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*An American Book of the Dead\**

*The Game Show†*

First Printing, 2008

Printed in U.S.A.

Cover art by Jennifer Zeyl

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ISBN 978-1-934962-33-6

**Also Available**  
**From OWP**

**The Armageddon Dance Party**  
**by David L. Williams**

4 Males, 5 Females

**Synopsis:** John and Michelle, a lovely young New York couple, are faced with a problem: the TV news just told them Armageddon is here. Talk about ruining a Friday night! But John and Michelle turn lemons into lemonade by throwing an end of the world party. With dancing!! When the friends and friends of friends packed into the apartment learn the end is nigh, the party changes a bit. Guests list everything they won't miss about the world, fights break out, people ask to be killed, others grant their requests, lovers couple and un-couple for Armageddon sex, and talk of Revelation and great music fill the air. Like any good party.

**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.'

**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<sup>†</sup> 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 imper-  
turbable 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 empti-  
ness; 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 complete-ly 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 with in 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 week-ends 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

**SALTED WIFE (cont'd):** 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.)*

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.

**CHIN:** You ask me I come so you insult?

**HENNESSY:** He's gotta come around, Cheek. Simple as that. You gotta convince him. Coolies gotta work as a group with us in this.

**CHIN:** What you know 'bout working as group? Yankees never work as group. Most time you act like it some kind of sin.

**HENNESSY:** We like our independence, if that's what you mean.

*(Cheek Eye spits derisively.)*

**CHIN:** "Independence". No such thing. Just bunch of Yankees running 'round like monkeys with tails on fire. Down in shaft, no help old man, no help your people. Each out for self. You Yankees like your selfs. That's all. You like your selfs, but only one self at time.

**HENNESSY:** Well we're working as a group on this. We're all striking together.

**CHIN:** So... you all starve together, too.

**HENNESSY:** Not if the Coolies join us.

**CHIN:** That no happen. Decision made. I no make it so I no know why you talk to me.

**HENNESSY:** You know why.

*(Pause.)*

Christ, why is it you Chinkies never wanna fight?

**CHIN:** You come China we fight you. Fight all Yankee bastard.

**HENNESSY:** Will you quit calling me a Yankee. I ain't no Yankee. Name's Hennessy. Me Irish, Coolie man. I'm a Brooklyn Paddy, a bog-trotter. Back East they call us white niggers.

**CHIN:** You no nigger. Nigger is something you know is nigger from hundred paces. Coolie always more nigger than Irish man. Coolie only fight war he know he gonna win.

**HENNESSY:** Well, I s'pose you got me there, Cheek. We Irish seem only to fight the ones we know we're gonna lose.

**CHIN:** Yeah. You pretty stupid.

**HENNESSY:** Thanks a lot.

**CHIN:** Welcome.

**HENNESSY:** Listen, this is all I can say: it's bad. Very bad... for all the Chinkies if they don't join the strike.

**CHIN:** You no think it bad for Chinkies all day all time?

**HENNESSY:** Alright, Cheek Eye. Here's the way of it. The boys are piling up weapons-- shotguns, pistols, ax handles. Most of 'em reckon it'd be a grand thing to stroll on up to coolie camp and start a ruckus. Till now it's been a question of gettin' the gumption, but Friday's pay day, and that means liquor. And that's about all the gumption any of these jackasses ever needed.

*(Cheek Eye gives no reaction.)*

We're talking about a massacre, Cheek Eye.... a lot of coolie blood running. Least you can do is warn your people.

**CHIN:** If I warn grandfather, he wanna know how I know. If I tell him you tell me, he figger you try trick.

Besides, how you know he no see it coming?

**HENNESSY:** Then why the hell would he just sit--

**CHIN:** --Look! You no understand nothing.

My grandfather grandfather when he just young man-- young coolie-- he live with his grandfather, my grandfather grandfather grandfather. Just two of them in hut on tenant farm. Only thing they got is plow-horse mare. One night she get scent of Mongol herd she run off to North country to be with. My grandfather grandfather, he so sad, he say, "Oh Grandfather. Our plow horse run away. This worse thing ever happen." But grandfather grandfather grandfather just say, "Maybe. Maybe no. What make you so sure?"

