

Creative Writings blurbs, synopses, scenes and a short story

**The art of storytelling
as a communication resource
to arouse the imagination of
readers for pleasure and jurors on duty and
incite them to inspired action for
everything that
edifies character and builds good relations with people
such as the noble cause of
Equal Justice Under Law**

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Blurbs of Creative Writings

SOPHIE AND THE CHILDREN OF THE WAND: (script and novel) A young teacher, Sophie, resorts to her extraordinary artistic talents to interest her 8 year old students, particularly the deeply withdrawn Nico, in classwork, and thereby gives meaning to their lives. She takes them to a bookstore, digitizes their photos, and makes them appear as if they were interacting with their TV heroes, who say that they learn to defeat evil guys by reading 'heroes books'. The children love it! She takes them to one of her plays in which she plays a Fairy Mother that outwits the Evil Spirits: Hopelessness, Ignorance, and Laziness. She brings her camera and teaches them what the Mathematicians, Physicists, and Technicians must know to photograph their heroes and print their pictures in popular magazines. By now, all the children in the school have the idea that if they get her a wand, all can become Sophie's children. The endearing bonding between Sophie, Nico, and her other children induces the kind of audience identification that supports the expectation of profitable merchandising if their popular appeal is developed like that of Disney's heroes and heroines.

THE VOICE OF THE FOUNTAIN: (script) Father Allgard recruits orphan Stacey to spy for him in his struggle against the conversion of a dilapidated seminary and church into a posh retirement resort. Through the ups and downs of their alliance, she makes him realize that his motivation is not religious fervor, but only selfish desire to preserve the stage for his sublime music and his outstanding choir. He unwittingly teaches her to temper faith in others with self-reliance. Teenagers can identify with the street smart Stacey and her search for parental love, while adults can relive Father Allgard's conflict between the pursuit of his lifelong emotional commitment to his vocation and the need for integrity and responsibility for his acts. All viewers can enjoy their witty dialogue and engaging alternation of unexpected funny scenes and the personality clashes between two characters in desperate search for a voice of solace for their troubled souls.

FAMILY BY CHOICE: (script) Three 17-year-old friends with little education and from broken families resign themselves to taking jobs as cleaning trainees, rather than as the uniformed front-desk clerks that they had imagined for themselves, in the Resort, a luxury retirement residence and country club. There they meet its director and three wealthy retirees. Coming from vastly different backgrounds and having unrealistic expectations as well as real conscious and unconscious needs, they clash and form alliances as their lives intertwine and they help each other to distinguish between what they wish they were and what they are and to achieve what they can still become. These are intense people with energizing dreams and paralyzing nightmares that end up realizing that they can only obtain relief from their emotional pain and have their demands on each other met if they show mutual respect and care for each other as family. The potential for dramatic situations and conflict among themselves and with other residents, club members, and friends and family is so vast that the script can be used for a movie and as the pilot of a TV series.

THE BLOODIED MATTRESS: (script & treatment for a novel) A jaded NY detective and his optimistic female trainee are called to a cemetery where a mattress was found with a bloodstain so large that an adult would not survive the corresponding blood loss. A lead takes them to the sublime world of art. They trace the mattress back to a posh hotel where an exhibition was held of a childish 26-year-old painter with the skill and sensibility of a master. In his room, only one single speck of DNA-matching blood is found. They cannot figure out how a mattress, and probably an already dead person, could have been spirited out of the hotel. They suspect the exhibition organizers, the caterers, and the painting transporters. After the body is found, their accounts check: There was only an accidental self-stabbing, the knowing or unbeknown concealment and transportation of the body in a painting materials trunk and the mattress in a crate, and a burial under a flowerbed to allow her soul to live on in the beauty of flowers. The detectives are shocked, but realize that although every day they are confronted with evil in the hearts and acts of people, there is also a positive, redeeming side to the human spirit and work that finds its purest expression in works of art.

BIG MONEY FOR LITTLE ONES: (script) An NYC Assistant D.A. and a Hispanic detective cannot avoid jointly investigating a burglary-homicide at a consulate with a strong-willed female Assist. U.S. Attorney and a suave Black FBI agent. The streetwise detective suspects the Feds of thwarting his investigative efforts at every step. But his credibility is doubtful due to his bully tactics and animosity toward the FBI. Moreover, the Feds reasonably explain their conduct. When he convinces the strict A.D.A., they realize that the Feds had broken into the consulate while investigating a smuggling operation in diplomatic baggage, lost an agent, whose government-issued equipment was pillaged and used by an attaché to blackmail the Feds into scuttling the NYC investigation or be exposed as violators of diplomatic immunity. The officers join forces to avoid defeat and discover the smuggling of orphans for illegal adoption by wealthy residents. Yet, they are torn by moral and professional conflicts, for those involved are neither saints nor demons, but people caught in dilemmatic situations and struggling to do right with imperfect knowledge and inadequate means.

DEAD BUT ON THE RUN: (script) NY City police detectives and prosecutors search for both a male criminal's corpse and the wealthy female patient who died after presumably having been transplanted illegally with his stolen and diseased liver. His body is not found in his grave because undertakers sold it to a pathology school. Only a DNA test can connect them were it not for cover-up operations that incinerate his corpse and cremate hers and for the non-cooperation of the life-insurer, who blackmails its defrauder. The investigators find out that police officers monitor police communications, kill 'disposable' criminals, and ship them to a clinic that harvests their organs and sends their 'carcasses' to the undertaker. The suspects have plausible explanations supported by doctored documents. Facing defeat, the investigators rein in their strong personalities and reconcile their divisive conceptions of law enforcement and the value of human life. Their cooperation enables them to apply their superior evidence analysis skills, knowledge of forensic science, and incisive logic to crack crafty methods of operation and expose the ring of conspirators.

PETALS OF THE HEART: (script) Roseleen, a Wall Street stockbroker, is robbed by muggers, but saved from a worse fate by a passerby, Grant, a Columbia University doctoral candidate in literature. When they go to the police station, she sees a secretary wearing her stolen bracelet, but the D.A. refuses to look into a possible police fencing operation for lack of evidence. Roseleen is determined to recover her bracelet, the symbol of her career success, and presses Grant into her service with keen observations on his character barbed with coercive comments about his moral duty. He helps while chastising her for her abrasive assertiveness and overbearing attitude. Thus begins the scrutiny of each other, which triggers a process of self-examination and discovery. Their investigation finds a fencing operation, but turns them into the fences' death targets. They narrowly save their lives thanks to his computer skills and her capacity for psychological analysis, while forcing each other to acknowledge and deal with character flaws that mar the decency and high principles that are the petals of their hearts and that so impair their social relations.

THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH: (script and novel) Ponce de León is a soldier that accompanies Columbus on his discovery of Puerto Rico in 1493. To secure the natives' friendship, he is forced by Iquena, the chief's daughter, to promise to protect them from the scourge of the Caribs, cannibals who deem themselves superior and raid islands for women and slaves. He keeps his promise, but brings with his soldiers and settlers the scourge of diseases that kill many natives, whom he too treats as savage weaklings. To find a cure, she convinces him to search for the Fountain of Youth. Ponce de León thinks of it as a source of medicinal water, whose discovery can earn him what he so craves: acceptance as a ruling class Castilian, rather than just a man of León. He discovers Florida in 1513. After a Pyrrhic victory over fierce Indians, he finds out that he and his men almost died for what had the appearance of the Fountain but was only storm rain temporarily welling up from an underground swollen river and enlivening its surroundings. She makes him realize that personal worth is assessed on one's conduct, not birthplace or superior knowledge; and that a civilized man's or a savage's treatment of others as inferior is equally hurtful so that respect for others that avoids deadly confrontation and allows reaching old age is the true Fountain of Youth.

SOPHIE AND THE CHILDREN OF THE WAND

Synopsis of a script and a novel

An austere woman in her late 40s is ironing the business suit that she bought for her daughter Sophie, 24, to wear on her first day at work. She brings it to Sophie's room. Its extraordinarily original decoration reflects on Sophie's superior artistic imagination and skills. Ignoring that suit, Sophie wears the colorful and stylish 2-piece pantsuit that she designed and sewed.

Sophie walks in a rundown multi-ethnic working class, violence-ridden ghetto known as the Block, for there is no way out of it. In a dilapidated building, she receives her assignment: the list of her third graders...She is an elementary schoolteacher! Yet everybody had higher expectations of her. Soon she realizes that the kids are not interested in academic work at all, but from a state of intellectual coma, they explode into boisterous activity at playtime, except one, Nico.

She learns that Nico was born to minors, so that his mother abandoned him the year before and his school-dropout father blames him therefor. Neglected by him, Nico is so unkempt and smelly that the kids call him "the Fish" and avoid him, causing him to be withdrawn. Yet, this is what attracts Sophie to him because as a child she was rejected by her peers, though for being too gifted, which she flaunted to get back at them, thus triggering a vicious cycle. She feels that her mother neglected her while becoming a renowned engineer. The memories of her suffering are stoked when she goes with him to his apartment: There is little food and no toys, except a dirty white bathrobe that his mother left and that he hides behind a sofa as his only source of solace.

By contrast, Sophie's father, a literature professor, comforted her with his storytelling that took her to more accepting worlds of the imagination where she was free to be as she was, thus fostering her creativity. Now the artist in her is suffocating in her students' indifference to her teaching the curriculum. Desperate, she would quit, were she not loath to admit that her mother was right in criticizing her career decisions. She confides her agony to Herbert, her mentor and director of the arts academy where she developed her artistic skills and now teaches a computer art class. He advises her: "Don't try to lead them into your learned world; instead, find out what excites them and use its energy". Sophie is at a loss, for no learning, only playing, excites them.

She keeps bringing Nico food and eating with him in his corner of the playground from where he longingly watches the children play. Although he does not talk, she relieves her stress through soliloquies in which she tells stories about her parents and her adoring toys, her younger sister and brother, who..."What program?" Nico asked a question! She realizes that she mentioned having watched a TV program. Thus she discovers that he identifies with his TV heroes. Nico is alive inside! Sophie finds out that the other children are also passionate about their TV heroes. Their TV world is what excites them! From that day on, she ignores the curriculum and has them read about their heroes in *TV Guide* and similar popular magazines. She invents all sorts of games to have them both enact what they read and play people they admire. They love it!

Yet, their abysmal reading skills are even less capable of coping with adult magazines already too difficult for any eight-year old kid. Hence, Sophie takes them to the school library to

help them find children's books "like those our heroes read to learn what to do". But the donated books there are moldy, for adults, and in the custody of "the Cop", a disagreeable librarian. So Sophie suggests taking them to a bookstore, but not any: Imagineland, where they will meet their heroes and see how they use books to learn how to develop their superpowers and defeat their evil enemies. The children are excited by learning! With Herbert's support, she prepares a virtual reality show at Barnes & Noble. But the parents beg off coming along. To take 26 kids alone, Sophie makes them believe that theirs is a dangerous mission requiring their heroes' discipline.

Nico does not show up, for he is afraid of being among the children. On the subway platform, many have the impression that the train is leaving with Sophie but without them. In Block fashion, they break into the car kicking, biting, and pummeling anybody in their way. After they settle into a state of impending aggression under the horrified eyes of surviving straphangers, Sophie persuades the train driver to depart. However, she is shaken by the incident.

The children make it to B&N in 'heroes' discipline formation'. Unbeknown to them, Sophie's students at Herbert's academy take digital photos of them as they enter the show room and manipulate them so that the kids see themselves interacting with their TV heroes while on a virtual trip. It ends in a magnificent library where the heroes congratulate the kids for their decision to study and go to college to become all they can be. Believing that they actually interacted with their heroes, the children come out dazed with wonderment and a free 'book of heroes'. As they are leaving, Sophie sees Nico: He followed them! They go to McDonald's, where in a chain of freak accidents they throw the other diners into an all-out food war that wrecks the place.

After the trip, they cannot stop talking about it to their parents, who are perplexed by their enthusiasm over a schoolteacher, and their schoolmates, who envy them because they have the only exciting teacher in the school. But the Principal reproves Sophie for taking 26 students out to the streets alone and without her authorization. From then on Sophie spends all her free time with her children and avoids her colleagues, who in her view lack imagination to inspire the kids.

She convinces Nico that she can 'make him read', although he feels he is dumb. She realizes that his fear of the other kids causes him to feel inferior and lack self-confidence. An idea hits her: To bring them together to an activity that she can orchestrate so as to bridge their chasm. The inauguration of the auditorium of her siblings' school offers the occasion. Herbert puts his academy resources at her disposal and she infuses her students there with her creative spirit.

The Principal refuses her authorization for a school trip on a Saturday evening, but agrees to the parents taking their kids on it by themselves. But they do not have transportation. At the last minute, Sophie finds a bus and only with the help of Nico do the children learn that it will pick them up. He is confused by his ability to help Sophie since at his father's instigation he deems himself "no good for not'ing". He hides this time too, but she finds and gets him on the bus, where she introduces him as the Announcer and Copilot. The kids wonder who Nico really is.

At the inauguration, they are treated to amazing special effects of sound and light shows, including fierce beasts that morph into swans and then caring mothers. All this makes them believe that they have entered the wondrous Imagineland. Nico panics when Sophie asks him to go with the other children; so she lets him stick with her. He is enthralled when before the play he sees her dressed in white as the Fairy Mother and asks her, "Do you have children?" Sophie is baffled until he adds, "I can be your child. Can you be my mother?" Sophie embraces him as she wishes her mother had done her. She takes him to a seat to watch the play from behind the stage.

During the play, when the Evil Spirits –Hopelessness, Ignorance, and Laziness- come to harm his Fairy *Mother*, Nico rushes hysterically onto the stage to warn her. He is dragged out and scolded by a stagehand. Distraught by the certainty that Sophie has abandoned him for being bad again, Nico hides and cannot be found at departure time. After an anguishing search, Sophie remembers his confidence that when he feels lonely he holds his mother's 'dress'. She finds him in the dressing room wrapped in her Fairy Mother dress. Back on the bus, the kids unexpectedly hail him as 'the Child Prince' of the play because he 'saved' the Fairy Mother and became a TV hero. Nico is overwhelmed and confused, for how could Sophie make him be applauded?

Though the Principal hears admiring comments from parents, she still reprimands Sophie for turning her activity into a school one neither unauthorized nor covered by the insurance. As the children tell their schoolmates ever more aggrandized details, they realize why Sophie is so wonderful: She is Fairy Mother, theirs! She needs a wand so that all of them can become her children and travel with her to Imagineland. A group goes to a hazardous closed-down fish market to find a stick that can become her wand. Their now effervescent imagination transforms the 'horrific' incidents there into the story of Red Hot, a fish that eats Wand rescuers.

Nico resents that again nobody pays attention to him. Sophie tells him that since he is the Child Prince, he should go and tell them that he wants to be and play with them. "I ain't no Child Prince, just Nico". Sophie plans how to drain the Water Box where Red Hot lives to enable her children to find her wand and then see Nico do 'magic' with science by distilling some of its polluted water. She only tells him that she will make him work magic on Red Hot's 'poison soup' if he repeats the magic words, 'I'm the Child Prince;' otherwise, Red Hot will eat him!

But before she can organize her science event, the children stage an escapade to retrieve the Wand. Nico follows them because of his fear that Sophie will abandon him if he does not join the search for her wand. Upon failing, they realize that the Evil Spirits are out to capture Sophie. If they do, Nico will be left without his Mother! Repeating as if in a trance "I'm the Child, the Child Prince", he enters Red Hot's Water Box and retrieves the Wand. The kids bring him back triumphally.

But The Principal chastises Sophie for having infected their minds with 'stories.' Nico is demoralized because if Red Hot was only a 'story,' he is 'just Nico'. But Sophie tells him that although everybody was afraid, he was the only one to defy Red Hot. Nico accepts his new identity. Sophie buys him new clothes and gets him a haircut. The next day he looks like the Child Prince and is treated as such. After a surprise party, he takes ill and lands in hospital. His father takes the opportunity to abandon him. Sophie manages to bring him home as a foster child.

That is a school policy violation, as is not teaching the curriculum. The Principal suspends Sophie, who learns that what sickened Nico were harmful bacteria in the Water Box. She is shocked, for she is excluded from her children and may be their real, dangerous Evil Spirit. The nasty librarian substitutes for Sophie, but she cannot handle the kids, who keep comparing her with Sophie and complaining that "With Sophie and her magic we can be anything". The librarian loses her temper. When the children see her, the Principal, and other staff morph into the fierce beasts of the sound and light show, they attack them. Kids and staff get hurt. Sophie is in crisis!

Herbert makes Sophie realize that she became a teacher at the Block to spite her mother and emulate her building prowess, not out of love for kids that could only remind her of those who rejected her. The Principal calls a PTA meeting. Nico, imbued with the sense of the Child Prince, brings the other children to it. Sophie is there, in the business suit that her mother bought her. The meeting backfires because the parents praise Sophie and then chant "*We want Sophie!*"

THE VOICE OF THE FOUNTAIN

Synopsis of an original screenplay

From the vaults of a church, a superb choir is being listened to by somebody moving around stealthily. A coffin is at the altar and the occasion is special: The funeral service for the seminary's Father Superior. After it ends, a parishioners committee to support the seminary, which includes the church, meets with Father Allgard, 67, the second ranking officer. They report to him that the seminary cannot afford the required repairs and recommend that the religious Order to which it belongs sell it to investors for conversion into a resort comprising apartments for wealthy retirees and a country club. Rebuking them, Father Allgard lets them know that he, the next Father Superior, will never consent to such defilement of the seminary and 'his' church. He, the choir conductor and resident composer, and his music are what support the seminary.

Father Allgard sets out to foil their scheme. He asks Stacey what she has found out about the Committee's next moves. She should know because this 15-year-old girl eavesdrops on everybody. For that reason, he gave her, unbeknown to everybody else, a novice frock that allows her to wander incognito in this all-male institution. But as always, her information has a price, which he pays rather than let her untrained voice, 'like a startled flock of geese', join his choir.

That night the seminary holds a recordation dinner at which the Order dignitaries that came for the funeral are guests. Father Allgard is deeply disconcerted when they fail to appoint him the next Father Superior. He smuggles Stacey into his Spartan room and pays her price: food that he has stolen from the seminary. From her gibberish account of the Committee's conversation, he deciphers that the end of the institution is imminent. Its closing down would spell disaster for both of them: for Father Allgard it would result in the termination of the musical activities and choir that give meaning to his life; and for Stacey it would entail the loss of her only source of food for her body and relief for her soul. Realizing that they must become allies to survive, they concoct a plan to rescue the seminary and 'his' church. From now on, their bickering gradually gives way to bonding as they confide in each other that her mother died in a fire and that his musical talent earned him the seminary's protection after his parents abandoned him.

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Father Allgard forges ahead with his plan, which he discloses to an excited choir. They start rehearsing only to be disrupted by a terrible din. "The hurricane!", shouts a frightened Stacey from her listening post by the vaults. All run out of a quaking church and are met by an

army of trucks bringing all sorts of construction materials. He imprecates those destroying his church and while denouncing the Lord, whom he has always praised in his music, for ungratefully allowing this to happen, he suffers a heart attack. Stacey keeps him informed at the hospital.

When months later he is enticed back from a convalescence home, he finds the seminary turned into a high-class resort and his ascetic room into a luxurious suite. Unable to recognize this as his home, he feels deceived. He resolves to sabotage the resort, in which he vows never to produce music. So he accepts the Committee's offer of room and board in exchange for his promoting the resort among his many current and former choristers and their wealthy friends and families. He secures Stacey's assistance by promising to teach her how to communicate with her dead mother. At his instigation, she fakes to be a resort employee to have a catering service deliver food for the resort's open house on the wrong date and trickily changes the date on the invitations. Pandemonium ensues when unexpectedly the guests show up, whom a dreadful-looking Father Allgard hilariously misinforms about the resort to dissuade them from moving in.

