHIN *(after a good long time)*: Well?

HENNESSY: Well...

CHIN: Why you call me here?

HENNESSY: What, no kiss, Cheek Eye Chin?

CHIN: You want kiss?

*(Hennessy finishes rolling a cigarette and seals it with his
tongue. He holds it out to Cheek Eye, who takes it and lets Hennessy
light it for him.)*

HENNESSY: Whiskey?

CHIN: No thanks.

(Pause.)

CHIN: Why you call me here?

HENNESSY: As if I needed a flippin' reason.

CHIN: You got flippin' reason?

HENNESSY: I wanna talk about the strike.

CHIN: Then you talk my grandfather. I got no to do with.

HENNESSY: Your grandfather's as stubborn as an old boot left in the
weather, and about as clever, too.