Couple months later plow mare come back she bring with her Mongol stallion. My grandfather grandfather, he so happy. He say, "Look grandfather. Our mare come back with beautiful stallion. We breed big herd now. This best thing ever happen." But grandfather grandfather grandfather say, "What make you sure?"

Few weeks later, young grandfather grandfather out riding stallion when it throw him. He break his leg. He no able to work farm or nothing. He say, "This worse thing ever happen." But grandfather grandfather grandfather say, "What make you so sure?"

Soon war break out, every man must go with army 'cept for old and crippled. Young grandfather grandfather cannot march with broken leg so army leave him alone. His leg heal soon, but army get slaughtered in war. Every man die. But grandfather grandfather and his grandfather work farm in peace, breed big herd. You never know what good, what bad.

**HENNESSY:** That's horse shit. Gettin' yerself killed when you been warned better is bad, pure 'n simple.

**CHIN:** You no kill us all. We five hundred up in Coolie camp.

**HENNESSY:** How many's too many?

**CHIN:** You come. You kill as many as you can. You see what it change. You see nothing.

**HENNESSY:** I ain't going up to kill coolies.

**CHIN:** Why not? You stick with your people.  
**HENNESSY:** Jesus, Cheek. You know I care for you more than that.  
**CHIN:** Why?  
**HENNESSY:** Cheek Eye.  
**CHIN:** You should not. That weakness. Why you so weak?  
**HENNESSY:** Look. I swore an oath a long time ago that I was never killing anybody. Jesus never killed a man, so far as I've heard. I don't know why I should be taking liberties he never did.  
**CHIN:** Well, that good for you and Jesus.  
**HENNESSY:** Goddammit Cheek!  
**CHIN:** You got something else to say?  
**HENNESSY:** No.

*(Cheek Eye leaves. Hennessy sucks a last drag from his butt; then gets up, stamps it out and walks off.  
Lights shift back to the game show. Blink Bodie stands in front of Kim's isolation booth.)*

**HOST:** Whoa! Kim, come on out here.

*(Cheek Eye Chin steps out of the booth.)*

**CHIN** *(no accent; maybe just a feminine timbre):* Hi Blink.  
**HOST:** Hi yourself, Kimmy! How was your first life in the game?  
**CHIN:** It was... big.  
**ANNOUNCER:** You can say that again, Kim. Cheek Eye Chin lived to the auspicious age of 96 years old.  
**HOST:** So the massacre didn't happen after all?  
**ANNOUNCER:** Oh, it happened, Blink. Twenty-eight Chinese miners were killed at Rock Springs, including Chin's grandfather. Cheek Eye himself suffered a broken jaw and six cracked ribs, but he and many of the other survivors crawled to the railroad tracks where the mining company had a train waiting to pick them up.  
**HOST:** That was mighty white of 'em.  
**ANNOUNCER:** I'd say. Cheek Eye returned to China and then a few years later back again to San Francisco, where he built a lucrative imports business. He kept several wives in China and a string of male lovers in the U.S., and spent the rest of his life straddling the gap between old and new worlds.  
**HOST:** Wow. Well, with all those wives and lovers, you must have found true love in there somewhere, huh Kim?  
**CHIN:** I... I don't remember even thinking of love.  
**HOST:** Oooh. Bummer. Well, it was only your first time out after the bardo. I don't s'pose we should expect miracles.  
**CHIN:** No. I guess not.