To make Stacey a more effective spy, he gets her a resort job. As a server, she discovers that the retirees moving in are likable people. They give her paying chores, so she does not need stolen food anymore. Then she takes the initiative to ask for jobs and even forms a 'company': She brings in her funny friends to help her out. One of the residents, Mr. Higton, asks them to wash his luxury car. By accident, a company member hoses him and he in turns drenches him and all the others until they jump him and soap him up. When they calm down, he tells them how much he would have enjoyed his granddaughter being there. Stacey suggests that he throw a birthday party for her at the exquisite resort fountain gardens. In search of work for her company, she successfully proposes to the Committee to rent the gardens to Mr. Higton for that purpose. Father Allgard accuses her of having gone over to the enemy and their relationship deteriorates.

While organizing that activity, she calls the caterers that were to have serviced the open house. Mindful of what happened before, they call the Committee to confirm the order. Thus, they determine that Stacey was the one who changed the dates and botched that activity. Baffled because everybody likes Stacey, the Committee investigates who she is. Her profile is disturbing: a minor neglected by her father, a school dropout, and a purloiner of seminary food. The Committee blame each other for not checking her background and thus hiring a delinquent. She eavesdrops on an acrimonious meeting where they decide to fire and report her to the police.

Desperate, Stacey runs to Father Allgard for advice. He only cares to know that nobody suspects him. She cries that he never cared for her; he retorts that she betrayed her mission in "his" church. That night she goes to the resort fountain, whose murmur makes her feel as if she were hearing her mother's voice of advice. He is there, for the fountain murmur is what comes closest to his music in an otherwise silent resort. She strikes a deep chord in him by asking whether the Lord would save a church where to be praised with the music of a selfish loner with no love for anyone but himself. Father Allgard is shaken by her question. Contrite, he discloses to the Committee that he manipulated her all along. The Committee confronts him with the choice between leaving the premises and figuring out how to make restitution to Stacey and the resort.

Months later, the Order dignitaries arrive at the resort for a grave meeting: Father Allgard's excommunication. It turns out that they have come for the inauguration of the church as an activities hall where the Father's new choir will entertain the guests at a birthday party. Stacey sings to her mother and the choir replies. At the buffet by the fountain, she tells him that she felt no fear while singing, for she sensed her mother at her side. He thanks her, for now that he composes, not for himself, but for the joy of his fellow men, he feels that the Lord will listen to his music.

Family by Choice

Synopsis of an original screenplay

On a sunny day in March, Lisee, Philip, and Dennis, all aged 17 and poor, break into a construction site where an old seminary is being renovated into the Resort, a luxury residence for wealthy retirees, and a posh country club. They voice their fantasies about what it would be like to work there. When they are ready to leave, two ferocious guard dogs attack them, but thanks to Lisee's ingenuity and quick thinking they make it out alive...barely.

Lisee goes home to cook dinner and is yelled at for being late by her abusive father, with whom she lives alone since her mother died in a fire. The following day, the three friends meet at their poor inner city school and discuss their efforts to find after-school jobs, so far unsuccessful because of their lack of skills. They fail to come up with a plan. Dennis goes home, where he lives with his siblings and mother, who disparage him because he can hardly read.

In June, Lisee startles Dennis and Philip with a plan: To go back to the Resort to search for jobs since it is now hiring. They go there and ask Mr. Nirhop, the director, to give them summer jobs. He declines arguing that the Resort clientele is so demanding that only experienced personnel is hired. But their arguments about taking risks in order to give a chance to the young and inexperienced get Mr. Nirhop thinking. That night at home, he sees his wife ably developing the skills and self-esteem of their two children. Thus inspired to emulate her, he extends a job offer to the friends, which is relayed to them as they are having a good time at a graduation party.

On their first workday, their immediate boss, Doug, tells them that they are being hired as cleaning trainees. They are aghast, for they saw themselves in smart uniforms behind the desks in the lavish lobby interacting with the residents, country club members, and outside patrons, giving them instructions where to go to get what they wanted, or serving them in the classy restaurant or the garden coffee shop by the renown Tearful Bliss Fountain that fills the pool and pocketing hefty tips. At the end of the day, the friends mournfully tell each other what kind of dirt they spent hours cleaning up without being noticed by anybody. Then they go home; Philip to that of his father and new wife, both of whom ask him again when he will move out now that he has a job.

To be noticed, the friends offer Resort clients, particularly residents, to do chores for them. Since the clients are accustomed to being served and although the friends still have to do their cleaning jobs, they develop ever more intertwined relations. Doug sends Dennis to program a TV DVD recorder/player for Mrs. Hildeft, the wealthiest resident, who says that she has never done any work, not even raise her kids. She is shocked upon realizing that he can hardly read.

Lisee inadvertently breaks an expensive vase in the lobby. When Mr. Nirhop approaches her, she becomes hysterical shouting, "Don't hit me!" Her cries attract nearby clients. Among them is Mr. Kokal, a resident and former topnotch corporate lawyer always itching for an audience before whom to argue his case. He scolds Mr. Nirhop for threatening Lisee only to find out that she yelled him off when he tried to tell her where to dispose of the pieces. Mr. Kokal ignores Mr. Nirhop's request for an apology, stating instead that he will replace the vase. He is troubled by the implications of Lisee's reaction and her vehement denial that anybody hits her.

Mrs. Passden introduces herself to Mrs. Hildeft and tells her about her days as an army nurse although she came from a wealthy family. Mrs. Hildeft invites her and her resident friends to a tea party. Philip, who dreams of becoming a star basketball player, is caught lying when he tries to woo rich girls in the gym and gives Doug excuses for shirking, who almost fires him.

Mr. Kokal takes Lisee to buy the replacement vase and in the process they become acquainted. He spurns Mr. Nirhop's request that he not take his employees away during work time, for it is 'Clerk Nirhop who has to adapt the performance of his 'chores' around the wishes of the people that pay his salary'. Mr. Nirhop tells him that he is not the only one that pays his salary, to which Mr. Nirhop retorts that he is nevertheless the only one with the skills to make a case to have him fired by the resort's board of directors.

Mrs. Passden examines the mail that Dennis picked up for her from the mailroom and tells him that he may be dyslexic rather than dumb, as people think he is and he does too. He is so excited upon learning that he is not dumb that he runs into the female employees' locker room to tell Lisee. As a result, he is branded as an unpredictably dangerous screw-loose.

By contrast, Mrs. Hildeft asks Doug to send her an assistant to rearrange some new furniture in her apartment, but one that can read. Henry, a coworker, finds out that the illiterate is Dennis. Doug sends Philip, who tells her how fun it was to mix beverages at the graduation party and that if she does so at her tea party, she will become the resort's 'hot chick'. The idea catches her imagination, for she says that her children never call or visit her and she feels lonely.

As usual now, Lisee has breakfast with Mr. Kokal in his apartment. There she reads cookbooks because she wants to become a cook and comments on them while he reads the newspaper that she brings him. Philip is with coworkers when Henry tells them that Dennis cannot read and they tell how he burst into the girls' locker room. Philip denies being Dennis' friend.

At Mrs. Hildeft's party, Philip laces everything drinkable or edible with alcohol that he orders from the restaurant bar and serves it with matchmaking fibs as he plays his DVD music so that what was a deathwatch ends up as revelry. A thankful Mrs. Hildeft tells him that she wants him to become her driver and will pay for his driving lessons. Doug tells Mr. Nirhop that Dennis is perceived as a risk; Mr. Nirhop agrees to let him go. Philip shows Lisee and Dennis all the clothing that Mrs. Hildeft bought to dress him as her driver. When Mrs. Passden hears from receptionist Cindy that Dennis is to be fired; she offers him to get his eyes tested, but he refuses.

Henry mocks Dennis and Lisee, and tells Philip that if Dennis is not his friend, then Philip should not hang out with Lisee either. Doug tells Dennis that he will be let go because of insufficient cleaning work. After Lisee realizes that Philip denied being Dennis's friend, she loses self-control and beats him up to make him feel what being afraid of a person really is like., Philip shouts, "You are like your father!" His comment takes her aback and she runs up to Mr. Kokal. Dennis follows her and Mr. Kokal volunteers to protect both. While group jogging, Mr. Kokal learns from Mrs. Passden what Cindy said about the real reason for firing Dennis. He tells Mr. Nirhop that if he dares fire Dennis, Mr. Kokal will bring a disability discrimination suit in Dennis' behalf. Mr. Nirhop tells Mrs. Hildeft that she cannot turn Philip, his employee, into her private driver, but she replies that he lacks the means to oppose her wishes.

These incidents with the residents make Mr. Nirhop doubt his abilities and his likeability as a person. His wife reassures him that she likes and loves him because of his constant strive to be a better person. Mr. Nirhop tells Dennis that for everybody's safety, he should take an eye test, but he refuses and tells him that he would rather be fired.

Mr. Kokal tells Lisee that at least his granddaughters accepted his invitation to visit him and asks her to make them feel welcome. He asks Mrs. Passden to organize a party for their friends and grandchildren. Dennis asks Lisee to be friends with Philip again, but she refuses because he failed to protect a friend. Dennis shakes his head and both walk away together as Philip watches them with teary eyes. Mr. Kokal calls a limousine service to have his granddaughters, Claudia

and Barbara, picked up at the airport. They resent his not coming to receive them. Barbara wants to hold a poolside party and asks Philip to set up Mr. Kokal's music system. He takes this for an invitation to the party and evidence of her interest in him. Lisee is no sooner introduced to the granddaughters than Mr. Kokal takes her away to supervise the party arrangements.

At the party, Barbara asks Philip for beverages for her and the Ivy League-headed young guests; but offended by being treated as a waiter, he tells Dennis to do it. Mr. Kokal asks Lisee to go to his apartment and bring down some of his 'oldies' music. She goes there and gives in to the temptation of taking a close look at his granddaughters' clothing. Dennis is holding the beverages tray when it is accidentally tilted and falls to the floor. Some boys mock him. Philip attacks them and pushes one, Collins, into the pool. Barbara takes Collins to the apartment to get dry only to be stunned: Lisee is wearing one of her dresses! She orders Lisee to leave without changing because "I can't wear that dress anymore, can I?" Her statement deeply offends Lisee since it means that the dress has become contaminated by her wearing it and no laundry can clean it.

In the lobby, she screams at Mr. Kokal her resentment over his failure to introduce her to the guests and his treating her as a maid. Claudia sees Lisee in her sister's dress and goes upstairs. Mr. Kokal follows her. His granddaughters tell him how disappointed they are that he has avoided spending time with them. The friends meet in the cleaning room. Lisee asks Philip why he jumped the boy at the pool. He says that the rich guy mocked him and Dennis. "They don't like us. Nobody does. We don't have nobody to look after us but we." Lisee approves of his attitude: "That's what friends do 'cause what we touch turns dirty, like this dress after I put it on".

Deeming themselves fired, they decide to go out in style: They take Mrs. Hildefth's luxury car to joyride downtown and parade along their peers' hangouts. They are stopped by the police and taken to their station. Philip calls Mrs. Hildefth and asks her to come down and prove to the police that they did not steal her car.

She seeks Mrs. Passden's and Mr. Kokal's advice. He tells them that his granddaughters called a limousine and left in disgust at his uncaring hosting. Alerted by the receptionist, Mr. Nirhop shows up since the kids are his employees.

He and Mr. Kokal have an altercation that stops only when Mrs. Passden asks them to think of the kids rather than of their egos. Mrs. Hildefth avows how incapable she is of dealing alone with the unexpected; hence, her dependency on others to make decisions for her. Mrs. Passden tells them that it is time to stop talking about themselves and go to the aid of the kids.

All go to the station. Mrs. Passden secures their release by telling the officers that the kids did not call their parents because they feel that the parents do not care about them. "If we leave those kids feeling that they have nothing to lose, not even anybody's affection for them, we doom them. Let us care for them."

In the lobby, they bicker. "We are cranky", says Mrs. Passden, "we need breakfast". While preparing it in her apartment, Dennis confesses to her that he does not want to take the test because if he is not dyslexic, he is dumb; but she convinces him to risk finding out what he is and work to become what he wants to be. Mrs. Hildefth tells Philip that his call made her aware that she failed to care for her children because she did not know how to; he admits that he wanted to be caught by the police to see whether anybody would come through for him. Mr. Kokal and Mr. Nirhop realize that to help the kids they have to quit asserting their own status. Lisee tells Mr. Kokal that she so wanted him to be her father that she forgot who she was; he admits that he has always been insensitive to the feelings of 'the weak' and now he has nobody left but her. When all sit at the table to eat, they wish they could grow into the family that they long for.

The Bloodied Mattress

Synopsis of a movie script and treatment of its novelization

One early morning two cemetery workers find a mattress lying on the sidewalk against the fence of the Beth Olom Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York City. When they start removing it, they find a huge dark reddish stain on it. They call the police. Detectives Pablo, 53, and Jasmine, 26, respond and believe it to be blood. The single bed mattress must have been dumped here after that night's rain given that it is dry; hence, within the last six hours. As they inspect the scene, they notice further up the street large tire marks sideways on the pavement and against the curb. They also find small pieces of black rubber, which they bag. They agree that because of its size and the blood, it must have been concealed in a van for transportation. However, Pablo believes that a man was stabbed on it and dumped elsewhere while the mattress was dropped off here as a message that a similar violent cause can bring the bloodied bodies of his friends and relatives to lie beside him here. By contrast, Jasmine believes that an outcast, such as an illegal immigrant, may have had a terrible accident at home and other aliens put her on it, took the risk of dropping her off at a hospital, and brought the mattress here so that her soul may rest where life is conceived and makes hope flourish eternal. So begins a dynamic confrontation between a master, whose long career dealing with the worst fellow men has darkened his outlook on the world and rendered him jaded and cynical; and his young trainee, who still believes that there is a noble streak in the human spirit capable of inspiring a person to acts of courageous selflessness.

They find no such injured person at any hospital and no exsanguinated dumped body is reported. The mattress is taken to the Medical Examiner. She tells the detectives that the blood on the mattress is too abundant for an adult to survive its loss. Moreover, the mattress shows a pattern of an arch of small stains below which smaller arches with bigger stains converge on one solid stain that goes deep into the mattress. This suggests that an initial arterial spurt with the highest blood pressure occurred when the victim was seated on the edge of a naked mattress. Then he or she fell back. The weakening arterial pressure caused blood to be ejected ever closer to the bleeding point. The blood flowed down to the depression in the mattress caused by the weight of the person, where it formed a pool that by absorption and gravity sank deep into the mattress. Consequently, the adult was injured and bled out through a natural process that nobody disturbed by moving the victim in an effort to assist him or her. The ME adds that the carotid artery must have been completely transected with a profound blow that caused the victim to lose consciousness in a matter of seconds and bleed out in less than a minute. Blood samples are sent for DNA and toxicology analysis. The detectives tell their chief that a person that is about to commit suicide does not first remove the bed linen so that it can be used by survivors. They suggest that the wound was inflicted unexpectedly on the victim by another person, even if only by accident. The chief green lights the criminal investigation of a suspected homicide.

The technicians of the Vehicular Forensic Lab analyze the rubber of the tire marks and the small pieces and identify it as that used in the tires of an old Chevy van model. They speculate that if the scraping against the pavement or the curb was so forceful as to chip off pieces of rubber, the wheel train might have been bent. If so, the driver might have needed to call for road assistance. What they cannot figure out is that the pieces do not appear to have been scraped, but rather sliced off the tire.

The detectives find a call received by the local cellular tower that morning after it

stopped raining and routed to the nearest AAA office. Strangely, the AAA service contract is for a previous year's Mercedes-Benz model. They trick the AAA service man by asking about 'the yellow Mercedes...rather the red one...I mean, the black' until he admits that he was paid off to service an old Chevy van and tow it to a repair shop. There he identifies the van, which is taken to the lab. The detectives then see the owner of the Mercedes-Benz, Mr. Willbough, owner of the first-rate art gallery Impressions in Greenwich Village. He says that his handymen, Gary and Karoff, called him requesting his AAA membership number because his Mercedes, which they were supposed to take for its weekly cleaning, had broken down. They said that they wanted to leave the car very early at the car wash so that they could run to finish dismounting his exhibition at the posh hotel Duke of York and release the hall before he would be charged for another day.

Gary and Karoff admit that they did not tell their boss that it was the Impressions van, used for transporting objects of art, that had broken down in Brooklyn, where it had not reason to be, because late comers to the exhibition insisted on viewing it and had caused them to finish dismounting it too late. So they decided to keep the paintings overnight in the van under lock and key in Gary's garage and unload it the following day. The Vehicular Lab tells the detectives that the van's rear left side has dents and transfer paint. In their opinion, a green Honda van impacted the Impressions van repeatedly during a chase, bent the fender inwards, which sliced pieces of the tire, and forced it against the curb until it stopped. However, the motive can hardly have been to retrieve the victim since neither fibers matching the mattress fabric nor bloodstains were found in the van. The trace laboratory determines that the mattress is expensive and its fibers bear transfer traces of laundry detergent used in hotel bed linen. The fingerprints on it do not match those of Gary and Karoff, which are in the criminal system fingerprint database for theft.

The detectives go to the Duke of York Hotel. The manager says that the exhibition organizers asked for two connected rooms. One was for the exhibited artist, Gregory. The housekeeper explains that the big beds in his bedroom were removed and replaced with a single bed because he wanted to have room to mount an easel and paint whenever he could not sleep. "A strange fellow, if you ask me," she comments, "who doesn't have set hours for eating or sleeping or doing anything, like normal people do." In the manager's view, "the organizers were more than happy to milk every drop of painting that he wanted to squeeze from himself." The beds and furniture in the other room were removed to store the crates of exhibited paintings. Sometime he kept there his painting materials trunk, "a rickety wooden box, like children have for keeping their toys, on wheels and with a top lid, where he dumped everything pell-mell and pulled by a cord on one side. Only he could pull it and did not allow anybody else to handle it. A crazy boy in the head", says the housekeeper, and the manager adds, "with the hands of a magician".

He takes the detectives and their Crime Scene Unit personnel (CSU) to those rooms. There is no sign of a struggle. CSU spray Luminol all over the carpet, the bedspread, and the walls but it does not react to make visible a single drop of blood despite the massive amount spilled on the mattress. They are baffled. The housekeeper joins them and says that a spare single bed is missing. CSU keep working there while the detectives go with the manager to his office.

He calls up Hotel Caterers Martin and Frances, who work in the kitchen and brought food service carts to Gregory whenever he wanted. They say that shortly before 8:00 p.m. on the last night of the exhibition, an hour before it ended, they brought up another food cart. When they came out of the elevator, they saw Mr. Willbough eavesdropping outside his door. He hurriedly walked away in the opposite direction and turned the corner. When they removed the cart before 10:00 p.m., they saw nobody. On both occasions, they only entered the crates room, which had the door to the bedroom closed..."the way of that lanky, stingy, gluttonous pig to avoid tipping

us". They say that the crates are about 4'L x 3'H x 18"W. In addition to seeing Gary and Karoff enter the crates room, they also saw Deborah, 49, go in or out of the bedroom on other occasions. The manager says that she is one of the organizers and Director of New Artists Exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Frances notes, "she mothers Gregory and consents to his every whim. I would have kicked his..." "Frances!", shouted the manager. "Oh yes," says Martin, "she would and his pocket too, for the tips." The detectives leave even more baffled, for how could a body and a mattress be brought down and removed from the hotel without anybody noticing?