**HOST:** Well, get back in there and keep cracking.

**CHIN:** Okay.

*(Cheek Eye steps back into Kim's booth.)*

**HOST:** Say Don, I'm a little curious about our good buddy, Barry. Can we take a look and see how he's doing?

**ANNOUNCER:** You bet, Blink!

*(The blue on Barry's booth begins to flicker.)*

**ANNOUNCER:** Oh... oh my.

**HOST:** What is it, Don?

**ANNOUNCER:** Blink, I've seen some unlucky infant mortality runs before, but this takes the cake. While we've been following Kim, Barry's been born, lived and died 48 times without ever growing old enough to talk. Small pox, malnutrition, infanticide, SIDS, AIDS. You name it, Barry's been there, died of it.

*(A tight pin spot picks up the empty space just in front of Barry's booth. At first it glows dimly, then gains intensity during the following.)*

**HOST:** What's happening now?

**ANNOUNCER:** Well, he just popped out in the year 1851 as Sheila Hennessy, the seventh child of Brigid and Joseph Hennessy.

**HOST:** Yeah?

**ANNOUNCER:** Aw geez!

**HOST:** What?

**ANNOUNCER:** Papa Joe Hennessy just got drunk and fell off the Brooklyn ferry. He's barely putting up a fight against the frigid water. Yep, he's drowned. And sure enough that spells eviction for Brigid and her brood. Off they go to the New York Juvenile Asylum. Spring comes soon enough. Some of Sheila's older brother's are being shipped out on orphan trains.

**HOST:** Orphan trains?

**ANNOUNCER:** Right, Blink. One Reverend Charles Loring Brace--

*(Enter the Reverend.)*

**ANNOUNCER:** --had the bright idea to kill two birds with one stone...

**REVEREND BRACE:** The rampant orphan problem in New York City and the labor shortage in Western farm states.

**ANNOUNCER:** He started the Orphan Trains.

**REVEREND BRACE:** Also known as "Mercy" Trains.

**ANNOUNCER:** Kids get scrubbed down, spruced up and loaded onto cars headed west.

**REVEREND BRACE:** Where farmers can come to the station and look them over for adoption.

*(Exit the Reverend.)*

**HOST:** That's fascinating. But--

**ANNOUNCER:** Hold on a second. Sheila's oldest brother Tommy's just been picked--

*(Enter Tom Hennessy, he places his hand on Barry's isolation booth.)*

But he's refusing.

**TOM:** He's got to stay behind and look after Sheila, who at four years old still hasn't uttered her first word....

**ANNOUNCER:** That's interesting: they're sending Sheila with him.

*(A gigantic 19th Century Railroad map flies in and the Spokes-models proceed to track Tom and Sheila's progress on it with pointers.)*

All aboard! Heading west... through New Jersey... into Pennsylvania. First stop: Latrobe.

*(Lights up on a hops farmer.)*

**HOPS FARMER:** A hops farmer picks up a 15 year-old boy, the healthiest of the bunch.

**TOM:** But no takers for Sheila and her brother.

**ANNOUNCER:** Moving on... into Ohio... trotted out and gawked at in Wooster... Madison... Upper Sandusky.

*(Enter a cooper.)*

**COOPER:** In Lima there's a cooper wants the boy but not the sister.

**TOM:** No sir.

**ANNOUNCER:** And back on the train they go.... Into Indiana now... stopping in Monroe... Peru... West Lebanon:

**TOM:** No takers.

**ANNOUNCER:** And now Illinois, the true West. Empty places with names like Danville... Tolono.

**TOM:** Still no takers.

**ANNOUNCER:** Plunging south at Decatur to Vandalia... Potoka... Centraillia, and then... end of the line-- Carbondale.

**TOM:** Sheila and Tommy are the only orphans left.

*(Enter a group of farmers.)*

**FARMER 1:** Empty-eyed farmers from the empty-skied hills of Southern Illinois look them over

**FARMER 2:** And even yet, no man's eager to take on an eleven-year old boy and his mute sister...

**FARMER 1:** But wait, there's a someone stepping up.

**FARMER 2:** It's Etta Bartels.

**FARMER 1:** Though everybody calls her the Lightening Farmer's Wife.

*(Etta Bartels, a hard-looking woman in the plainest of dresses, steps forward.)*