Pablo and Jasmine go to the Metropolitan. The curator says that Deborah has not showed up since the exhibition started five days earlier, which is not unusual because she spends a lot of time taking the pulse of the art world and building links to the Museum. Her previous job was as an appraiser for the Antique Roadshow, where she developed a TV following. She discovered Gregory as he displayed his paintings on the artists' sidewalk of Central Park, and brought him into an agency contract with Mr. Willbough and a new art investor, Mr. Hsung. The detectives go to her apartment building, but the manager refuses to let them into her apartment without a warrant. However, he finds out from the janitors that everything is in order inside; and gives the detectives the address of her next of kin: her two grown up children, who survive their father.

The detectives ask Mr. Willbough why he did not mention either Deborah or Mr. Hsung as co-organizers of the exhibition. "Because you asked me only about Gary calling me for my AAA registration number." He says that Gregory is a temperamental, capricious, and immature young man in his mid 20s. The last night of the exhibition he disappeared from the exhibition hall, so Mr. Willbough went up to his room to find out whether he was working; "if he was sleeping, waking him up was definitely not a good idea". Mr. Hsung is a Chinese art importer, whom Deborah persuaded to convert a house in Chappaqua, upstate New York, into an art gallery to cater to wealthy suburbanites and her many affluent friends.

The detectives cannot find Mr. Hsung in his Chinatown office. They travel to Chappaqua, where they meet his secretary Frieda. She says that she supervises the conversion. But there are no workers, only interior decoration materials. To bring them, she has been driving Mr. Hsung's green Honda van, which is parked in the driveway outside the closed garage. She has not seen him, Deborah, or Gregory since the end of the exhibition. That night Mr. Hsung left at about 8:30 p.m.; shortly thereafter, she left with a client; Deborah remained behind to wrap things up. After the convention, Mr. Hsung was to attend an art dealers convention; that is why he did not need his van. The detectives ask whether they can look around the house, but Frieda adamantly refuses because it is under construction and, as such, a hazardous place. As the detectives are leaving, they take a look at the van. It has no dents or paint scratches; but pretending to drop her keys, Jasmine kneels behind the van and uses them to scratch a paint sample from it.

Deborah's children have not heard from her in the last few days. With their authorization, the detectives enter her apartment. Chicken parts were left in the fridge to defrost, which a person would not do who is planning not to come home for days. CSU takes underwear from the hamper for analysis. Deborah's answering machine has messages from Mr. Hsung asking to meet with her and indicating that Gregory was staying at his Chappaqua house. Frieda lied to them about it! The laboratory matched up the van's paint sample with the transfer paint on Gary's van. So the detectives have a surveillance camera installed on an electricity pole across a flowerbed in his backyard and aimed at the driveway. A CSU report reveals that a single speck of blood was found under the desktop in Gregory's hotel room and that its DNA matches that of the blood on the mattress and the skin flakes in Deborah's underwear. This convinces the detectives that she is indeed missing and most likely was killed in Gregory's hotel room.

The detectives go back to the hotel with photos of people photographed on Mr. Hsung's driveway and yard. The manager identifies Mr. Hsung and Frieda and confirms that they left before the end of the exhibition. Other people appear to be Chinese construction workers. The detectives grill Hotel Caterers Martin and Frances separately, but cannot shake their story that they did not see anything out of order when they took their food service cart in and out of Gregory's crate room. Yet, it is precisely the fact that their stories are so consistent, as if they had been rehearsed, that make them suspect. They interview other coworkers and find out that they have a champion-protégé relationship and that Frances has a highly developed take-charge attitude and is very resourceful. The detectives speculate that either Gregory, the caterers, or Gary and Karoff phoned for help to dispose of Deborah's body and the mattress. They check the logs of phones from which they could have called and find that a call was made from the employees' locker room, which is near the hotel's delivery dock, to a cellular phone registered to Mr. Hsung and relayed by a cell in Chinatown at 12:24 a.m.

The detectives scout Chinatown restaurants unsuccessfully. By accident, they find in a nearby Little Italy restaurant a waiter that recognizes Mr. Hsung from a photo. He says that Mr. Hsung was having a late night dinner with presumed Mafiosi when a phone call came in that upset him and everybody else. The detectives speculate that Mr. Hsung had Gregory kill Deborah to divide proceeds between fewer joint venturers and then left messages on her answering machine to pretend that he thought that she was alive; and that Frieda returned to the hotel after her snack with a client to make sure that the job had been done and then called Mr. Hsung from the locker room. But they cannot figure out why Mr. Hsung's van would bump the van of Gary and Karoff to make it stop if they helped him get rid of the mattress and the body, let alone if they did not. Then the detectives remember that the surveillance camera took a photo of a freshly planted flowerbed in Mr. Hsung's backyard...“That's Deborah's tomb, dug by the workers!”

Pablo and Jasmine get a warrant and take a CSU team to Mr. Hsung's house. Inside they find Mr. Hsung. He says that after the exhibition he lent his van to Frieda so she could bring interior decoration materials while he met at a convention with clients that he had met at the exhibition. CSU goes to the backyard to dig out the flowerbed. The detectives ask about Gregory. Mr. Hsung admits that he has been working on the second floor and that Mr. Hsung asked him to hide his clunker in the garage so that it may not bring either of them or the house into disrepute with the neighbors that may...screams! They rush outside. Police officers catch a young man who exited through a second floor window and was climbing down a tree. It is Gregory! A physically and emotionally frail man, he whines that he was not trying to escape, but that nobody would believe that he did not kill Deborah, who was alive when he last saw her in his hotel room...more screams! They rush to the backyard. CSU has found Deborah's body! Mr. Hsung and Frieda deny any knowledge whatsoever of it and contend that Gregory planted the flowerbed. “It was an accident!”, shouts Gregory uncontrollably. Taking that as an admission that he killed her, the detectives cuff him and lead him away as he becomes ever more hysterical until he drops unconscious. He is taken inside and laid on a sofa in Frieda's office. When he comes to, he is questioned until he breaks down and tells his story. Flashback:

The last night of the exhibition, an impressed visitor praises one of his paintings and buys it for more money than Gregory has ever been paid for all his works. That painting as well as all the others is truly remarkable for their thematic appeal, their color composition and structural balance, and their technical mastery. He, who sold his paintings for whatever tourists had in their pockets, is overexcited. Deborah asks him how much he sold it for, but he refuses to say and insists that he will keep it all because “I'm the talent here! It's mine! I'm The Painter!” She

reminds him of his contract with the joint venturers. Upset, he storms out and goes up to his connecting rooms. Mr. Hsung has watched the scene, approaches Deborah, and learns what happened. He asks her to make Gregory understand that Mr. Hsung is the one footing most of the cost of the exhibition and his room and board and tells her to leave certain paintings in the hall for him to pick up and hold as insurance. Then he pays Frances to keep an eye on his pieces and call him if any attempt is made to remove them. He insists that among those pieces is the one whose view is blocked by all the people standing in front of it. He even takes her to see it.

There is good reason why that piece attracts so much attention from all exhibition viewers. It is Gregory's most ambitious and largest, 7' x 5' painting on which he is working in the hall as an artist-at-work promotional device. He could only paint it here because the hall provides the necessary space, whereas otherwise he is limited to paintings whose sizes fit his studio, that is, the back of his clunker van. However, there is something else that makes it amazing and elicits so many compliments to Gregory.

The canvas lies horizontally on its 7' size and has no sketch at all. Yet, its top half is already painted in color and reveals a surreal scene of a gallery of faces of people, animals, and flowers attentively looking from the top of trees at the center of the canvas. It is as if Gregory had attached the top edge of a rolled tapestry along the top edge of a wall and were slowly unrolling it down, thus revealing a complete and exquisite scene: The whole forest has come together to witness the birth of a life-sustaining fountain of water spurting up from the ground and... That's what's happening there! The scene of the people at his back watching as a genius of a painter is born and Gregory in turn is seeing them with the eyes of his imagination at the back of his head! There the painting is already finished and he is only using the dexterity of his hands to unroll it onto the canvas.

The sighs of wonderment and admiring comments are an ode to the appreciation of art and the mysterious ways of its creation. They resonate on Gregory's body, turning it into a tuning fork that keeps emitting a single sound of perfect pitch: I'm The Painter! The considerable amount of money just paid him to purchase one of his paintings is only the tangible expression of that sound. But it and the wrangle with Deborah have become shock waves breaking against his frail temperament and making him too nervous to keep painting. So he stamps away.

After her conversation with Mr. Hsung, Deborah goes up to the rooms. Gregory admits to having sold the painting for a lot of money and childishly challenges her to find it, as if playing hide and seek with her. Incensed by his inopportune and immature behavior, she ransacks the place, undressing the bed in his bedroom and moving onto the connecting room, where the crates are kept and he moved his painting materials trunk. In the latter, she finds a shoebox-like safe and a palette knife. She takes both, sits on the mattress, and with her right hand tries to pry the safe open. But the knife keeps slipping along the joint of the lid and the container bottom. As she hurls insults at Gregory, who is dancing and laughing puerilely, she turns the box and exerts a lot of pressure against a hinge at the back to burst it, and more pressure, and all the pressure that she can muster with her right hand, to no avail. So she places the box between her knees and with both hands holding the knife pointing upwardly she tries again, and puffs, and her arms shake with tension ... the knife snaps like a tense coil that is suddenly released, darts up, and slashes the left side of her neck. Blood spurts out like a geyser of death. She falls back on the mattress while blood is pumped out in an ever more languid jet. Inversely, Gregory becomes ever more aware that she is bleeding out, and is dying, and she is dead. Horrified, he crumbles in a corner, wraps his arms around his bent legs, and with his face pressed against his knees weeps like a child.

When Frances and Martin enter his room to remove the food service cart before their

shift is over, they hear somebody weeping in the bedroom. They knock. Nobody responds. So they open the door and find that scene. Frances shakes him and slaps him “and answer me or I flatten you like a ball of dough”. Gregory snaps out of the self-absorbed stupor in which he has retreated. He asks for her help. “Help! Like I take your dirty dishes away and a dead body too?! I ain’t no undertaker. I’m a business woman.” He takes a key from his pocket, opens the safe box, and offers her all the money in it if she helps him. Bedazzled, she takes it, ‘but this’s for the tips you owe me and my employee. I want that painting too’. He agrees to her taking anything if she helps him. She takes a small painting, an insightful portrait of a girl on a swing joyfully screaming as she swings forward toward the sky while the children behind her are looking down as they play with their toys in the sand. Frances is fascinated by it. She hides it in the cart. Then it’s clean up time!

She takes from the cart plastic bags and presses them in Martin’s hands. He protests about always having to do all the work, about how much of the “tip” she is going to share with him this time, about her never asking him how he would do it “though I too have lots of many good ideas”, but she does not pay him any attention. She is busy figuring out how she and he are going to... “I’ve got it!” She orders him to take Gregory’s painting materials from the trunk and put them in the bags “and I’ll charge you for every stain you make on the carpet”. When he is done, she gives him orders to help her “bag this Thanksgiving turkey for the oven but we’re gonna stuff her in the trunk”. He protests each and every order while following each with practiced obedience and skill: He pulls Deborah to a sitting position and she pull a plastic bag from her head to her torso “like covering an ice cream cone with chocolate sauce without spilling a drop or I ain’t letting you lick the bowl no way”. After “Deborah is cooking”, they bring from the crates room into the bedroom the big crate for the big work in progress, lay it flat on the floor, and without tilting the mattress, lift it off the spring box, lay it on the floor beside the crate, and slide it in. They leave it thus for the pool of blood on it to “marinate” into the fabric. Gregory watches on in dumbfounded silence that gradually becomes amused curiosity.

They take the cart downstairs and before entering the kitchen to clean it, they clock out. “She said everything had to be in the nature’s order of things if the cops come asking ‘bout your slipping-hand beauty”. Martin adds, “Your stiff would have been a great help in the kitchen opening oysters!” Frances shouts: “She’s going to work, everybody still alive get out of the kitchen!” “They tag teamed always,” says Gregory; “Cracked me up! They’re real funny. We had a good time, though Frances smacked me like my parents ‘cause I’d paint the walls with ketchup and mustard in cream cheese and blue toothpaste and they don’t like it and they hurt and I left.”

Later on, Gary and Karoff enter only the room with the crates to take them to the hall and pack therein the paintings for safe transportation. After they have done with the conventional size crates, Frances and Martin move the big crate from the bedroom to the crate room. Gregory tells the packers that it was packed with a painting that he was working on in the bedroom and the big work in progress in the hall does not yet need a crate. Frances adds, “It belongs to Mr. Chow Mein”, and keeps ridiculing Mr. Hsung. All have a big laugh at his expense. “He thinks he waves his chopsticks like Harry Potter and gets everybody ordered around to do what he wants.”

They load everything in the Impressions van in the delivery dock. Frances asks Gary “Do you have to slave much longer being that it is so late or you’re gonna split home and do a good unload like a profi tomorrow morning fresh and strong? I guess they don’t pay you triple time to work in the wee hours when their sleeping like a cannoli log on a pudding bed. That’s what we make the hotel pay us or they can have the guests open a can of chicken of the street”. Gary thinks it over and confides that from SOHO, where they are, they will take the Williamsburg

Bridge to Brooklyn because “you’re right, it’s too late to drive to the Upper West Side. That’s hard labor to unload all this stuff in Mr. Willbough’s storage facility by the Amtrak yard”. They exchange hearty goodbyes and then Gary and Karoff drive away past midnight. It is raining.

It is then that Frances calls Mr. Hsung from a pay phone in the nearby locker room. He is at table eating with other businessmen, yet he shouts angrily upon learning that Gary threw his work in progress without a crate in his van, where he will keep it overnight after he parks it in front of his home near Richmond Hill, “a real nasty neighborhood, Gary said, but nobody will steal anything and anyway he knows all the fences”. She tells him Gary’s route. Then she takes Martin and Gregory to the storage room and has them bring a mattress and two cardboard boxes up to the bedroom. Frances and Martin place the bags with his painting materials in the boxes and carry them down while Gregory pulls his trunk with Deborah’s corpse. They load it all in his clunker of a van. Gregory hugs them both like old childhood friends and tells them that they have to come see him at his next exhibition. “That’s great! Greggy. And here is our farewell gift”, says Frances pressing a plastic bag into his hand. “If you need to paint out another organizer, just put this bag over their head and choke’m ‘cause we ain’t cleaning no blood mess no more”. They explode with laughter. After their banter subsides, Gregory climbs in his clunker and leaves.

“Don’t you let her fool you! She is no clown”, exclaims Mr. Hsung in a voice-over. “That cunning sleazy grease cook”. The flashback goes on. He is standing by the table where their drivers are eating when he calls Gary. He tells him to take the paintings to Mr. Willbough’s storage facility; but Gary refuses and says that he works for Mr. Willbough and “don’t take orders from no chow mein”. An infuriated Mr. Hsung takes his driver and leaves Little Italy.

It is drizzling as Mr. Hsung lays in wait by the Williamsburg Bridge. When the driver sees the van with the “Impressions” logo, they follow it. It has cleared up by the time they get to the deserted Beth Olom Cemetery on Cypress Hills. There his driver bumps the left rear fender of Gary’s van into the wheel so that is brought to a stop. His driver jumps out with chain sticks in each hand and, standing by Gary’s right headlight, starts swing them at a vertiginous speed. Mr. Hsung has a 50” engraved wooden dragon staff that he threatens to run through their windows if they do not roll them down and drive through their ears if they do not step out. Gary and Karoff step out trembling. “You dogs! You put my jewel uncrated in the van!” They try to explain what... “Shut up! Don’t you disrespect me talking back! If it is as much as scratched, I break your fingers! Take it out!” Gary and Karoff look at each other in fear, instinctively put on their work gloves, remove it from the van, and hold it to the headlights of Mr. Hsung’s van while he inspects it. He tells his driver to open the big crate of the work in progress. “Boss!”, shouted the driver, “there’s a mattress here!” The driver and Mr. Hsung pull it out... “What’s that? Blood?!”

Gary and Karoff look at it incredulous, realize that it is blood indeed, and are panic-stricken in a flash. They cannot contain wildly denying having anything to do with it. Mr. Hsung says that they are at least accomplices helping in disposing of the mattress and who knows what else. He tells them to place the painting in its crate and load it together with some other crates in his van. “You two take the mattress down the street and dump it on the sidewalk and do it quickly before a Good Samaritan stops and sees that you dumped your bloodied mattress. If you two keep your mouth shut about my knocking your van, we won’t say anything about your doing a whack job on the mattress or cleaning up for whoever did it.” He adds that Gary and Karoff should tell Mr. Willbough that they left the work in progress at the hotel for Mr. Hsung to pick it up; he will bring it up to the Chappaqua house, where Gregory can be brought to finish it. “If he asks about the other pieces that I just took, let him ask Deborah. She knows what the deal is.” He and his driver leave as Gary and Karoff hastily grab the mattress to distance it from them.

In a voice-over, Mr. Hsung says that, “Those two characters must have known that if they called AAA to tow the van, Mr. Willbough would find out that they had driven it loaded with paintings to Brooklyn to spend the night on the street and he would fire them on the spot. As for Frances, she played us! She wanted me to go after that extraordinary painting so that I would find the mattress and get rid of it before it ever made it to the storage facility. From there it could be tracked back to the hotel and her. With her tongue, she beats any of my salesgirls to sell the cross to Tibetan monks!”

Gregory drives to the house in Chappaqua and during the night buries Deborah’s body under the flowerbed. He is about to leave when Mr. Hsung arrives. “Gregory, by the Great Wall!, what are you doing here?!” Visibly disturbed, Gregory tells him haltingly that Deborah took the money from the sale of the painting that night to offset what was owed her from the sales at the exhibition; she wanted Gregory to give notice of termination of the contract with Mr. Hsung and Mr. Willbough and sell through her only. She upset him so much! So he came to the house to discuss the whole thing with Mr. Hsung.

“Deborah showed lack of trust in Mr. Willbough and me. She should be the one to get axed from the venture”, says Mr. Hsung. In the morning, he will discuss the matter with them. “I know you can’t finish your work in progress in your ‘studio’”, so he will bring it from Mr. Willbough’s storage room in the morning for Gregory to finish it in a big room in the house, where he can stay as long as he wants if he wants to keep painting there. “A room! It beats living in my van. I’ll do it!”, shouted Gregory beside himself. Moreover, Mr. Hsung will bring other paintings so that Gregory can give his opinion on how best to set up the spotlights. Exhilarated, Gregory goes into the house “’cause I’m beat with all the driving here and that it’s so late”. Soon he is snoring in a sleeping bag on the second floor. Then Mr. Hsung and his driver take the crates from the van to another room on that floor where interior decoration materials are stacked.

The following morning the driver takes the van to the shop to repair the damage from bumping Gary’s van. When Gregory wakes up in the afternoon, Mr. Hsung tells him that he brought his work in progress. “Frieda will order all the food and materials you need and make sure you can work without any distractions.” Gregory is seen licking his fingers and wiping them on his shirt before going back to his work, on which he is making beautiful progress. He chews on food from a table behind him that he has turned into a real mess, with five take-out containers and several opened soda cans intermingled with all sorts of materials from the two boxes nearby.

“You need to come with us until we check your story”, says Jasmine to Gregory, “you may be charged at least with the illegal disposal of a corpse”. Pablo shouts “a dump job!”. “No! no!”, cries Gregory, “I loved Deborah! She believed in me. She gave me hope. I’ll stay here and take care that she lives forever in the followers above her and the art that I’ll create in her name.”

The medical examiner performs an autopsy on Deborah. “The slash on her neck has a slanted upward trajectory. Gregory’s palette knife cut the skin at the bottom of the slash, proceeded deeper into the flesh, cleanly severing the carotid, and its tip stopped half an inch under and along her skin. The tool marks on her body and his safe box match the knife; her fingerprints are on both the box and the knife. A scratch on her throat below the slash is consistent with the nail of her right thumb, under which her blood and tissue were found. The cause of death is exsanguination by accidental self-stabbing.”