**ETTA:** I'll take the boy.

**TOM** (*indicating Barry's booth*): My sister comes, too.

**ETTA:** Don't need that one. Ain't hardly got food to feed your mouth let alone hers.

**FARMER 1:** Been six years since her husband got thunder struck.

**FARMER 2:** Two years later, the son got kilt the same way.

**FARMER 1:** She's barely making ends meet.

*(Tim Long steps out, a muddy mountain of a man.)*

**TIM:** Etta, go on and take the girl. How much you think she gonna et anyways?

**FARMER 1:** That's Tim Long.

**FARMER 2:** Etta's brother.

**ETTA:** He helps some on the farm

**TOM:** When he ain't working the Big Muddy or the Missus Sip.

**ETTA:** You gonna work the extra to feed her?

**TIM:** Sure. Why not?

**ETTA:** Fine then. Get yer bags, let's go.

**TOM:** Little Sheila's too young to work. But the Lightening Farmer's wife sure works Tommy. He's at his chores long before sun-up to well after dark.

**FARMER 1:** It's a long summer.

**FARMER 2:** A hard harvest.

**ETTA:** And a cold winter coming.

**TOM:** But on Christmas the Lightening Farmer's Wife lets Tommy sleep all day.

**TIM:** Uncle Tim takes Sheila out to play in the snow.

**ETTA:** Something happens. Neither one ever comes back.

**TIM:** Uncle Tim disappears down river and cross the Gulf to Cuba.

**FARMER 1:** The girl never leaves the bottom of the Big Muddy.

**FARMER 2:** And no one ever finds her.

**FARMER 1:** 'Cept maybe the cat fish.

*(Lights out.  
Lights back up full on the Gameshow.)*

**HOST:** Cripes! That's it! Get him out here.

*(The Spokesmodels guide Barry out of his booth. As soon as they let go of him, he falls to his knees.)*

Barry!

*(Barry looks up, eyes shining with panic.)*

What's going on, buddy?

*(Barry tries to speak but can't.)*

49 lives, and not one long enough to learn how to talk?

*(Barry looks around desperately as if for help.)*

This last one, Sheila. What? She just up and died?

*(Blink puts a hand on Barry's shoulder. He instantly begins to sputter words:)*

**BARRY:** Snow... white everywhere.... So pretty. Then... the sky rose... red... and dark... so fast.

**HOST:** And Uncle Tim? Where was he?

**BARRY:** Not good. Bad.

**HOST:** Okay, Barry, Listen. I want you to do me a favor, okay?... I want you try and stay alive this next life, at least until you hit puberty, for cripes sake. I mean, how are ya gonna get your soul goal if you're in diapers?

**BARRY:** Soul goal?

**HOST:** Aw, geez. You haven't forgotten your soul goal, have ya?

**BARRY:** Uh...

**HOST:** Barry, we can't tell you if you've forgotten it: those are the rules; but we can remind the audience.

Girls!

*(The Spokesmodels cover Barry's ears.)*

**SPOKESMODEL 1:** Barry's soul goal...

**SPOKESMODEL 2:** Is to fight in the Battle of Gettysburg.

**HOST:** All right, Barry. Get back in there and see if you can't jog your memory in the land of the living.

*(Suddenly Tom Hennessy appears from the shadows. Oblivious to the game show, he bows his head and places a hand on Barry's booth.)*

**HOST:** Uh... what the--? Who's that?

**ANNOUNCER:** That's Tommy Hennessy, Sheila's older brother.

**HOST:** Right. Knew he looked familiar. What's he doing here?

**ANNOUNCER:** I couldn't say, Blink.

**SPOKESMODEL 2:** It looks like he's praying.

**SPOKESMODEL 1:** Like he's holding some kind of funeral.

**SPOKESMODEL 2:** But not in the world.

**BARRY:** For Sheila... for me... but no one's in the booth.

*(Blink opens Barry's booth, as if to double-check.)*

**HOST:** Nope.

**BARRY:** Do you know where Sheila went?

**HOST:** Couldn't tell ya.

*(Tom crosses himself and disappears.)*

Well that was just plain spooky.

*(Beat.)*

Barry!

**BARRY:** Yeah!

**HOST** *(hooking his thumb toward the booth):* Booth!

*(Barry steps inside. A spokesmodel shuts him in.)*

**HOST:** Alright, Don, what's next?

**ANNOUNCER:** It believe it's Tonya's turn, Blink.

**HOST:** Ah, Tonya. Shall we take a look, folks?

**EVERYONE:** SOUNDS GREAT. BLINK!

*(Tonya's booth glows red during the cross fade to an empty picture frame. Isabel, dressed as a lady of 1890's aristocracy, meanders in and stops to gaze at the invisible painting. Another woman, Surge, dressed as a working class man, enters and stands behind her.)*

**ISABEL:** It's called "Mass".

**SURGE:** Mmm.

**ISABEL:** By someone named "Surge".

**SURGE:** Mmm.

**ISABEL:** Do you suppose it's meant to signify a mass of people?... Or a massive abstraction? Or a... Catholic Mass? Or... what?

**SURGE** *(Russian accent):* Precisely.

**ISABEL:** Precisely what?

**SURGE:** Precisely all of these things.

**ISABEL:** Hold on just a moment. You're this... "Surge" person, aren't you? My husband told me about you. You're a woman.

**SURGE:** I am person.

**ISABEL:** Yes, quite. But a woman-person dressing like a man.

*(Surge shrugs, begins to walk away.)*

Are you a sapphist?

*(Surge winces, uncomprehending.)*

You know, a female homosexual?

**SURGE:** I reject... these... how do you say? Tickets.

**ISABEL:** Labels.

*(Surge shrugs.)*

Are you not attracted to women?

**SURGE:** I am attracted to... persons.... But only they must be from future...you see? From world of no distinctions, no classes or sexes. Only beauty.... and persons who see beauty.

**ISABEL:** Sounds marvelous, this world. Is this a picture of it?

**SURGE:** No, but it is window. No?

**ISABEL:** Oh. I see... I think.

**SURGE:** It is only picture I ever paint.

**ISABEL:** Really?

**SURGE:** Really.

**ISABEL:** Oh my. Well, then I hope you sell it for absolute loads upon loads of money.

**SURGE:** Thank you. But this matters not. The man who buys this painting, I will take his life.

**ISABEL:** I beg your pardon?

**SURGE:** I will kill who buys this painting. And thus... open the window.

**ISABEL:** You're joking of course.

**SURGE:** Of course. Joking. But in every joke is truth, yes?

**ISABEL:** No. No, I'm afraid I don't understand.

**SURGE:** Who buys picture at my price is who barter beauty at market. Such men keep the people from living lives of beauty. Perhaps art is to keep such men from living life of ugly. No?

**ISABEL:** That's art?

**SURGE:** No?

**ISABEL:** No.

**SURGE:** Perhaps not. Perhaps. It's only joke, no? Big joke. Very funny.

*(Fade to black.)*

*Lights shift back to Blink and the gameshow.)*

**ANNOUNCER:** True to her word, Surge only sold the one painting, "Mass". A year later she was arrested when a bomb she made rolled under a bridge into a squatters camp, killing a little mongoloid boy. After thirteen years in a home for the criminally insane, she died of tuberculosis.

**HOST:** Wow! Well, let's see what Tonya thought of that!

*(Tonya's booth opens and Serge steps out.)*

**HOST:** Tonya Rey! Your first life playing. How'd you like it?

**SURGE** *(no Russian accent now):* It... it was...

**HOST:** Yeah?

**SURGE:** Awful.

**HOST:** Yeah.

**SURGE:** Yet again the hegemonizing super-structure of wealth and privilege crushes an innocent life.

**HOST:** Whose? Yours? Or the little retarded kid you killed?

**SURGE:** I mean mine. But... also his. Both-- all of them.

**HOST:** Unh-hunh. You figure you're any closer to murdering America?

**SURGE:** That's not what I said. My soul goal was to tear people's eyes open to the truth, exposing the hypocrisy at the heart of the American system, and once exposed, destroy it.