Jasmine tries to get Pablo to see in the light of the facts that there were no demons in this case. Pablo wonders whether the human soul has a bright side; and the thought that art may be its highest expression comes to him as an epiphany.

BIG MONEY FOR *little ones*

Synopsis of a movie script

It is the opening night of the Romanian Trade Fair in New York City. There is a party atmosphere, with folkloric dancing, top Romanian singers, typical gastronomic delicacies, and plenty of wine. Top government officials and businessmen from Romania and the U.S. are present. Cultural Attaché Caragiale introduces the VIP guests to each other, while gorgeous female Romanian interpreters facilitate their communication. Caragiale sees when his special project, Mr. Inleighs, fixes his eyes on beautiful Elena. He pairs them up, picks up his own girlfriend for the evening, and squirrels away with them to the limousine, which Petru drives to the Consulate.

Their fun is snuffed at the Consulate when they surprise two intruders. One escapes, but the other is shot by Petru and falls dead outside the gate, on non-Romanian territory. Caragiale removes the intriguing night vision goggles, headset with microphone, and waist bag of the fallen man before NYPD Detective Ramiro arrives. Caragiale tells him simply that he found an intruder at the Consulate and shot him in self-defense.

The next day Ramiro informs Assistant District Attorney Gianni. Both meet with Assistant U.S. Attorney Ariel and Special FBI Agent Charleston. Ariel requests that the D.A. relinquish jurisdiction of the case to the Federal authorities given its diplomatic elements. Gianni states that the D.A. will not do so. After a tense discussion, it is agreed that both parties will work together. Gianni and Ariel find out to their surprise that the Romanian Consul refuses to let them inspect the premises or interview any of his employees. To him this was nothing but a burglary in light of the presence in the Consulate of gifts for special Fair guests. Privately Ariel tells Gianni that she too thinks this was only a burglary. At Gianni's insistence, she agrees to have the Romanian interpreters interviewed, for they were brought in by the Fair organizers so that they neither enjoy diplomatic immunity nor are covered by the Consul's refusal.

Ramiro resents having to partner with Charleston because the FBI has discriminated against his joining it due to his being Hispanic. Yet, he must go with Charleston to the Immigration and Naturalization Service to obtain the list of Romanian interpreters. Upon noticing that they are all young women, Ramiro comments that something is going on with them, but Charleston ridicules his comment as unfounded. Although they interview the interpreters at their hotel, Charleston deems it a pointless investigative effort. The two detectives find out that Elena is the interpreters' director and lives in New York. Ramiro becomes suspicious when Elena grows impatient and says that she has told them 'all she can'; now he wants to find out all she knows.

Ramiro goes back to the INS alone and learns from the records that Elena works for Romanian businessman Antonescu. He is one of the Fair organizers and thus, must have close ties to the Consulate. Since her address is his, she may have valuable information about the Consulate and shooting. Hence, Ramiro wants first to shadow and then interview her. When the Feds are told about this, they object to taking the investigation so far afield, but Gianni supports him and prevails. Ramiro and Charleston see Elena take two kids from Antonescu's house to school. Now Ramiro wants to know her relation to them. Charleston complains about such shotgun investigation, but accompanies Ramiro. They learn from a teacher that Elena is simply the nanny of Euge and Dinu, who arrived the previous October and January, respectively. Charleston's complaints grow louder. Ariel insists on interviewing Elena alone because "woman to woman is more productive". Ramiro tricks her into agreeing to wear a wire and to his talking to the kids too. Upon analyzing the conversation, he concludes that the kids are not even brothers: One calls Antonescu "Dad" and the other "Papa Anton". He wants to interview the school principal. The

Feds argue that if only an INS violation is found with no link to the shooting, the case should be turned over to the INS and considered closed. Gianni agrees with that approach, but Ramiro goes along with him only reluctantly.

The Principal says that Dinu is Antonescu's illegitimate son and arrived when his mother allowed him to leave Romania. In Charleston's absence and by a slip of the tongue, the Principal calls Ramiro "Gianni". Ramiro bullies him psychologically and the Principal confesses that Antonescu, upon a request from Gianni, who wanted to close the case, asked him to say that Dinu had arrived in January, although he was enrolled in the school only later, in April. Ramiro does not tell Charleston anything. At the INS, he finds out that there is no record of Euge having ever entered the U.S. Then he blasts Gianni for double-dealing. Gianni affirms that he did not ask Antonescu anything. Ramiro asks him to prove it by going to see Antonescu right away. Gianni berates Ramiro for jumping to conclusions, but agrees to his demand.

While interviewing Antonescu in his home office, Ramiro pulls a stunt by saying that their investigation has discovered a prostitution ring involving the interpreters in which Antonescu can be implicated, and that Dinu entered the U.S. under the false name of Euge so that both can be deported. Gianni does not play along and the stunt fails to pressure Antonescu into telling what he knows about the Consulate shooting. On the contrary, he threatens Ramiro with a lawsuit for defamation and demands that Gianni disassociate himself from those accusations. Gianni upbraids Ramiro for the situation thus created. In turn, Ramiro accuses him of not having played along out of fear that a subordinate may get the credit for breaking the case. The next day, Antonescu and his lawyer obtain his removal from the case in exchange for their pledge not to sue. Ramiro berates Gianni for having sold him out, thus putting a blemish on his record.

To rethink their strategy for proceeding without Ramiro, Gianni calls Ariel, who invites him home for dinner. She tries to convince him to bring the case to a close. He picks up a detail in the conversation that gives away Ariel's lie of not having ever met Antonescu until she did with Gianni. Moreover, by mistake he enters her bedroom, where he sees a typical Romanian work of art similar to one that he saw in Antonescu's home office.

Still in shock, Gianni wakes up Ramiro at home and tells him of his suspicion of Ariel's corruption. Ramiro reveals that he took the initiative to examine the autopsy report on the dead burglar, who was identified by his mother. She claimed that her son might have been an FBI agent. Given the Feds' attitude to close the investigation as soon as possible, Ramiro ventures the conclusion that the Consulate break-in was a covert FBI operation. Gianni finds the evidence intriguing, but insufficient to support the conclusion or have Ramiro reinstated in the case.

The next day Ramiro shadows Elena and picks her up on her way back from the kid's school. He tells her that as part of a deal with Antonescu, he admitted that the Fair and the Consulate use the interpreters in a scheme that trades sex favors for VIPs' concessions. As a result, she is being deported. Right there he gets her on the car and drives her to the airport at a maddening speed. She is terrorized, breaks down, and tells him what happened on the Fair's opening night. She also says that Caragiale showed Petru the equipment taken from the intruder that was killed. Both quickly recognized what it was and were outraged, but just at soon became delighted by their "treasure", which "pays dividends hidden or in the diplomatic sun". Ramiro's bluff has paid off, but has left him puzzled.

Ramiro shares with Gianni Elena's equipment description and statement. They figure that Caragiale and Petru, thanks to their espionage training, realized that the equipment was government issued and the intruders were agents; and that the Consul must have blackmailed the Feds into killing Gianni and Ramiro's shooting investigation or the equipment would be shown at the Fair as proof that the U.S. Government had broken into sovereign consular territory to

conduct an intelligence operation. What intrigues them is how the subject of the Feds covert investigation is so sensitive that the Consulate needs to prevent the shooting investigation from stumbling upon and revealing it. But one thing they now know: It earns money.

When Ramiro takes Elena back home, he learns that she never knew her parents, who abandoned her at an orphanage, where she suffered terribly. Following a lead from Elena's statement, Ramiro and Gianni go to the airport. They find out that Caragiale often goes to the cargo section of the Romanian airline to obtain a package that Antonescu brings for him in a chartered flight, which Caragiale then claims as diplomatic baggage. The dates of the first two flights coincide with the arrival of Euge and Dinu. The officer in charge of the U.S. Customs office denies that there is a pattern of entry of diplomatic baggage for Caragiale and surprisingly says that Gianni has no business investigating a matter "in the hands of the Feds".

At the INS, Ramiro is shocked at finding out that Euge has no immigration documents at all. He and Gianni realize that the officer that signs off on those documents fits Elena's description of the VIP brought to the Consulate the night of the shooting. Ramiro tricks him and with Gianni playing along, the officer agrees to falsify a document. They go to see Elena at Antonescu's house only to learn that she left for Romania because her parents are sick. But she never knew her parents! They check and her name does not turn up on any airline manifest. Hence, she is still in the U.S. But where? They accuse Ariel of having made Elena disappear. She denies having done so, but admits that she conducted a covert operation at the Consulate; Charleston adds that "we" must clean up the mess to save "our" standing in the FBI by playing along with Caragiale until the equipment is retrieved. Ariel says that Antonescu bribed Caragiale to smuggle Euge and Dinu as diplomatic baggage and then Caragiale went for more easy money by getting Antonescu to smuggle more orphans for illegal adoptions. When she realized that Gianni and Ramiro had put it together, she used that information to force Antonescu to help her retrieve the equipment or she would let Gianni's investigation cause his kids to be deported. He agreed to cooperate and gave her gifts.

Gianni and Ramiro realize that Charleston was the other intruder; that the Customs officer told him of their visit to Customs; and that Charleston had Ariel alert Caragiale to take Elena out of the reach of Gianni's warrants...and it hits them! They cut a deal with Elena by promising to keep her in the U.S. if she helps them retrieve the equipment. They rode Trojan Mare Elena into the Consulate! Gianni and Ramiro craft a plan to 'ride' Elena out the Consulate so that Gianni can offer her immunity from charges of running a prostitution ring in exchange for her testimony against the smuggling and adoption ring, a case that can make them a name by exposing the Fed's break-in.

After cajoling sensitive information from Petru, Elena lets Charleston enter the Consulate that night. Petru returns unexpectedly and fights Charleston. Ramiro comes out of hiding to take advantage of the distraction to sneak out with Elena, but Petru jumps him and he must be saved by Charleston; then both retrieve the equipment. An alarm goes off. Elena escapes and is met by Gianni outside the Consulate. Ariel and her agents pick them up before the NYPD arrive.

All go to a safe place. Ariel argues that given the Consulate's diplomatic immunity, they succeeded in quietly stop-ping the smuggling of orphans and causing corrupt INS officials to resign so that exposing the Fed's covert operation would only prevent the use of such operations to end abuses of diplomatic immunity. Gianni agrees not to expose it. Elena makes them admit that when they cooperate they are more effective than when they fight each other and can get results more important than the advancement of their careers: They can help the little ones, like the orphans, the interpreters-cum-sex girls, and her, who alone do not stand a chance against Big Money. Ramiro agrees with her and says that later on he wants her to tell him more about the smuggling ring. They tease him that what he wants is to date her.

Dead *But On The Run*

Synopsis of a movie script

Ex-convict Morton McCaully, 36, is playing with niece Sally, 5, when Stephen, 19, arrives at the McCaully's motor repair shop, cum chop shop, in New York City, with the stolen motorcycle that they need to do a 'job'. But Morton takes a fancy to the Harley-Davidson that a client has just brought in to repair. Since his brother will not give him the key, Morton starts smashing that big hog until he gets it and rides away with Stephen.

They hold up a check cashing office. When on his way out Morton finds that a door does not open quickly, he has a flashback to his 11 years in prison, panics, kills a customer...and drops the loot. They escape on the hog, which soon stalls, forcing them to split and run. Morton barricades himself in a house. There he is taken out of action by police officer Bolansky with a shot that disfigures his face. Stephen is apprehended by officers of a neighboring precinct where detectives Lawrence, 44, and Perol, 32, work, who are assigned to the case.

Stephen plea-bargains with the Queens Senior Assistant D.A. Alfred and his junior, Kathleen, by offering to testify that Morton was the killer of a schoolgirl. This allegation can only be proved by matching the DNA of fluids found on the girl's clothes with that of Morton. The lawyers and the detectives discuss the need for an exhumation order; tension erupts when Alfred treats the detectives as clerks of lesser intelligence.

When Lawrence and Perol go to exhume Morton...there is no coffin in the grave! The cemetery workers confess that they 'recycle' coffins, but allege that Morton was not in his. The detectives check with the McCaullys: They last saw their brother's corpse at the funeral home. The home director denies trafficking in corpses. The detectives recognize that a surveillance operation can take time, during which Morton's corpse can disappear forever.

The next day an anonymous tip says that a certain Travis wants to talk. When the detectives visit him he confesses through a smashed up face that he and others at the home sell corpses to a corpse dealer. Later on Lawrence admits to Perol that he hinted to the McCaullys the need for information, hoping that they would beat Travis into 'volunteering' to talk. Perol contests Lawrence's tactics, which becomes a source of conflict between their views of what means and ends of justice are proper.

The detectives bait and apprehend the corpse dealer, who confesses after realizing what happened to Travis: He buys corpses from funeral homes and sells them to medical schools. Lawrence and Perol manage to identify the school that bought Morton's corpse, which is incinerated before their search warrant is executed. However, the detectives find a pathology resident who dissected a faceless corpse and says that his liver had been removed and his other organs had poison traces, which he discovered by preparing tissue slides. The detectives suspect that this was Morton and that his liver was transplanted.

Through the McCaullys, they obtain the medical record of Morton after he was shot. It states that he died from gunshots to not only the head, but also the torso, of which the resident, however, found no signs. Lawrence and Perol talk to Bolansky, who only mentions shooting Morton in the head. They find out that EMS never sent an ambulance for Morton; strangely enough, it came from a clinic to which Morton would not normally have been sent because too distant. Nobody there would say who requested the ambulance.

Lawrence and Perol ask Vranska, Bolansky's commanding officer, to lend them the Morton file, but it is not sent. So they talk to Bolansky's partner, who says that Bolansky received a call on his cellular phone and then drove to the besieged house. The desk sergeant says that she did not send the ambulance and that Bolansky and Vranska are buddies. Vranska says he does not know who sent the ambulance. But cellular phone records show that Vranska called Bolansky and the clinic's director, who in turn called Dr. Gombrat, a liver transplant surgeon. Both the clinic's director and Dr. Gombrat refuse to provide any information. Now the detectives put it all together: Bolansky defaces criminals; Vranska arranges for their shipment to the clinic; the latter steals their organs while 'treating' them for torso wounds.

Kathleen obtains a court order enjoining the clinic to release its admission and operating room records. These show that liver patient Mrs. Flannigan was operated on shortly after Morton arrived. Alfred and Kathleen visit her, only to be told by her husband that she died of liver cancer and that her operation had nothing to do with a transplant. Unconvinced, Alfred applies for an order of exhumation; and criticizes Kathleen as naive; in turn, she resents his treating everybody as a suspect and lack of compassion. While the judge decides the application, the Morton record arrives from Vranska's precinct. It only refers to a face shot and has no police photos of the besieged house. The detectives get news footage copies, but the view of Morton is blocked; yet, Ringers bags held over him indicate that he was still alive.

The exhumation is ordered, but...the grave is empty! Mrs. Flannigan was cremated in the meantime by her husband. Kathleen acknowledges that he must have feared his insurance company's refusal to pay on his wife's life policy if she died from an illegal transplant. They are disappointed when the insurers say that based on mere suspicion they cannot launch an investigation that would expose them to liability, though they release Mrs. Flannigan's file.

Alfred and Kathleen take it to the medical examiner to decipher. He finds no indication of a transplant, only of cancer treatment, complicated maybe by a 'hepatic toxin.' The case is doomed ...until Kathleen's free associative thinking realizes the implication of the examiner's jargon: "Bingo! That means liver poisoning and tallies with the poisoning found by the pathology resident in the other organs of Morton's alleged corpse." But who poisoned him and why? The detectives talk to the McCaullys, who may have poisoned their brother if he was a pedophile.

For more evidence, they get the owners of the besieged house to lend them their photos of the destruction that Morton wrecked inside while surrounded by the police. After an ingenious analysis of the photos, they and the lawyers realize that out of desperation Morton drank a household pipe-unclogging product rather than be caught. Yet, the insurers remain unconvinced by the evidence. The lawyers trick the insurers' outside doctor that examined Mrs. Flannigan: 'Yes, she got a liver transplant and her autopsy produced slides of a poisoned liver.' Those liver-tissue slides and the slides of Morton's liver prepared by the pathology resident have matching DNA.

They arrest the suspects of killing Morton and illegally transplanting his liver to Mrs. Flannigan and the insurers who blackmailed her husband, who defrauded them by falsifying her cause of death. But their explanations are plausible and supported by doctored documents.

To crack their conspiracy the witnesses must be tripped on the stand. The lawyers do so using logic and a document found by the detectives showing that the defendants overdid their greed. A plea bargain discloses that the insurers engaged in blackmail after discovering that Morton had been killed for his liver. Stephen is tripped into blurting that he killed the schoolgirl. The lawyers and the detectives realize that they are most effective when they work as a team and respect each other.

PETALS OF THE HEART

Synopsis of a movie script

Grant Marwock, 28, is a candidate for the Ph.D. degree in literature at Columbia University in New York City. After shopping for groceries, he walks through his crime-ridden neighborhood of Washington Heights. He gives his landlady, Mrs. Sheppard, 69, her groceries and receives her criticisms. Then he goes up only to see thieves scurrying out of his apartment and through the scuttle with his notebook computer. He runs over the roof after the thieves: Mini, 17, the leader, and Tommy and Gaby, both 15, his 'crew'. They mock him as he pursues them right into their trap: a junkyard where in spite of Grant's ingenious effort to get back his notebook, they beat him up with sticks. He is saved by Oxy, 26, Mini's brother, a corpulent ringleader, whom those who follow or fear him have alerted to Mini's and his crew's 'prank'. It turns out that Grant and Oxy attended the same school. Oxy compels Mini to return the notebook.

While having a drink, Oxy tells Grant that he is a rising star as a fence with his own crews of thieves. It is dark when Grant, walking back home, hears a woman screaming for help. He flees, but the screams throw him into a quandary. Finally, he is driven back to help her. Hitting the assailants with his notebook, he manages to flush them away, but breaks his computer. Then he takes the woman, who lost her purse, jewels, and part of her dress, to safety.

She is Roseleen Sainberyl, 28, a resilient and spirited woman who swears vengeance. At the hospital, she tells Grant that she, a managing stockbroker, just transferred from Chicago to Goldman Sachs' NY office. In her search for a house near Washington Square, she got off at the wrong subway station. At the police station, she demands to see the captain. He has them look at the perps photo books, but neither can identify the attackers. She compliments the bracelet of the detectives' secretary, Wenifer.

Outside the police station, she reveals to Grant that Wenifer was wearing her stolen Celtic bracelet. An incredulous Grant responds: 'Then tell the detectives. This is your only lead'. She lashes out at his ivory tower naiveté: 'The police protect their own!' The conversation spins out of control until he tells her that he is done helping her and abruptly leaves.

Roseleen goes to the posh jewelry store Empress, where Wenifer alleged her boyfriend, Patrick, bought the bracelet. However, they never carried any Celtic bracelet. Then she looks for Grant at Columbia. Reluctantly, he listens to her apology of sorts as he keeps working on his thesis on the application of computer search capacity to comparative literature. Her argument that being a passive victim denies one peace of mind strikes a chord with him, but flashbacks to her screams and other dark memories make him turn down her plea for help. He walks away. Later on, he finds in his student mailbox an envelope from her with money 'as retainer for services'.

He meets her at work to return the money because he is 'a literary critic, not a detective'. She tells him to keep it to replace his computer. Arguing that writers stand up for justice, she persuades him to accompany her to the D.A.'s office. The incisive questioning by an Assistant D.A. of their allegations makes Grant realize that he made a fool of himself, while it only infuriates Roseleen. They clash again, but this time he runs away from her and smack into a column. At the hospital, they shake each other emotionally when he tells her that only robbers and would-be rapists would approach her before knowing the corrosiveness of her spirit; and she tells him that he can walk away from her once more but not from the emotionally stunted boy that he is.