**HOST** (*shrugging*): Potato-puhtahto. Maybe we better give you a shot at the Bardo Wheel.

**SURGE:** The what wheel?

*(Again the curtains part revealing the Bardo Wheel. One Spokesmodel blindfolds Surge, while the other places a high-crowned Dutch merchant's hat on her head and a blunderbuss in her hands.)*

**ANNOUNCER:** Tonya, in your hands is a Dutch blunderbuss, just like the ones used by the settlers of old New Amsterdam.

**HOST:** Great! Josie, spin that wheel!

*(Spokesmodel 1 helps Surge aim towards the wheel, while the other spins it. Surge fires, blasting a hole in the panel labeled "The Karma Inverter".)*

**ANNOUNCER:** Tonya, you've selected the Karma Inverter!

*(A strange contraption, looking a lot like a souped-up shop-vac, rolls onstage.)*

**ANNOUNCER:** Along with the Karma Eraser and the Luck Amplifier, the Inverter is one of the game's more deceptively simple gizmos.

*(Surge is ushered back into Tonya's isolation chamber. Enigmatic pneumatic tubes are connected from the Karma Inverter to sockets on the booth.)*

**ANNOUNCER:** Once Josie's done plugging her in, it's just a flip of the switch and Tonya's karma flops upside-down.

**SPOKESMODEL 1:** Wrong turns right.  
Forgiveness, spite.  
Hated becomes loved,  
And coaxed, shoved.

**SPOKESMODEL 2:** Pleasure becomes pain.  
Clear skies rain.  
Smooth becomes friction,  
And science, fiction.

**HOST:** Oh, I get it...  
Sober is drunk  
Passing grades flunk  
Bluegrass turns Funk  
And John Philip Sousa, Thelonius Monk.

**ANNOUNCER:** Exactly, Blunk.

**HOST:** It'll be a gas to see Tonya's next incarnation with her karma completely yin-yanged.

**ANNOUNCER:** It sure will.

**HOST:** What's next?

**ANNOUNCER:** Well, we haven't dropped in on Kim in a while.

**HOST:** True! Folks, whaddya say we see what ol' Kim's up to?

**EVERYONE:** SOUNDS GREAT, BLINK!

*(Kim's booth glows. A very bright flash bulb goes off, then everything fades to darkness. Lights rise on Nathan snapping pictures of Jacqui Potts. She swirls for the camera in flamboyant 70's fashions, occasionally toking from a fat joint.)*

**NATHAN:** Okay, here's how the world works. First they ask, "Who's Jacqui Potts?" Then it's, "Get me Jacqui Potts." Then it's "Get me a young Jacqui Potts." Then "Get me the next Jacqui Potts." And then finally, "Who's Jacqui Potts?"

**JACQUI** (*British*): Can't we simplify it and skip right from "Who's Jacqui Potts?" to "Who's Jacqui Potts?". It'd be very Zennist.

**NATHAN:** I'm just tellin' ya, you got to strike while you're in the second phase, 'cuz everything after that is down hill.

**JACQUI:** I wasn't aware I was in the second phase.

**NATHAN:** That's what I'm saying. These snaps are gonna put you there.

**JACQUI:** Oh, well, that's four-ways fab then, isn't it?

**NATHAN:** Look at you. Stunning! I'm gonna make you a motherfucking star.

**JACQUI:** That should be very amusing indeed.

**NATHAN:** Do me a favor, sweetie?

**JACQUI:** Anything.

**NATHAN:** Take your top off.

**JACQUI:** Do sod off!

**NATHAN:** Come on. Just lift the blouse up a bit.

**JACQUI:** You're serious!

**NATHAN:** 'Course I'm serious. What the fuck's the difference?

**JACQUI:** I thought you were a nancy.

**NATHAN:** Of course I'm a nancy, but that doesn't mean I can't appreciate a nice set of milkers. Look, it'll be a whole lot easier for me to land you an agency if there's some naughty bits peeking through ever so tastefully, tastefully.