While convalescing at home he agonizes over what he is, after which he decides to adopt an active role. From Wenifer he finds out that Patrick is the police station's computer wizard and lends her jewels from his father's jewelry store, Fidelis. From Patrick's father he gathers indicia of collusion between Fidelis, Empress, and the police. He finds out Roseleen's new address and at night goes there to tell her of his willingness to help her, but only hints at why he changed his mind. He takes her to Oxy, who may know who stole her bracelet. She sizes up Oxy as a swaggerer and pressures him into agreeing to help her. Outraged, Grant blurts that she flaunts her strength of character to show that she is any man's match, but that she has plucked from her heart its petals of beauty only to expose the heart of a bully. She is shocked, but bounces back.

Oxy and Roseleen visit Fence Bentley, whom Oxy unsuccessfully squeezes for information. When they visit Fence Pickering, she stuns Oxy by pretending to be his coquettish girlfriend and cajoles from Pickering a painful confession: Without telling Oxy, he has dealt with a new crew, which may have offered him the bracelet. Oxy's acknowledgment that she is 'a tough cookie' makes her wonder how she can be perceived as a macho man after playing 'a weak bimbo'.

Meanwhile, Grant submits the first chapters of his dissertation and learns from the Ph.D. program secretary that a friend came asking about him. Then Mrs. Sheppard demands that he move out immediately. Baffled, he sees Roseleen. She proposes that if he cleans her attic, he can move in and use her high-end computer. He accepts. While eating in her dining room, she tells him that she grew up in her father's large farm and has four older brothers who...boom! A projectile has crashed the window: It is a brick wrapped in a rag of the dress that she was wearing the night of the attack! After he calms down, they draw implications: Only the police could have given her attackers her new address; and the 'friend' asking about him and Mrs. Sheppard kicking him out of his apartment are connected to the attack...and to his investigation of the fence ring! Afraid, Grant decides not to move in. After going to the housing office, he sees his doctoral adviser, who blasts him for work so shoddy that he will seek his expulsion. When Grant opens his dissertation file, it flashes this: "Butt off or you end up garbled like your chapters".

It backfires: He tells Roseleen that he wants to fight for his doctorate. He stays over and has a terrifying nightmare after which he reveals to her the source of his fears and love of literature. Next day she visits Pickering and using a program written by Grant pulls off a scam that allows her to copy his computer's content. At home, Grant searches the copy for files linking the fences to the police...but all are encrypted! While he is uploading them to Columbia University's powerful mainframe to decode them there, Bentley, Pickering, and the police Captain show up leading Mini and his crew by their bloody noses as well as a badly beaten Oxy!

A psychological battle ensues. It reveals the way Pickering discovered that Patrick, disregarding the 'semper fidelis' motto of these ex-marines, was at the root of the bracelet affair; the role of Mini and his crew; and Mini's true relationship with Oxy, whom the fences have duped all along. Roseleen realizes that the fences have come to eliminate them as liabilities to their operation. She convinces Oxy, Mini, and his crew that they can only save their skins and even solve their identity crisis by feigning submission to exploit the fences' overconfidence and defeat them. As for Grant, he tricks the Captain in the attic as he overcomes his own childhood fears.

Grant goes with the others to Columbia and pulls off a daring stunt to prevent Patrick from erasing the copy of the stolen files that are being decoded on the mainframe. With these files, he proves that he wrote an excellent work and Roseleen provides the D.A. with evidence of police corruption. After the commencement ceremony, Grant and Roseleen acknowledge how they helped each other in their change of attitude, while Oxy, Mini and his crew, who have become witnesses for the D.A., show up with a look revealing their own inner transformation.

THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

Synopsis of a novel and a movie script

At dawn, somebody sneaks into a house through a window. On his way upstairs, he takes a knife from a wall. Quietly he opens a door to a woman's bedroom to... "Little Juan! Come in!" The boy, 9, runs into her bed and tells his mother that Don Pedro, the nobleman to whom she entrusted him as a page, was invited: "We are going, but I wanted to see you again." She tells him never to forget who he is when he is among those people: A Castilian, like them. "I won't!", he promises. He leaves, for Don Pedro is headed for the wedding of Ysabela of Castile and Fernando of Aragón at a castle in northern Spain. It is 1469.

At the castle, pages Nicolás, Carlos, and Diego are friendly toward Juan until finding out that he was not born in Castile, but in León, for he is Juan Ponce de León. At the wedding, he manages to give Ysabela the knife, 'so you can defend yourself from the treacherous Moors', their century-old enemies and cause of anything negative, whether drought or flood.

It is 1493 when the former pages meet again as officers in the second voyage of Admiral of the Ocean Sea Christopher Columbus. The three friends resent having to take orders from the Foreigner, Columbus, born Italian, and 'the Page of León'. When Puerto Rico is discovered, its chief, Agüeybaná, asks these 'gods of the sea' to protect his people from the Caribs, cannibals from South America's northern coast who in dugouts raid the Caribbean basin for women, slaves, and loot. Captain Ponce de León promises to protect them. Yet, Iquena, 17, Agüeybaná's daughter, defiantly shows that she is not impressed by a promise and a trinket.

The discoverers go on to La Hispaniola -the island of Haiti and Dominican Republic-, where they find the 39 men left there in the first voyage massacred. Over the objections of Nicolás, the soldiers' commander, Columbus charges Ponce de León to find and punish the culprits. He does and becomes provincial governor of the eastern region. There lands native Mayagüez, who carries a message from Agüeybaná: 'The Caribs have invaded us! Come to our rescue and you will be rewarded in gold.' Ponce de León asks Nicolás to lend him the Crown's ship for the mission. Only too happy to send the Page of León off on a very risky mission, he agrees.

To avoid detection, Mayagüez takes Ponce de León and his reconnoiters to land in Puerto Rico through a bat-infested tunnel. They rail at having to follow the lead of an 'ignorant savage'. Mayagüez concludes that Agüeybaná and Iquena have been captured by the Caribs, who will soon hold an areito. This is a rite of passage where the Carib chief's son, Nincanaqui, will choose for abduction nubile women to serve as producers of children for his future army as well as the strongest men to produce the necessary food; and Agüeybaná's best soldiers will be eaten as a lesson for his people, forced to attend the areito, not to resist the Caribs in their future raids.

After a risky reconnoitering of the village where Agüeybaná and Iquena are being held, Ponce de León realizes that 'my 50 wheat biscuit-eating soldiers are so outnumbered by over 500 cannibals' that he must walk away from a sure defeat. Mayagüez outwits him and makes his soldiers land. "Treacherous Moor!", yells Ponce de León. He retorts, "You promised to protect us. Are the gods of the sea treacherous too?" Thus morally constrained, Ponce de León decides to attempt a rescue just as he wonders how a savage could outwit him...that's it!: Pit the superior intelligence of civilized men against the inferior intelligence of savage Caribs.

The night of the areito, Ponce de León hurls bats with wings stretched out by sticks toward the hut where Iquena is being held; the bats flap convulsively and scare away the guards. He gives her a brass whistle for her to blow when the abduction candidates have arrived at the areito plaza and thereby signal to him that his rescue attempt can begin. The areito is a danced poem about the triumph of Carib life over the birth-mating-death cycle. It is accompanied by music played on primitive instruments. Iquena defiantly forces Nincanaqui to dance to her steps. In the light of torches and a bonfire, the whistle around her neck sparkles, so Nincanaqui takes it from her and puts it on himself. When Agüeybaná's best soldiers have been brought to be sacrificed, Iquena daringly warns Nincanaqui that if he disrespectfully breathes into her amulet and disturbs her ancestors' souls, who live inside it, they will kill him. "Me afraid!," he shouts, "your amulet is but a shack for scared rats to hide in", and he blows it. Ponce de León hears the whistle and his ingenious attack begins: Crossbowmen shoot darts with gunpowder wrapped around their heads into the torches and bonfire, thus causing explosions and preying on Carib's ignorance and prejudices. Defeated, the cannibals are expelled from the island to a likely death at sea.

Ponce de León receives his golden reward and the invitation to stay on the island. He brings about economic development, but also diseases that decimate the natives. Searching for a cure, Iquena finds an old man that escaped the Caribs' enslavement after learning firsthand about the Fountain of Youth. Ponce de León listens to his story and deduces where the Fountain must be located. He decides to search for it because it may have, not a magical effect, but medicinal mineral water, whose discovery can earn him what he craves most: acceptance as a Castilian. He fits ships with the help of 'savages', natives whom he deems to be just tagging along. At the farewell party, Iquena chastises him, for while he and his soldiers do not eat her people's flesh, they prey on their labor and disrespect their persons. He replied, "We are Castilians, civilized and superior: Only we are persons."

After being mistaken for a Carib ghost, Iquena is discovered as a stowaway in a coconut powder sac. 'I want to prove that we can do anything the Castilians do', she says. She makes Ponce de León tell her why he is not accepted as a Castilian. The natives mistake a hurricane for the vengeance of the Caribs who died at sea and infect the Spaniards with their fear. Where the ships land is arid and has no mountains from which the Fountain could spring as fountains do in Puerto Rico. But Ponce de León finds a depression embroidered with flowers. He names the land Florida. To steer away from the hurricane, he coasts south, but finds no mountains.

To persuade him to land again, Iquena argues that in dry riverbeds gold is easier to find. So he takes his men ashore. Under a scorching sun, they are disheartened at finding no gold, just another depression in...boom! A water jet shoots up from the ground! They frolic like kids...as they are watched. They bring their water barreling materials to the beach to...horrible screams! A surprise attack by Calusa Indians forces the men to run into the sea. Many are saved by Iquena ordering that coconuts, which float, be roped and swung to the water so that the men can pull themselves or be pulled to the ship. At night, the Calusa use that invention to reach and attack the ships. Iquena, as a coconut powder ghost, scares them away, but their chief is caught.

During a summary trial, Ponce de León realizes that hurricane rain flowed underground building pressure until it welled up through the depression's thin topsoil layer. 'There's no Fountain of Youth!' Iquena pleads for the Indian chief's life, asking Ponce de León whether he is a civilized person just because of the accident of his birthplace or a good person who can understand why others defend their land just as Spaniards did against the Moors. He releases the chief and leaves Florida in love with Iquena to search for the true Fountain of Youth: empathetic respect for others based on the commonality of needs and aspirations and prevents deadly enmity.

Punting on The Digital River

Storytelling A Proposal for Developing and Marketing Areas of Academic Excellence

“Did you bring it?”

“Yes, I did.”

“How do you know? Not good enough. Go on, check it!”

“I had Hannah make us so many copies of it that Customs officers will think we are bringing merchandise for a store.”

“We? Have you...”

“Of course I have. There are copies of it in each of your suitcases and...”

“But what if they get lost?! That’s not good enough! You should have...”

“I did! I put copies of it in each of your handbags and mine. Relax, will you?! You are going to get there so stressed out you won’t be able to appear in command of yourself, let alone of the project.”

“You know how much is riding on it. If we don’t make a very good first impression, we will never get a second chance to attract their attention. Those who have made an investment by also travelling to New York to attend this event will feel disappointed and be lost forever.”

“If we lose them it won’t be because we didn’t bring it since it is impossible not to...”

“Wait a moment! What are you saying there?! That other things can go wrong too? Is that your way of getting me to...”

“You know that in such a high tech project many things can go wrong, don’t you?”

“Well, yes, I suppose so. But did you have to say it?! You really know how to put your boss at ease, don’t you? Now you only have to whisper it in my ears every five minutes while I wrestle on the plane with Murphy to disprove his law that what can go wrong will.”

“No, you won’t ‘cause you’ll be knocked out, fast asleep for the first time in the last three months, without eating as if you were on a crash diet to get ready for the summer balls. And it shows, for you look rather a pitiful mess that...”

“That too! You little foul-mouthed ingrate tactless sadistic...”

“I have booked us in a van, with a recliner for you, from Cambridge to London and in British Airways first class from Heathrow to New York. From the moment, we leave Hughes Hall, I will start stuffing you with some decent food. That junk on which we have survived lately while supervising the techno geeks of our new Learning Resources Centre and trying to rein in those idea-geysering promoters in New York is deadly. I’ll make sure you pass out even if I have to force-feed you and hook you up to an IV to pump you full of highly relaxing and delectable liquors.”

“If that could only get me to unwind! I need it. Sometimes you do have good ideas.”

“Me!? Always!”

“Well, with relative frequency.”

“I hope you choke on the food! Then I’ll write your epitaph: ‘Here lies the meanest of Presidents the University of Cambridge ever had in its 800 years of history: Sarah Squire’.

“Don’t you forget to add: ‘for having beheaded the most insufferable and indispensable Head of Development and Alumni Relations ever: Annemarie Young’.

Her riposte did not come back in the same tit for tat rhythm of their exchange of retorts up to now. There was a pause that weighed heavily on both of them as if they had simultaneously realized the only comment that could come next. They had worked so closely for so many hours for so many months on this project that they had come to learn the thought patterns of each other. Now they often communicated by just looking at each with their eyes closed. It was telepathy by empathy. But she voiced it to release their shared tension.

“If you don’t, those in New York will cause the separation of us as the head of this college if we fail to deliver on all our hype about the first reunion of the Hughes Hall Alumni Society in America.”

“Oh, AnnY! Let’s eat and drink while we still have a head.”

They looked at each other full of apprehension and waited in heavy silence for the van to arrive.

They had gambled their careers on this event that the Society promoters in New York had come up with within the broad parameters established by Hughes Hall. It was aimed at highly educated, and by the same token critical and demanding, alumni, many of whom had climbed the hierarchy of the education system from teachers to become school principals, school district supervisors, education chancellors, even presidents of some prestigious American colleges and universities. Moreover, as a result of Hughes Hall’s enlightened decision made some decades earlier to diversify its student body, there were among the alumni also lawyers, and doctors, and scholars, even engineers, programmers, technicians, and business people precisely in the key areas of computers and their networks.

As proposed by the New York promoters, the purpose of the meeting was not merely to lure these busy, career-oriented people into becoming members of yet another social club and making donations to their alma mater. It was to win them over for a very innovative, ambitious, and technologically complex business venture that would make Hughes Hall the indisputable leader in the field of life-long education and multidisciplinary problem-solving through the application of cutting-edge computer and digital technology to the online interaction in real time of massively multiple geographically widely distributed users in the real world and real-like worlds.

To win the alumni’s support, the event had to catch their imagination. To begin with, it had to display creative thinking that elicited respect and trust by demonstrating the technological feasibility of the business venture, thereby showing that it had been conceived by people with their feet solidly anchored in the ground but with their eyes turned to the sky. If the event

succeeded in astonishing the alumni, they might not only invest in the development of the venture and use its products, but also become its spokespeople, recommending and even selling its products to their own institutions and their associations. In the process, those who had envisioned and pushed it through might even make a tidy sum of money for themselves. To attain these results, the event had to appeal to something more intangible than the alumni's logical minds and deeper than their imagination; something uncontrollable, viscerally impulsive had to be touched: their emotions. No wonder those of President Squire and her feisty Assistant Annemarie were stretched to the limit.

The President and her Assistant were aware that during their trip to London and the transatlantic flight they could do nothing else to ensure the success of the event except to use that time to get some rest so that they could appear fresh and relaxed as its hosts. But the current circumstances were not those that they had planned for.

Their plan had been to leave England a couple of days earlier in order to recover from jet lag and, as it were, run from New York a full dress rehearsal of the presentation, that is, the technical part of the event. However, that had proved impossible. They had to stay at Learning Resource Centre of Hughes Hall until the very last minute to ensure the interface between the technicians there and the promoters in New York. Hardware bugs and incompatibilities of software had kept glitching the presentation up to a couple of days earlier. To a great extent it was the fault of those in New York, for no sooner had a glitch been fixed, they had come up with yet another enticing feature, another detail, the kind of subliminal touch that turns an excellent presentation into an amazing experience...until President Squire had had to put her foot down to crush the pipeline that carried the seemingly irrepressible flow of innovative ideas.

From then on, the promoters in New York could not communicate directly with the technicians of the Centre. All communications between them had to go through her and Annemarie. They filtered out everything that was not intended to ensure that the presentation as conceived up to then would work without any more problems. They had been able to take on that relay and editing function of technical matters between the two teams because since the early discussions of the presentation they had become fascinated with its potential and had immersed themselves in it down to its bits and bytes, so to speak. In the process, they had become quite technologically savvy. Nevertheless, all the expertise that they had forced themselves to acquire would not save the presentation during its roll out at the event, for they would not be at the control consoles. Rather, they would be first on the floor, welcoming the guests, and then the President would climb on the stage, acting as mistress of ceremonies, with Annemarie behind the backdrop giving everybody else their cues to flick switches; after which they would mingle again with the alumni to get their impressions.

Due to the unplanned circumstances, the event would take place that very same night, less than half a day after their arrival in New York. At Heathrow, they were whisked into the VIP lounge of British Airways. However, unbeknown to them, their trip stopped there as if their flight had crashed at takeoff: A sudden storm over the Atlantic, another freak manifestation of global warming, had caused a delay of all flights to and from North America. Would those to the United States be cancelled? That was anybody's guess. Of late, similar violent meteorological phenomena occurred out of the blue and could stop just as abruptly. It had caused a world record:

a foot of rain in 19 minutes! And just as suddenly it could trigger its counterpart among humans: An explosion of irrational anger among high-strung VIPassangers with all sorts of pressing commitments, who would not understand that even mighty BA could not control the weather and its proud pilots, heirs to the bravery of those who fought the mad fury of the Nazi airplanes during the Blitz of London, could not take on the murderous winds of a disturbed atmosphere. Hence, those VIPs would remain stuck in the lounge, fretting uselessly until they would fall one after the other victim of heart attacks, ulcer-perforated stomachs, and epileptic convulsions due to extreme anxiety.

So instead of waiting until they were managing an intensive care unit, the BA managers of the VIP lounge opted for a more radical solution...What? What are you saying? To bring in Jack the Ripper and turn the lounge into a morgue? No, of course not! They brought in a specialist, one that could have been a top hit man for the mafia if his expertise had not been to shoot a barrage of hit songs with the weapons of choice of a disc jockey and the intention to kill the minds of VIPs worrying about missed appointments and to rough up their bodies with his shameless jokes in cockney accent that left their mating instincts tender to the touch of any suggestion.

Pretending to have on-screen access to BA's roster of its VIP lounge members, to their passport photos, and to the manifest of those there awaiting embarkation, the specialist singled out some individuals with a commanding presence and attributed to them top credentials, such as high-priced executives, stellar sale representatives, and top brass of Scotland Yard, and asked them to help him part the lounge into studs and 'maries'. After everybody was on his or her side, he picked out the bossiest and most successful-looking woman, made up her description as a top scouting executive for an American premier fashion model company and, alleging privacy concerns, called her Maggie One. He asked her to pick up and bring by the hand a handsome, full-blooded, mature stud, whom he made out to be an investment genius at Lloyds, and give him to the girl in whom she saw the potential for becoming the next top model. She chose a gorgeous brunette who was not older than 21 but way past 100% in heat. Then he asked them to dance to the tune of "Woman in Red, dancing cheek to cheek" and they not only did, they showed off! As if it had been the opening dance at the royal gala for the wedding of money and beauty. The studs cheered them on with congratulatory exuberance, for they all wanted to prolong that moment in which they too felt what it would be like to win a trophy wife. And the 'maries' applauded with delirious jealousy, rooting for the young girl in her prime they wished they had been or could still be: beautiful, famous, and desired.

At the end of the dance, the specialist had a prize for Maggie and the princely couple: They each got a tray with four shots of alcoholic mixes that he described as exotic aphrodisiacs from remote parts of the world. They could drink any they wanted and then offer the other three shots to others: Maggie to the studs or maries that she wanted to be top models; as to the couple, the prince to the princesses and the princess to the princes that each wanted to pick out his or her successors. If the person offered a shot drank one, he or she could choose his or her dancing partner.

As Maggie and the princely couple each chose a shot and then went about offering the others, the specialist stated each of the shots' names purportedly in their respective native language pronounced with hilarious accent and thinly veiled meaning in English, such as the "Khandyvoovs" and the "Ol-ueis Jornie", that he made his audience repeat. He had them convulsing with laughter at those names and clapping their hands in a frenzy every time a model, heir, or heiress downed a shot and went across the lounge in quest of his or her partner in the midst of

a shouting match of those screaming the description of the person they wished they could choose and those extolling their own features that made them the right choice. It was a riot!

After that dance, the dancers were each rewarded with a tray containing 12 shots for them to offer around. While their heirs and heiresses were dancing, waiters and waitresses were circulating through the lounge with trays so that every VIP had the chance to shoot his or her empty stomach with an alcoholic mix more potent than high-octane jet fuel, for it could almost instantly burn its way to their brains and consume their worries and inhibitions. This showed at the end of that dance, when the specialist declared open season: a Sadie Hawkins, where the maries could ask studs to dance. They jumped at both the opportunity and the studs in a stampede. Thereafter everybody was daring enough to ask anybody to dance. That day President Squire danced more and with more enjoyable casualness than she had in the previous half century...No, no! That's not to date her, that's just an expression meaning a long time. As to Annemarie, a total geek that could switch to a total flirt in a nanosecond, she had at least four proposals of marriage by drunk and not so drunk studs, including a true stallion that wanted her to hop on his flight and go with him to get married in Las Vegas. She was seriously discussing with him how to do so when the announcement was made.

It startled everybody. It caused everybody to stop in their tracks and freeze. They all would have given in to hysteria or exploded into fits of anger had they realized what it really meant: That it was not known when or if their flights would depart. But they were too full of booze and too depleted of energy to think past what they actually heard: A meal would be served. The VIPs sunk to an even lower level of primal instincts, that of hunting for food, and adopted the suspended animation attitude of a pre-pouncing feline lying in wait.

A few minutes later, the doors of the lounge were opened from the outside and their quarry came into view. The unsuspecting waiters and waitresses rolled in their carts with two-compartment Styrofoam containers with transparent plastic lids and pint cartons. As the smell of sweat and fresh blood spread in the lounge, those behind the third or fourth rows of VIPs lining the quarry column sensed that there might not be any flesh left to eat by the time they got to the column and they pounced forward. That triggered a generalized rush toward the carts with the quarry. The horrified waiters and waitresses screamed at the top of their voices that there was more, that everybody would get food, that they were spilling food all over the place, which was true, for hot potatoes with melted butter and cream cheese as well as slices of roast beef and globs of custard pie were flying from corner to corner of the lounge. The calls to reason of the service personnel were to no avail, for the drunk and starving VIPs were in a grabbing frenzy. They even took the pint cartons and used them as throwing weapons, squeezing, squirting, and splashing enemies with their red and white wine. The VIPs had retrograded to the primeval stage of an all-out, no holds barred, school food war...and they were relishing it. They grabbed everything around them they could lay their hands on: food, body parts, kisses, and slaps and kicks. It was a Bacchanalia!

The specialist again was called in to do a hit on those that had disrespected BA, his boss, Berry Allarnd. He went about his job with gross ruthlessness: He iced the red-hot debauchery with "God Save the Queen", the British national anthem.

After everybody had calmed down, waiters and waitresses full of trepidation carted in more food and drinks. Since there were not enough tables for everybody to sit down at, lots of tired VIPs ignored once more the proprieties of people of their standing and simply sat on the floor and eat away...as they growled and snarled at those around them that looked at them, not to mention their food, for more than four consecutive seconds. After they had eaten up everything

save the containers themselves, those still alert enough to be concerned about their appearance began to tidy up their hair by combing out globs of custard and buttery cream cheese. The others just passed out, leaning against the walls or columns of the lounge or against each other, or with careless spontaneity, they simply stretched themselves out on the floor to sleep it off. So it was that the lounge managers ended up with a kindergarten of napping pre-schoolers while avoiding an intensive care unit.

They took this for an indisputable success of managerial foresight and congratulated themselves effusively, for it was only seven hours after the flights were delayed that the violent storm cleared up and it was safe to take to the air. There was no point in waking up all of them at the same time since all the planes could not be boarded or cleared for takeoff at the same time. So all the lounge personnel pitched in to identify and tag sleeping passengers that were not awoken by the low volume of the loudspeakers announcing boarding flights. In the end, it did look a bit like a morgue. When their time came, many could not be resurrected or could not walk steadily enough, so they had to be muscled to their airplane seats: Bag handlers were called in to give a hand with this special cargo.

When their flight was called, President Squire and Annemarie dragged each other the best they could to their planes. They fell into their seats, stretched them out, and continued enjoying in their sleep the booze in their bodies and the fog in their minds. That was the best they could do, for otherwise they would have realized the full scope of their situation: It was with a nine-hour delay that their plane took off. Even if their plane flew at full speed to make up for some of the lost time, they would arrive in New York with very little time to spare. For them to have the opportunity to participate in the much needed full dress rehearsal of the event and incorporate in the presentation what they had brought, they would have to go to their hotels right away, take a quick shower and change, and rush for the venue of the event. No doubt, their situation was critical, for not only had their performance during the presentation been compromised, but also the very success of the event was in jeopardy.

Their flight over the Atlantic was uneventful, at least as far as President Squire and Annemarie remembered. Like everybody in first class, they ate when they were given food and slept after they had eaten it. However, upon landing they found that the situation was more than eventful, much more: It was chaotic! The sudden storm had had a ripple effect that had seriously disrupted normal patterns of departures and arrivals. As a result, the tarmac of JFK Airport was overcrowded with airplanes and their tugs as well as the additional baggage and galley loaders, janitorial vehicles, water tankers, and ground power units that had been called in to service those most unfortunate planes that had been stuck on the taxiways for hours without end until many had had to return to a terminal. Their own plane had to wait on the apron for more than an hour just to get to a pier. Despite their VIP treatment, they disembarked through an airbridge into a waiting area where they had to join the tug of war between those that had just arrived and those that had not yet been able to depart and the sheer number of all of them caused people not to know whether they were coming or going.

But nothing prepared the President and her Assistant for the scene of out of control madness in the baggage claim area. There were hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people breathing out impatience and epithets because the number of their flights had not even been

posted at the carousel where they were supposed to pick up their baggage and because those that had found their baggage had to engage almost in hand to hand combat just to open a way for themselves through the crowd. Hence, they bathed in sticky hot air heavily damp with sweat and anxiety and something else, for some people on the verge of a nervous breakdown did the unthinkable: They illegally smoked! After a wait of an hour and a half for their flight number just to be posted on any carousel, foul acrid air was clinging to their hair, to their clothes, and to their skin as if snails had crawled all over them and left them covered in their viscous, malignant slime. Utterly disgusting!

They realized that even if they got their baggage right then and there, they would not have time to go first to their hotel, rather they would have to go directly to the venue of the event. Therefore, there was no point in wasting any more time in that infectious atmosphere. But they could not possibly go to the event in the wretched condition in which they were.

“We have to get cleaned up here”, said President Squire.

“What are you talking about?”, snapped Annemarie. “There are no showers even in the VIP lounge...if you ever wanted to go back there”.

“But there are boutiques and they have at least a bathroom for their personnel. And we have money. We will improvise with it.”

So they left the baggage claim area with just what they had arrived with, their carry-on handbags, and went to the shopping area. They looked for the largest boutique, the one that would carry the largest array of products. The President asked to speak with the manager. When the manager arrived, a not too friendly but businesslike woman elegantly dressed met them.

“Good evening. Did you ask for me?”

“Yes. We need to be upgraded”, said the President matter of factly.

The manager opened her eyes completely baffled.

“We have no time to waste. Can you refit us?”

The manager’s lower jaw dropped in disbelief, for she could not understand what these two individuals were doing in her store. They did not look like clients, but rather like the beggar and the pauper, in shockingly crumpled and dirty clothes, with their hair hanging wet as if they had not washed it in a month, and with an offensive smell about them. It was not that the manager was unfriendly; it was that she was repelled by them. And on top of that, the older one spoke nonsense. She looked at Annemarie.

The President too looked at Annemarie in consternation since she knew that she was in New York speaking English. Why could this manager not...?

“Now, look who is the total geek,” said Annemarie to her. Then looking at the manager she added, “What she means is that we need to be outfitted from head to toe”.

Now the President realized it. “Oh! I am so sorry. We are not computers. My mind is on a high-tech career-breaking or -making meeting tonight that we...I am the president of a British college and she is my Assistant. That storm you surely heard about turned us into this mess. We need you to let us use your bathroom to wash up and give us your undivided attention and that of your best assistants so that in less than an hour we walk out of your store looking, well, lovely! We’ll pay you a 25% premium over the total of everything that we buy.

The manager smiled. It was not just a friendly smile; it was the smile triggered by a

favorable business opportunity.

“The delays, of course. Look at my store, how busy it is. These are women with a lot of time on their hands until their flights are called and in the mood to relieve their tension by just buying something nice for themselves”.

The President and Annemarie looked around. They had not noticed anything as they had walked into the store, so immersed were they in their own problem. But it was true: The store was full of women. Their hearts sunk.

“We can’t concentrate just on you two and neglect their business. But for twice the price, you can use our bathroom and I and two of my best girls will see to it that you both are transformed in record time in two attractive business women.”

The President looked at her. “Fifty percent over cost”.

“Time and three quarters.”

“Deal!”

“So it is!” She waved at two of the store attendants. When they arrived she told them. “Jacqui, Heather, we have less than an hour to turn these two ladies into...into ladies. Drop everything else and let’s get going. Heather, you take them to our bathroom and give them everything they need to start getting washed. Jacqui, get them a set of shampoo, soap, and perfume. Then come back to help me get them a nice evening business set. Do you need make-up too?”

“No”, said Annemarie, “We could bring it on board, here, in the handbags”.

“OK! But leave your shoes here, for measurement. Then move it! Move it!”

And off she and the President went with Heather. Jacqui skipped in one direction and the manager darted in another. Then both got together, made a choice, and took it to the manager’s private office, which was also her own dressing room. When the President and Annemarie were done in the bathroom, Heather brought them to the office. They brought with them their purses with the money and their make-up kits to match the colors to the outfits.

For President Squire, they had chosen a single-breasted indigo linen jacket with silver buttons bearing a filigree bas-relief and having violet leather cuffs and collar that allowed a pink cotton blouse to show its frills at the wrist and from the collar to the middle of the chest. Over each of the thighs of the tubular skirt and on each side of the jacket from four inches above the waist to the sides above the breasts there was embroidered a fine elongated fern leave. She wore violet leather shoes. The set gave the President a sober, powerfully elegant look.

For Annemarie, they had a sleeveless one-piece white dress with a floating pleated skirt in silk and a long sleeved buttonless jacket. When she was standing still, the pleats joined forming a smooth surface just as the two sides of the jacket joined; but when she walked on her low heel white leather shoes the pleats opened revealing along their inner edge a narrow band of a different color each: the colors of the rainbow! The movement of her arms also opened the sides of the jacket so that the top of the dress beneath became visible: A satin top in gradient blue with ascending tones toward the neck. It was as if she were walking on a rainbow that pointed to an ever-bluer sky of hope. It was exquisite!

Both of them were so excited! They were going to do their make-up there, but the manager insisted.

“You will do a better job of it if you sit at the cosmetics counter in front of a desk mirror. That tiny mirror of your blusher won’t let you do justice to your outfits.”

They went out to the cosmetics desk. In front of the desk mirror and with a selection of lipsticks, mascara, and eyeliners and –shadows wider than their own, they realized that theirs were not the best. So Heather and Jacqui helped them choose the best one and do their make-up under the supervision of the manager.

After they had finished, the manager insisted, “You have to come to the semicircular mirror under the best lighting.”

Now they were ecstatic, for they not only would look the part; they would look, well, lovely!

“Now you have to get going or you won’t be seen at all. We have taken a bit longer than planned”, said the manager.

President Squire looked at her watch and almost got a panic attack, for they had spent there over an hour and a half. So she snatched Annemarie, who was still turning like a fan from side to side in front of the semi-circle mirror, and ran to the cashier. When the bill was handed down to her, she did not even get a sticker shock: \$1,609. She asked that \$150 be added so that she could have it in American currency. She gave a firm handshake to the manager and a lot of thanks, gave each of the attendants \$20, who in turn gave her and Annemarie two large store paper bags.

“We put your stuff in the boxes of your purchases. You’re ready to go. Good luck getting to your meeting in time. You’ll need it to catch a taxi in front of the building.”

They were still not home free! So they grabbed the shopping bags and ran out into the corridor. They had to wade through an enormous crowd of indirect victims of the storm. When they finally got to the outside of the airport building, they were aghast: The line of people waiting to take a taxi was endless! They realized that if they had to wait their turn, they would never make it to the event in time. Something had to be done and fast.

“I haven’t got American dollars. Give me yours”, said Annemarie.

“How can you be thinking of that now?! Anyway, I just bought you an outfit that you could never afford. Get your own money!” retorted the President rather irked.

“First, you charged it to the College expense account; and second, if you paid me what I am really worth, I could have flown you here in my private jet with a bathroom where I would have let you make yourself decent after I had finished my...”

“Don’t start me with that again!” burst out the President. “I will never pay you more than I myself earn, you little self-centered, conceited, ungrateful...”

Annemarie dropped her shopping bag, hopped a few steps in front of her and turned around, fanned out her pleated skirt and looked up absorbed in her own admiration; then with languid sultriness she raised her arms above her head making an arch and coquettishly tilted her head from one side to the other like a pendulum marking time to surrender to her seduction as she pivoted on her toes the way the ballerina of a cuckoo clock does until she slid one foot back, bent the opposite knee, bowed, opened her arms, and stretching them in front of her with her palms up, moved her fingers with a give-it-to-me in and out gesture, as if she were the prima donna asking an admiring audience to keep applauding her genius.

“You little greenish pretentious flirtatious maniac!”, said the President as she opened her purse and gave Annemarie her dollars. Jumping forward and snatching the money, she dashed away until she stopped in front of a good-looking young limousine driver holding a sign with the last name of the passengers that he was waiting for.

The President could not see her face, but she could see that of the driver, and his face opened up, smiled, but nodded because he could not...Annemarie grabbed one of his hands, turned around, and ran with him in tow toward the President as he dropped the sign.

Once in front of her, Annemarie said, “Aja is going to take us in record time to the place of the event”.

The Indian driver nodded and parted his lips in a bashful smile. Annemarie gave him her shopping bag. “So let’s go! Quick! Quick!”

He and Annemarie darted off, followed by the President carrying her shopping bag.

The limousine was nearby. Aja put the bags in the trunk and let them in the spacious rear seat. Although the drop-off and pick up area for taxis looked more like a long-term parking lot, Aja drove out of it and into the expressway with the same skillfulness and temerity of all other demolition derby NY cabbies.

On the way to the venue of the event, President Squire made a startling and horrifying realization: She had not called the team in New York since they had left Hughes Hall. So she called their number on her British cellular phone, but it just did not work in New York. Annemarie came to the rescue by cajoling her new pal Aja into lending her his.

The President called from that cellular, but the line was busy. She figured that perhaps the New York team was trying to call her hotel. She called there, but was informed that no message had been left for them. She told the concierge to deem them to have registered and not to cancel their reservations. He told her not to worry, that the news stations had broadcast reports all day long of how a capricious storm over the Atlantic had disrupted air traffic and caused the return of many flights that were already on route as well as the delay and cancellation of many others; as a consequence, there had been a bunching up in the three major airports in the Tri-State area of way more than the 1.7 million passengers that had arrived or departed on the Thanksgiving getaway Wednesday and the 3,500 flights that had taken off from or landed at them that day. The concierge agreed to arrange to have their baggage delivered to her room from the airport as soon as possible.

Shortly thereafter the limousine stopped. Aja opened the door and the President and Annemarie stepped out...to their dismay, for he had brought them to the wrong place!

“This is not a hotel! This is not a cultural center either. This is a non-descript dump!”

She was right. This was at best a third rate business street of buildings not taller than 12 stories. The place in front of which they had stopped was about the only one to have over its entrance lights, bright ones though about to go out because they were flickering; otherwise, the street was poorly lit with no light coming from almost any building window. There were no pedestrians, but if any had come here, they would have been the members of a gang of dropouts just passing through, for what could they have stolen from these seedy buildings? No doubt, this was not the place to hold the first reunion of the Hughes Hall Alumni Society in America. First impressions do count!

“How can you have missed your way? Don’t you know New York?”

Aja smiled and nodded his head. Then he repeated the address and pointed to the number of the building. It was the correct number. Then he raised his hand to point to a higher place on the façade where one could barely read something:

“The Mercury Building”, he read.

Annemarie ran to the door. It was opened. She went in and not even 10 seconds later she came back out running.

“There is an easel with a big sign bearing Hughes Hall’s coat of arms of two owls above a lit torch and the name of the event! There is also a man behind a desk. He said that it is about to start in less than five minutes! At 9:00 sharp!”

“What?! This is it?! And they are going to start without us!? Without it!”, screamed the President in disbelief.

Annemarie paid Aja; he got the shopping bags out of the trunk; and the two women walked hurriedly to the building.

“Give me the rest of the money”, demanded the President.

“Rest?! It was used to get us here,” snapped Annemarie.

“I gave you \$110 and you paid him \$70. You owe me \$40.”

“That’s for my irresistibly charming performance.”

“That’s your job! You’ll give it back to me later on or you can check yourself into a by-the-hour motel in this neighborhood, you little scoundrel cunning grabbing thief!”

Inside the building, under an eye-hurting flickering light, they identified themselves to a man slumped in a folding chair. He said that he was the caretaker of the building and that they should simply follow the signs on the wall leading to the basement.

“Get it!”, the President ordered Annemarie.

Annemarie put her shopping bag on the floor and pulled out the big carton box of her dress. Her dirty clothes, her toiletries, and all the other belongings that she had pulled out of her handbag while in the bathroom of the store were there, but not the handbag itself! She pulled out the smaller shoebox. It was not there either! She snatched the President’s shopping bag from her hand and looked into its boxes. It was the same: her dirty clothes and other belongings used in the bathroom were there but not her handbag! They did not have it!

IT! It was the DVD disc holding the latest version of the presentation with all the contents that had been added by the technical people at the Learning Resource Centre of Hughes Hall. In addition, it contained programming code after removing all the bugs. But more importantly, it had been decided that in order to eliminate some nagging incompatibilities that had not been identified, the operating system developed at the Centre would be used to run the servers in New York. This code was rather big in MB size and the efforts to download it from Cambridge to New York had proved unsuccessful because the connection always dropped at some point along the transfer. So what was it that these promoters in New York were going to use tonight?

“Can you keep these shopping bags with you?”, the President asked the caretaker.

“No ‘cause I aint being here all the night”.

“Look how pretty we are? Well, we just couldn’t help it”, added Annemarie teasingly,

“that is, that we are late, got stuck at the airport. But if people see us with these shopping bags, and we are the hosts!, they’ll think we got carried away shopping and forgot about them. You wouldn’t want anybody to think that of us, would you?”

“Not’ing doing ‘cause their coming in more late the night and I gotta show ‘em where and I blink sideways and any gets the whole or just the juice of ‘em bags and you yap to the boss that his sure giving me heat for ‘em. And then my job? Forget’a ‘bout it!”