**JACQUI:** Nathan, my lad, let me assure you my naughty bits are entirely and enduringly tasty. But I ain't flashing me jubbles or droppin' me knickers for your soddin' fairy fashion show.

**NATHAN:** Suit yourself.

*(A very bright flash bulb goes off. Lights up on João Nascimento, speaking into a microphone.)*

**JOÃO:** Ladies and Gentlemen, today we announce the latest and most excellent acquisition of Nascimento Agency: a beauty so exquisite and so intense as to make both men and women alike question the very meaning of their lives.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we give you the Jacqui Potts.

*(A very bright flash bulb goes off. Jacqui sits on the couch sucking a roach and spooning powder into her mouth from a cardboard box, as Nathan scrambles around packing his camera bag.)*

**NATHAN:** Snort some coke or something, darling. My treat.

**JACQUI:** I don't like coke.

**NATHAN:** You're getting downright plump.

**JACQUI:** I don't like coke.

**NATHAN:** Well you can't sit around smoking reefer and eating my fudge brownie mix all day.

**JACQUI:** Let's make some brilliant brownies.

**NATHAN:** Jesus, Jacqui. I barely got time to crap, you want me to bake you brownies?

**JACQUI:** Brilliant brownies.

**NATHAN:** If you'll recall, unlike you, I actually have to work for a living. Weddings to shoot?

**JACQUI:** No. Brownies to bake, brilliant.

**NATHAN** *(going toward the door):* Have fun.

**JACQUI:** I'll let you shoot me nude.

**NATHAN:** What?

**JACQUI:** If you bake me brownies brilliant.

**NATHAN:** Don't tease.

**JACQUI:** No. Never teasing.

**NATHAN:** You'd do that?

*(Jacqui shrugs.)*

**NATHAN:** Fuck the wedding. Let me set up.  
**JACQUI:** Brownies first, please.  
**NATHAN:** May I have the fucking mix please?  
**JACQUI:** 'Course.

*(Grabbing the box, Nathan heads into the kitchen.)*

**JACQUI:** Do you ever feel like you're a tunnel?  
**NATHAN** *(from the kitchen):* What?  
**JACQUI:** Do you ever feel like you're a tunnel?  
**NATHAN** *(from the kitchen):* A funnel?  
**JACQUI:** A tunnel!  
**NATHAN** *(from the kitchen):* Oh, like a hole?  
**JACQUI:** Well yeah, I suppose.  
**NATHAN** *(from the kitchen):* Oh, sure. Lots, if I'm lucky.  
**JACQUI:** No, no. I mean a tunnel... like a place to some place.  
**NATHAN** *(from the kitchen):* Oh.  
**JACQUI:** Do you?  
**NATHAN** *(from the kitchen):* No.  
**JACQUI:** Oh.

*(Pause.)*

Well, I do. Quite often.

*(Nathan reenters with a pan of brownies.)*

That was quick.

**NATHAN:** It's been an hour.

**JACQUI:** Oh?... Where was I?

**NATHAN:** Search me.

*(Jacqui reaches for the brownies.)*

Let'em cool first, for chrissake.

*(Jacqui scoops a piece out and begins scarfing.)*

Jesus... Okay. I'm gonna set up. If you want, you can use the bathroom to change.

**JACQUI:** Change into what?

**NATHAN:** Into nothing. That's the idea, right?

**JACQUI:** Right. Cheers.

*(She crosses off to the bathroom as Nathan begins setting up his tripod.)*

**NATHAN** *(muttering):* Holy Flakin' Christ.

**JACQUI** *(from the bathroom):* You sure you put enough in?

**NATHAN:** I'm sure.

**JACQUI** *(from the bathroom):* Can't taste anything.

**NATHAN:** Trust me! I'm almost ready out here. How bout you?

**JACQUI** *(from the bathroom):* As the day I was born.