“But listen, you can...

“Sometimes it just doesn’t work, AnnY. Let’s get downstairs.”

“Despite your jealousy you are right this one time: Nectar works on butterflies; cocoons can’t lick it.”

So they ran to the basement with their shopping bags. The staircase leading to it ended in a room where a bright light flickered violently although there was no ceiling lamp. They walked to one wall with a two-pane door that was closed under the last sign of the event, which one had to look up and stare at to read because its lettering was small. They opened one pane quietly and stepped in. Before moving any further, they checked the lay of the land...and were appalled! They were at one end of a long, narrow windowless basement, an unfinished one at that, for its walls were simply covered with white plaster of Paris and had no lamps in the ceiling, which was arched. It had no platform at either end, no microphone, no curtains, no signs or pictures, just flat walls! Along the center of the room, there was a column of rotating barstools four abreast with backs and armrests; except a few stools at the back, they were all occupied by elegantly dressed people, presumably Hughes Hall alumni and their spouses or companions. But there was no bar, no tables, no food, no beverages, no nothing! A four-foot corridor extended between either side of the barstool column and the wall; on the floor of each, about a foot from the wall, ran a line of 10 inch cubic boxes, each having at its top a round convex crystal that was lit, like a headlight pointing up. The boxes were connected by an electrical coiled tube. This was a claustrophobic tunnel with its ends walled up, except for the door at the back end, and nothing to see! Yet, there was supposed to be a stage and a screen where the...

The lights went off! It was pitch black. They had not had time to identify anybody who appeared to be one of the NY promoters. After a moment of hesitation, they whispered to each other that they should go upstairs to ask the caretaker where the people responsible for this event were. They opened the door to go out...it was also pitch black! They were trapped in that tunnel. Since the journey upstairs was the sure one to stumbling in the dark and breaking their necks, and the few steps to the empty barstools was the safer one to end a disastrous day in another disaster, they held hands and cautiously inched their way toward them. They sat there and before they let go of each other’s hand, they communicated through their skin, so attuned to each other they were, an inquisitive feeling: They asked each other what they were sitting for, what could possibly happen in that tunnel that led nowhere. Yet, they wondered whether after such a terribly eventful trip they should feel lucky, yes lucky because they had been hit simultaneously by one powerful realization: The promoters had taken on the responsibility of hosts of the event and had turned them into spectators. With a sense of great apprehension but also intense curiosity, they decided to sit back, relax, and watch.

After a few minutes in silent darkness, the sound of water was heard...tumbling in a steady flow, like from one level to a lower one in a fountain...lapping, against...more like gently caressing...a rumor of voices, hard to make them out, mixed with laughter, cries of joyful surprise, light!, blue, on the ceiling near the front end of the tunnel, the one opposite the doors, now more, on either side of...the crown of trees!, and buildings, and at the front end a river...

“The mill!”

“That’s the Graduate Centre!”

Heads! The backs of them, of men and women, looking out, moving along, but not walking as more buildings under a sunny blue sky appeared on either wall that...

“Sidgwick!, my girlfriend studied there!”

A long pole, inclined, the backs of people, dressed up, black tie!, and the women, lovely!, but not the one with the pole at the back...look lower on the wall, what’s that? What kind of boat is...a punt! They are punting! Look! Another old building that...

“Queens’ College!, one of the Fellows came from there!”

The Backs! Down the River Cam! They are in Cambridge! On two punts!, but not students, older, a group of *Watch out!* Up, on the ceiling:

“The Mathematical Bridge! I almost fell from it fooling around one night of revelry!”

More buildings on the walls toward the back end of the tunnel...

“Duck!, Dr. Glasser, duck!”

Clare Bridge appeared on the ceiling and those on the punts looked in as they duck...there was a roar in the tunnel, uproar, guests jumped to their feet, many shouting:

“Honey!, that’s you!”

“That’s me! On the punt!”

“Henry! Henry! How did you get there?!”

“Me too! I’m there!”

Very soon, everybody on the punt was recognized by an alumnus in the tunnel. Their faces had the full range of gestures and their bodies moved with the naturalness and realism of any person on a movie or TV program.

“I sung in the choir there! That’s King’s College!”, shouted a woman in the tunnel.

“You are going to scream in pain for losing your head if you don’t get down. There comes Kings Bridge!”

Soon thereafter, the back of the tunnel became the station where the punters got off...and the scenes on the walls and the ceiling disappeared. But then the punters appeared on either wall walking toward the opposite end of the

“That’s Trinity! My buddy in the Engineering Department was from there.”

“Look how beautiful, Jesus College! My doctoral supervisor was the dean there!”

“I’m there now!”

“Me too!”

“Jennifer, you are in!”

As the punters disembarked and turned around, they had become other alumni in the tunnel and they were walking through Cambridge on either wall. It was hard to tell whether it was the alumni on the walls or on the rotating barstools that were talking, for the acoustics in the tunnel were perfect and there was hardly any need for microphones or loudspeakers to hear what anybody was saying.

“The Law Library”

“No, the Law Faculty is a modern building.”

“Then, Sir, you are a much younger man than I am.”

“That’s Market Hill. We use to buy food there to cook in the residence.”

“McDonald’s, that was the nearest thing to mom’s kitchen in Cambridge.”

The punters kept walking down St. Andrew’s Street and past Pembroke College until they entered a large green space, Parker’s Piece. There were students throwing Frisbees near the University Arms Hotel. Tall, leafy trees appeared on the front end of the tunnel. As the punters approached them on both sides of the wall, less of the trees remained visible and more of what lay behind them came into view: the Parkside Pool. They went across Gonville Place and past the Kelsey Kerridge Sports Centre. They could see on the right Fenner’s Cricket Ground and on the left...

“Hughes Hall! That’s it!”

“Alice, that was my residence! Oh, my youth, my youth, it is all coming back!”

“Look how much it has changed!”

“Very modern buildings, that’s for sure.”

Now the punters were entering from the scenes on the walls into the front end of the tunnel, which was dominated now by the façade of the main building. Only the backs of the punters could be seen as they knocked on the door. The door opened for...

“That’s me! SaSq, I’m there too,” shouted Annemarie out of herself leaping from her barstool to the floor.

“Sarah! Sorry, President Squire, they are here! They arrived!”

From the interior of the lobby, a woman approached to...

“Good Lord! That is me, in this outfit!,” the President could not help but exclaim.

“Me too, I am in this dress! How’d they do it?! That’s super geekish!”

“Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen! Welcome back!”, said the President in the lobby. “We are delighted that you made it here once more. You have arrived just in time to have the appetizer with the others. With the presence of so many alumni like you, this will be an exceptional Summer Ball at Hughes Hall! Please do come in.”

As she said that, the tunnel was plunged into darkness. Then it became bright at the back end of the tunnel and everybody rotated toward it on their barstools only to scream in amazement as the perspective had changed and from the lobby the alumni were seen entering it.

“That’s me! That’s me 21 years ago, when I studied there!”

“William!, you look as young as when we married in ’77! How handsome were you!”

“I look young again! I’m a younger man tonight”!

What a clamor! One alumnus or alumna after the other, as he or she entered the lobby, was recognized by other alumni in the tunnel, but they looked as they did when they studied at Hughes Hall! The sheer impact of such totally unexpected and profoundly moving experience could be felt in the air. The tunnel had come alive, shaking with emotions. It had moved. It had taken the people in it back to their youth!

The alumni walked from the lobby of Hughes Hall on the back end of the tunnel to their right to go to the Common Room or to their left to enter the President’s Office, which were shown on opposite walls of the tunnel. As they picked up a glass of sherry and went deeper into the Room and the Office, they moved along those walls toward the front end of the tunnel. Their emotions on the scene were only exceeded by those in the tunnel because as they mingled with people in Room and the Office they would bump into other students that had also studied in Hughes Hall at the same time as they did. They had parallel outbursts of joy goaded by very old memories exploding into reality in front of their eyes. The vibrancy of reliving those memories so vividly only continued to intensify because more and more alumni in the tunnel kept appearing in Hughes Hall and meeting old friends.

Eventually, the time came for one of the main activities of the Summer Ball: the five-course supper. So the alumni proceeded to the Dining Room and lined up behind its closed door on the front end of the tunnel. When it opened, its frame was occupied by the back of their heads, shoulders, and backs. As they entered the Room, the back of the line kept moving forward and leaving in the dark the space of the walls behind them. When the last alumni went in, the door of the Dining Room was closed behind them on the front end of the tunnel; gradually the door became darker and darker until the front end was left in the dark.

Simultaneously, the alumni were seen on the back end of the tunnel entering the Dining Room from the perspective inside it. They filed behind the long dinner table beautifully set that appeared on each wall and kept extending toward the front end; when the last one went in, the door of the Room was closed from the inside on the back end of the tunnel. The alumni sat facing the tunnel on only one side of either table and engaged in lively conversation as they reminisced the old days when...a bell ringing? What’s going on? All the students stood up. Look!, on the front end of the tunnel, there appeared High Table. President Squire and several of her predecessors as well as bursars entered from either side of the front end. Once they were seated, the alumni sat down. A prayer was said thanking the Lord for this joyful occasion on which so many friends would partake of His food. Annemarie sat at the top of one of the side tables. Eerily enough, as High Table and the alumni began to be served, the tunnel too was invaded by the appetizing smell of cooked food!...as if it were not enough for the long and narrow dimensions of the tunnel and its arched ceiling to create the impression of being immersed in, and forming part of, the scene.

Another bell rang. High Table stood up as did all the alumni. After High Table had left the Dining Room on the front end of the tunnel, the Room’s door on the back end opened and a view of Hughes Hall’s backyard on the left and a tent on the right appeared. The alumni walked toward the door to leave the Room and the dinner tables disappeared behind the last of them, leaving the walls in the dark.

For its part, High Table on the front end of the tunnel morphed into the raised platform under the tent where a disc jockey had set up his equipment. On either wall near it, the alumni

entered the tent from the perspective inside it. Soon thereafter the music started and all the alumni were dancing, drinking, and celebrating their reunion. Then the music died down and President Squire climbed the platform and put on an over-the-ear headset with voice-tube microphone.

“Dear Students and Alumni, I am pleased to announce that this year for the first time we have more participants in our Summer Ball than those that are here with us. To foster a sense of community and allow many alumni to share in our merry-making, we have been broadcasting live every aspect of this great party by means of cameras placed throughout the building, the grounds, and in this tent. As a matter of fact, some of the songs that you have been dancing to have been requested of our disc jockey by the virtual partycomers. Thanks to software in part off-the-shelf and in part developed by us, they have the ability to switch from any camera to any other and even to zoom in and out any view. Let’s ask them how much they have enjoyed it.”

With that, she flicked a button and on the platform, mounted behind and above her head, a horizontal band of 10 screens lit up showing 10 alumni from different parts of world that...

“Carlos, Carlos! How are you doing buddy, this is Mark!”, shouted a student in the tent.

“Patricia, Pat! I’m here, Connie. You made it! I got your e-mail today.”

Several of the students on the screens were seen waving back.

“Many of those online tonight,” said President Squire, “graduated from Hughes Halls just last year and thanks to your communication with them you knew that they would be coming to our party tonight. Others just could not resist our invitation and have on the spur of the moment logged on. Still others would love to join us if only you called them on your cellular phones and asked them to log on and join us. If you do not have their phone numbers do not despair because we have a computer here with the phone numbers of all those students and alumni as well as teachers that listed their phone numbers when they registered on our website. And we have a surprise for you: There are 10 laptops on your left with webcams mounted on them and pointing at you and our dance floor behind you for you to communicate with them. These laptops will allow your friends to see you as you communicate with them through Instant Messaging or even Internet phone and, if they too have webcams, you will also see them. Please limit your use of any those computers to five minutes so that everybody has the opportunity to contact any of students and invite them to join our party. And I still have something else: One person that you loved so much that you elected her president of the student association last year is with us. Please welcome ever bubbly and witty Pradhi Kamaresh! She is joining us from Bangalore, India. Let’s put her on the central screen above me and on loudspeaker”.

“Howdie! All of you. It is so nice to see you all again. I would like you to join me in dancing. Yes, you heard me right. You can join me because I just sent your disk jockey as an attachment to an email the latest song that is having everybody dancing here in India to the point that Parliament opens everyday with the Prime Minister leading the deputies in dancing it...well, O.K., it is a suggestion, but it is a good suggestion that I will make to him next time he comes down here to have tea and biscuits with me and ask my advice on how to put an end to global warming ‘cause this song is really cool. It is India’s improvement on La Macarena! Just look at me dancing it and dance along. Hit it, DJ, let’s dance!”

And they did and had a lot of fun!

“Next year,” said the President, “we are going to run a contest during the year and have

the best five songs around the world played at our Summer Ball for you to choose the best one. So you all graduating students, keep your ears open as big as dish antennas as you go back to your countries. For the winner next year there will be a prize. And for those of you that come up with a dance for the song, there will also be another prize, one of your asking! That's right, send us your suggestion of what that prize should be and will choose one...up to half of Hughes Hall!"

As the President said that, there was uproar among the students and the alumni.

"Can we have our students choreograph a dance and win a prize?", asked one of the dancers on the floor.

"Yes, yes! There is a good idea. We'll work on it during the year. Keep it coming, girls and boys. Let us have your bright ideas...and why not, even your own songs. Let it be one of the projects for your music and dance students the composition of a song and dance for Hughes Hall Summer Ball!"

The President pressed her hand to her ear and then said, "Tom, our DJ and Universal Master of All Telecommunications, is telling me that one of our alumni on the screens above me has a question. Tommy, put her through."

"Hello, guys, I am Nancy Brandon here in Houston, Texas, Hughes Hall class of 2001. I would like to know if we have our students around the world compete with each other, will Hughes Hall bring a couple of them here to your next Summer Ball to teach dancers how to dance it?"

"We are willing to consider everything that will allow us to keep helping you our alumni to be the best teachers possible, the ones that can best motivate your students to develop their full potential. So you keep sending us your suggestions and we'll put them to the consideration of...of you! That's it. That's one of the functions that you alumni can have as members of the Hughes Hall International Society for Lifelong Learning. In this vein, I invite you all to sign on tomorrow, at 3:00 p.m. Greenwich Mean Time, after we have slept off this delicious double 'punch' of wine and gin and to our dancing muscles. One of the subjects that we have on tap for discussion with our alumni that made it to this extraordinary Summer Ball is how they and we can continue learning as a global community. So we will discuss how to help your students. Wait, Tommy says that Catharine of France has a suggestion in this regard."

"Bonne soir, I am Catharine DuChamps, in Toulouse. I graduated from Hughes Hall in 1999. I remember that when I first went to Cambridge as a school kid I could have learned much more English if I had not gone with a group of French kids. We remained among ourselves and spoke French most of the time. Maybe we can use this Society to help our students to communicate with other students of English around the world. We can have them participate in the organization of the Hughes Hall's International High School Students Song and Dance Contest. Naturally, all of this will be done in English and if we use Internet phone the students can choose those that speak English best and can be brought to Hughes Hall to form the jury of the Contest."

"That's a wonderful idea, Catharine. Well, you see that once we all open the floodgates of our imagination there is an unstoppable torrent of ideas...an all because one of our students, Pradhi, had conducted exhaustive scientific research that indicated that global warming could be stopped with a cool song. That's the caliber of our students. Dance on that thought for the rest of the evening."

The music had not started when Annemarie jumped on the platform and blasted the President in a hissing whisper:

“You could have told them that thanks to my astonishing performance as Hughes Hall’s thinking head we had the alumni connect to us tonight via the Internet!”

“That’s you job! But I can still let them know if you give me back the \$40 that you swindled out of me, you little rapacious, deceitful, narcissist brainiac!”

There was a burst of laughter from those on the dancing floor.

“The best couple ever!”

“You deserve each other!”

“Our very own Shrek and the Sassy Donkey!”

They followed up their laughter and comments with a burst of applause.

“The NY promoters overheard us!, AnnY. How could they?”, an astonished President in the tunnel asked Annemarie.

“They must have had highly sensitive omnidirectional microphones outside the...flickering lights! They weren’t...outside the building...They were flashes!, of digital cameras snapping photos away. Like inside, in the lobby and in the anteroom to this basement. That’s how they got the faces of everybody. They must have integrated those photos from many different angles into composite figures and applied to them life-like animation software. They could also have used facial recognition software to identify the faces of every guest here tonight from the moment they stepped in front of the building. Then they morphed the faces of the characters of the presentation that they had already made. They could have morphed the whole body to make tall people look tall and fat people look fat and so on.”

“Morphing! Exactly! Like they did with High Table, transforming it into the tent platform. Maybe they also used that technique to make people look young, using the students’ id. card photos. That’s why they were so adamant to get them. But we told them that we didn’t have photos for all of them, especially those that studied many years ago before the University Library began taking photos for the students’ admission cards.”

“They could have used something else, SaSq: the reverse variant of facial ageing software, which was developed by law enforcement agencies to get an idea what the victims of unsolved child abduction cases would look like even many years later. But why didn’t they tell us that they were doing all this?”

“I don’t know. But see the result: They have impressed us by delivering more than they promised.”

“That’s their message: that from the pool of ideas these came from there are still many more to be expected. When they ask you to pay them what they are really worth, are you going to be as stingy as ever, SaSq? I think they deserve every penny they ask for and even a premium.”

“Of course, you would think so! And I’ve told you not to call me SaSq!”

“You started it! You have horribly reduced my beautiful name to AnnY.”

“That’s to cut you to size and because I am your boss, you little impudent, ill-bred, manipulative brat!”

By now, the music had died down and the lights had gone out. The tunnel was again in silent darkness.

It appeared on the front end of the tunnel. It was the view of the top of a building that descended until the façade of a modern three-story building became visible from a ground perspective. As the building came into view, President Squire's voice-over could be heard and eventually the back of her head and her shoulders were seen moving from the center of the 'screen' to the building's door, followed by the backs of other men and women.

"This is our brand new Learning Resource Center", the President was heard to say. "It is the most technologically advanced of its class. Here at Hughes Hall, we made a decision to develop as our competitive advantage the application of cutting edge computer, network, and telecommunications technology to both teaching a geographically widely distributed set of clients and enabling their interactive exchange of academic experiences and knowledge in real time. The technological core of this project is that supporting massively multiplayer online role-playing games. MMORPG allows tens of thousands of players to interact in real time in highly detailed three-dimensional virtual worlds. This technology, as adapted by our programmers and technicians, will allow us to build real and imaginary scenarios to assist teachers, students, and all kinds of professionals in the learning process of any subject.

"There lies another key element of our competitive model in keeping with our policy to admit to Hughes Hall students engaged in all sorts of studies, not just those that want to become K-12 teachers. Hence, to teachers and their students we are making it possible to use to their best advantage what kids are practically born with and associate with a positive, enjoyable experience, that is, video games, animated and real movie characters, and pop culture celebrities as well as the iPods, videophones, and GPS devices associated with them. Instead of competing with the appeal of TV, the Internet, and their video games consoles, we are using them to render fun the teaching and learning of English as a first and second language, mathematics, science, and the humanities.

"Moreover, to those that have become educational system administrators, engineers, doctors, lawyers, and government officials we are making available the means of networking to exchange experiences and knowledge with substantial and immediate practical value. In other words, we are, not asking them to take time from their busy schedules to chat leisurely in a social club, but rather affording them the opportunity to leverage mutually their expertise so that they get their work done more efficiently and find together innovative solution to nagging individual or common problems. Let's see how we are planning to implement this ambitious, future-determinative, and realistic project to carve for ourselves a preeminent competitive niche on the education market through high technology."

By that time, they were in front of the Learning Centre and President Squire reached for the door. However, it opened from the perspective of Annemarie, who was inside. Both she and the President were wearing clothes other than those that they had on when they left Cambridge or bought at the airport.

"Good afternoon. I hope that you had a restful morning," she said to the adult-looking alumni that were behind the President.

“Hannah, please do come nearer,” said the President as she waved in with her arm.

Another lady approached her. “I would like to introduce to you Ms. Hannah Fogg, an Alumni and Development Officer. Hannah will help us explain how the Centre is setup and what we have undertaken to accomplish through it.”

“Welcome to the Learning Resource Centre!”, said Hannah. “It is delightful to have you here for a tour of our facilities and even a bit more. Indeed, we have been joined online by alumni from all over the world. I trust this real and virtual tour of the Centre will be most informative and stimulating of new ideas.” She was the one wearing the over-the-ear headset with voice-tube microphone and was holding a remote control.

As they moved through the central corridor of the first floor, more images of its facilities on either side appeared in front of them on either wall of the tunnel, with one half of the alumni behind the President and Hannah on the right wall and the other behind Annemarie on the left. As the groups kept moving forward, the images behind them would disappear. However, the image of a close door remained on the front end of the tunnel.

“On the first floor,” said Hannah, “we have our library. It holds not only books, but also educational and professional videos on all sorts of subjects. Included in its collection is also computer software that we have developed in-house and other on which he holds institutional licenses. This software allows us to send to clients the equivalent of a browser that they install on their computers in order to connect to our servers interactively in real time and be able to switch between many views available in a single session.

“Our books are not only in print, but also to a large extent they are in digital, PDF format, because through our main University Library we are part of the Google Project for the Digitalization of World Class Libraries. This allows us to make books available in digital form to our alumni all over the world. What is more, we are part of an innovative project for developing software that will allow us to let alumni check out digital books that are not yet in the public domain. To protect intellectual property and foster intellectual creation, their text will not be editable, that is, it can neither be copied in part or in whole nor printed, except one page at a time to paper through a physical printer, just as you can print the pages of a borrowed library book in print to the extent allowed by fair use. In addition, those books will erase themselves from the borrowers’ computers at the end of the check out period. A borrower will only be able to read those books the same way he can read printed books, but with the significant practical convenience that he will be able to access them from any part of the world. Moreover, while the pages of digital books of the first generation were monolithic, non-searchable photos, the text of digital books of the new generation can be searched using Boolean logic and proximity connectors. That feature facilitates research considerably. We are very excited about this project.”

“Our participation in a project like this,” added Annemarie, “is possible because we are at the vanguard of research in the application of the latest computer, networks, and telecommunications technologies to teaching and learning by all kinds of clients as well as collective decision-making particularly for professional clients. This is the main research in which our professors and resident scholars are engaged and on which our students write their master’s and doctoral theses.

“What is more, thanks to our association with the University Department of Computing Engineering, we are training our own programmers in the specialized field of writing code for new applications that use the potential of digital technology for providing new ways of learning and teaching. What makes our program so interesting and ambitious is that we deal with learning

and teaching for the benefit of not only school graders, but also university students as well as employees and officers in the corporate world and professionals too, and even retirees, whose life expectancy after retirement is ever longer. In brief, we conceive of learning as a life-long process. Although learning makes specific demands throughout its different stages, it has two constant factors, to wit, the human brain and the reality of an ever more technologically demanding world. Consequently, we have partnered with the School of Medicine's Neuron Research Program, the Department of Psychology's Program for Clinical Research into the Psychology of Learning, and the Department of Sociology's Study of the Transformation of Society Through Technology."

"In other words," explained the President further, "we are putting together a multidisciplinary program conducted by a team of experts in their fields. It aims at offering two comprehensive products: on the one hand, a curriculum for teaching our students and, on the other hand, continuing learning and problem-solving program for our alumni. Through the offering of these products to our clients, we intend to put Hughes Hall at the forefront of the field of fundamental research and practical application of the science of teaching and learning. What will be common both to the way we lead our institutional activity and to the development and marketing of our products is this: creative thinking that springs from unbound imagination assisted by technological resourcefulness. Let's go upstairs to see how this works in practice."

The group took a flight of stairs on the back end of the tunnel. The sound at the front of the tunnel of a door opening caused the guests to rotate on their barstools to face the front end, where they saw the door opening and the college officers and the alumni climbing the stairs and grouping at the entrance of the second floor. There Hannah explained to them by way of introduction that:

"On this floor, we have the computers, the servers, and the rooms where computer technicians and programmers work as well as where students gain hands-on experience in a learning by doing fashion. One of their activities produces a most visible result as well as one of the most important products of Hughes Hall, that is, its website. It incorporates the latest multimedia techniques and tests the new ones that we develop to make it not only appealing to users, but also a showcase of how multimedia can be applied to learning, whether it be in the classroom or in a corporate training room."

"We have three concrete examples of learning facilitated through multimedia," continued Annemarie. "In each of them we work in an interactive way with our clients, a broad term that encompasses our students as such, later on when they become teachers, their own students, and alumni in other fields. The first example originated with an idea from a teacher in an economic and educational underprivileged area. This is the politically correct term for a blunter description: a ghetto of blacks and immigrants, many of them illegal, where parents are mostly uneducated or functionally illiterate dropouts who put little stock on their children even attending classes every day, let alone succeeding at school, or cannot help their children with their homework even if they wanted because they would not understand what that work was all about. In their neighborhood, a flashy car for drag racing is the greatest aspiration of not only boys, but girls as well, except that girls do not get to drive the cars, they just cheer on their 'men' from the sidelines. So a teacher contacted us with a most challenging idea.

"He wanted to develop a whole course around the idea of having his class put together a marketing plan for a drag racing car shop. So he challenged his students to divide themselves into five 'business persons' teams that would compete with each other in developing a viable marketing plan that at the end of the year they would present to the owners of several car shops.

That was the outside aspect of the competition. The inside aspect was even more demanding because it challenged how students conceived of themselves and their role in the social context of their ghetto. This was the teacher's imaginative way of solving a problem: the boys did not want to have girls on their teams and girls claimed that the competition was unfair because they did not know anything about car shops. So he solved the problem: Can boys only work with their hands, having them dirty all the time with car grease or sore from clinching to the wheel of a racing car belonging to girls, who can work with their heads to become the owners of the car shop and the employer of the boys?

"The teacher was aware that this boys v. girls scenario would never have been realistic in the upscale school that he attended as a kid. But it fit perfectly the school where he worked as a teacher. His imaginative way of dealing with it had spectacularly positive results. For one thing, girls saw this as the opportunity to prove, not just to the boys, but more importantly to themselves, that they were not just objects to be displayed along with the boys' cars, but rather that they had the smarts and self-assurance to beat the boys at their own game. The teacher also made a rule: At any stage of the competition, a mixed team of boys and girls that was up to 5 percentage points behind a single sex team would win.

"The competition involved the mathematics of purchasing supplies, even the calculus applied to determine how frequently to order spare parts taking into account the cost of shipping and handling and the opportunity cost of not keeping the purchase money in the bank earning interest. It involved English grammar and composition, for students had to write letters in proper English to companies to explain to them what they were doing and the information that they wanted from them. It involved science because teams earned points by complying with environmental protection regulations on the safe disposal of used oils as well as with strict exhaust pipe gas emission regulations. To ensure such compliance, they had to determine the biodegradability of products, the increase of such degree by the use of different techniques, and the advantages of using ethanol or even electric engines. In addition, they had to keep their accounts on a spreadsheet, to balance a balance sheet, and to pay interest on borrowed money and dividends to investors. They also had to put together an attractive brochure to market their plan to the racing car shops. We have learned that on this score the girls inflicted a humiliating defeat to the boys, who had scoffed at anything that had to do with arts, such as graphic arts, as a matter for sissies. Even boys admitted that their brochures would not sell even a car wash, let alone a car customization that could cost thousands of dollars. So in the end, which team would be attracting the most clients and making a killing in business?

"Let me tell you that this account does not begin to scratch the surface of all the imaginative details that went into developing this program. Its development resulted from a collective effort that involved, not just this very imaginative teacher and our own programmers, technicians, and curriculum developers, but also all those teachers that learned about this project, followed it on our website, and contributed wonderful ideas. So much so that the project is still active and undergoing constant refinement."

"The second example," said Hannah jumping back in, "can add most valuable details to Annemarie's. The initiator was a teacher at a posh school who learned about this type of team-competition courses. In the social context of the kids at her school, there was no boys v. girls opposition. But she felt that those kids had had it just too easy in life and were not exerting themselves to develop their full potential. Spoiled as they were, they counted on living on the family wealth if they failed to go to college. Their lives were dominated by party going. So she came up with the idea of a course where teams would compete on whether a pop star should

develop a name brand clothing line or a chain of nightclubs. The kids loved it! For them, spending \$500 on the latest fashion and charging it to daddy's account was like going to Market Hill to purchase the fruit of the season; and bragging about going to the members' only nightclub that was 'in' at the time was like talking about the latest TV hit show. Since all had the same firsthand knowledge of what they were talking about, they had to gain a competitive edge in a different way. They were aware that they needed that edge if they were to make a winning presentation to a jury of top-notch designers, fashion show organizers, investors, and owners of night and country clubs. For these kids, not to mention for their parents, losing face in society was inconceivable.

"So it was the kids who generated an overwhelming number of ideas to make their plans stand out: One business model envisaged having no in-house designers. Instead, designers anywhere in the world would offer their creations and they would choose the best ones. Production of the designer clothing would take place in China. So the teacher had to do a lot of research to come up with obstacles for the kids: They had to propose how to determine royalties, the customs regulations applicable to importing from China, and whether to import from the new 'China', namely, Vietnam and its lower cost textile shops. They also had to develop a strict product safety assurance program, which was the way of introducing chemistry and biology into the course. It was during this process of throwing obstacles at the students that the teacher realized a fundamental element of team-competition courses: Its development calls for a storyteller that can develop a story with a beginning that sets up the scene of a quest, a middle that raises problems to attaining it, and an end that must fall within certain academic and professional standards of quality and efficiency.

"For their part, the students realized that text messaging had not equipped them to write business letters, let alone, reports. So they would pester their English teacher to correct their writings until the teacher realized that for the first time her students were interested in learning how to write. She also realized another key element of team-competition learning: Kids can be more demanding as well as more receptive to the demands of their peers than a teacher can be. A kid who is praised by their peers feels King of the Hill just as a kid that is chastised by his peers for having let them down feels that he has fallen through his social network to the abyss of eternal rejection. After all, young people lack experience to know that life is made of ups, downs, and rebounds.

"The English teacher contacted the initiator teacher to find out how they could work together. In turn, they contacted the science and math teachers, who were most receptive because by that time a phenomenon had occurred: Their students were complaining to them 'why they had to study science and math while the other students were doing fun stuff'. The teachers realized that they had laid their hands on a fundamental element of effective teaching and learning: How to motivate students to want to study and learn. Consequently, they, as a team, contacted us to help them develop a multidisciplinary course based on the principle of class teams competing with each other on a project with practical value that actually prepares students to meet the challenges of the real world."

"This brings us to the third example," said President Squire, as they reached the exit door of the second floor of the Centre. As before, this door was seen on the back end of the tunnel and these people went through that door and reappeared on the front end entering through the door to the third floor from the perspective inside that floor. Then they walked in two groups on either wall, which showed the classrooms on the third floor on either side of a central corridor. The views of the second floor kept disappearing until the back end of the tunnel showed the exit door

of the third floor.

“What you see on this floor is equipment that can be used, not only in K-12 classrooms and corporate training rooms, but also in the meeting rooms of professionals making presentations or engaged in a collective decision-making process. Look at this digital blackboard. The teacher or presenter writes on it using a digital stylus just as the students or meeting participants can type on their laptops or write on their Personal Digital Assistants, such as Blackberries, and their writings, processed if need be through handwriting recognition software, appear on the blackboard, to which their devices are connected wirelessly. This eliminates the need for graphics tablets and widens participation.

“The contents that appear on the blackboard and is reproduced on the laptops and PDAs, are just as sophisticated: It can be a plant for producing ethanol from corn as compared with one using sugar cane; a complex diagram of the journey of a scarf from the hands of a seamstress in China to the hands of a model preparing in her dressing room to appear on the catwalk; or a small toy part that a toddler has swallowed and appears making its way through a three-dimensional view of his body, where the lead of its paint is seen wrecking havoc over time on his neurotransmitters and causing genetic disorders inside a chromosome. This type of contents is what we help teachers develop just as we also help them develop the narrative of the competition, that is, an engaging story that makes them want to engage in a quest.”

“Likewise, we help our alumni, whether they are school system administrators or professionals, get the ideas that they have had as individuals ready for presentation to a group and help groups make decisions. Take for example this list of suggestions for improvement that a school chancellor and his board of 10 school district supervisors have to discuss, quantify, prioritize, and provide with a budget to the local authority or city council.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. student/teacher ratio | 6. after school sports & performing arts courses |
| 2. tardy and absent students | 7. providing books and laptops to students |
| 3. after school detention and remedial teaching | 8. repairing and upgrading school facilities |
| 4. one, two, or three school meals | 9. parents pot luck dinners at school |
| 5. social services provided at the school | 10. conversion of a failing, to a charter, school |

“For each of these suggestions they have to provide a cost/benefit analysis and incorporate all of them in a multiyear budget. If we touch with our stylus the number of any suggestion, the outline of its analysis drops down and if it contains figures, we can present it in graphical form, like a pie or line chart. Then we can collect only some elements of each suggestion to produce an overall view. We can also depict the process of making a decision through the application of game theory.

“But we do not do everything by any means. Competition with an attractive prize at the end is also a powerful stimulant to get our alumni to do and share their best ideas and results with everybody else. Actually, each of the entries that you see on the blackboard list is an idea that a teacher came up with, developed in considerable detail and to high professional standards, and turned into a course that she applied in her classroom or proposed for application by others and therefor made it available by its posting on our website. During the coming year, teachers

will be able both to assess these courses in the abstract the way they would grade a paper and to apply them to real problems that they are facing in their classrooms. They will vote on them and the finalists will be invited by Hughes Hall to present their ideas here at an International Education Symposium.

“This Symposium will be broadcast over the Internet in an interactive mode. Each presenter of a finalist course will be required to answer questions posed by participants in the audience, those online anywhere in the world, and by members of a jury of experts. All of them will cast a composite vote that will choose the winner. The winners will have the option of participating free of charge in a four week summer seminar; a three month intensive master’s degree program; conduct post graduate research as a Fellow for an academic year; or if they cannot spend time away from their jobs or family, they can opt for a cash prize paid out of the receipts of project entry and Symposium fees as well as sponsors. The latter will be, for example, manufacturers of hard- and software that will present their products at the Symposium.”

“Is it here where we come in?”, asked one of the alumni.

“Precisely,” replied President Squire. “During the next three weeks, we will familiarize you with every aspect of the Learning Resource Centre, in general, and those aspects that you have chosen as most relevant to your profession, in particular. Then you will go back to your countries and places of employment where you will be able to offer our products and services to your students, your colleagues, and your superiors or local authorities. Where your offering of our products and services generates a profit for us, it also generates a commission for you. It is a win-win situation.”

“President, we have a question from a teacher in Miami, Florida,” said Hannah.

“Very well, put the teacher through.”

“Do you consider this kind of alumni society a product too?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, traditionally alumni societies are simply social clubs that allow members to network among themselves and be hit by the alma matter with requests for donations. I see that you have taken a different approach. Yours is more of a mutual assistance professional association where members can find practical help for their professional advancement and can even join as a business venture. All this interactive software that you are developing to connect in real time alumni, not to mention their students, strikes me as highly sophisticated and expensive. I have the impression that other colleges and universities here in the U.S. could be interested in licensing it.”

An alumnus on the floor cut in, “You are on to something there. I guess that the extent of that interest could be tested if we made a presentation at the Conference of American Colleges and Universities and similar professional gatherings.

Another added, “You never have closer friends than those that you make as a kid in grade schools. I would say that graduating high school classes could be interested in keeping in touch through your program and even participating over the Internet in that year’s senior prom or your type of Summer Ball.”

“That is likely to be nothing,” said another, “compared to the interest of the high school itself, which would like to maintain its alumni involved in the continued development of the school. How many times have you thought, ‘If I could only get a hold of this or that student and

get them to come back and talk to my students or support this or that project'. But that is difficult to pull off when you drop on them out of the blue 10, 15, 20 years later and you find out that their memories are attached to the people that were there at the time, but those people are all gone and the school has become to the alumni merely a brick and mortar building. You need to cultivate their attachment to the school from the moment they leave it upon graduation."

"It is quite apparent," said the President, "that you do not lack for ideas. We are open to all of them and during the next few weeks, we will have the opportunity to hear them all and use our own decision-making model to determine their relative coefficient of feasibility and likely effectiveness in terms of our objectives. With that I would like to propose an idea that I think you all will agree is the best possible one right now: Let's have another glass of sherry and go for another delicious meal!"

Everybody applauded their assent. Then President Squire, Annemarie, and Hannah led the way to the exit door of the third floor, which was on the back end of the tunnel, through which all of them disappeared as the views of the third floor of the Learning Resource Centre progressively disappeared too. Eventually the tunnel became engulfed by silent darkness...and once more, it was invaded by a most irresistible smell of cooked food. Then the tunnel became lit and the doors at the back of the tunnel were open, allowing the view of the carts of a catering service that gave off all sorts of appetizing smells. The audience burst into applause and rather quickly headed to the back to partake in the buffet. As they did, they spotted President Squire and Annemarie...

"Look, Martin!, they were in the movie dressed like that!", a comment echoed by others.

"Whom do we talk to now?"

"I heard they are the back."

"There, where the bunch of people are."

"That's why this line is not moving. Everybody is thanking them for this wonderful evening."

"They really put on a show of unsurpassed imagination in the perfect locale."

"Good evening. I take it you are President Squire."

"Indeed, I am"

"My name is Dr. Michael Hermes and this is my wife Emily."

"How do you, Dr. Hermes, Mrs. Hermes," replied the President. "I am glad that you made it. This is my Assistant, Annemarie Young."

"Nice to meet you."

"I would like to let you both know that you and those that created this program made me cry tonight. For a moment I felt young again and I believed that my future was all in front of me, as I did when I studied at Hughes Hall more than forty years ago, when I was convinced that everything I thought I could also realize. You and your people think so. I would like to meet them?"

"So would we," said the President, "You cannot imagine how many questions we have for them."

"We will look for them and bring them here to meet you all," added Annemarie.

Behind the Black Robe Wall

Scenes from a play about those who have power to get away with anything and can muster the imagination to justify everything. They enjoy that power because there is nobody to require them to do anything they do not want to do; and what they are required to do, they are allowed to leave undone. They can do and not do it all because they have a most effective means to achieve it: Self-assured unaccountability.

INT. CHAMBERS OF THE CHIEF JUDGE OF A FEDERAL COURT OF APPEALS - NIGHT

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Hi, Gaby! Did you want to see me?

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

Yes, Bob, come in. Close the door.

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

What's up?

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

Sit. How is your prima donna case coming along?

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Have you been following it?

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

Like everybody else in the City. It is showtime: Godfather on trial!

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

I'm grateful it was assigned to me, Gaby.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

You bet, old boy. I saw you talking to his lawyer.

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

That was a good call to let cameras in. All TV newscasts open with it.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

Not even Judge Judy gets as much exposure. But, I meant in the parking lot.

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

What what do you mean? Was he there?

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

Wasn't that like an ex-parte contact?

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Oh, you mean last night. Yes, we crossed path briefly.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

That late at night? By that time, your court and mine had been closed for hours.

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

You are right. He said he had come to drop some papers in the after-hours box.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

It looked more as if he was filing it with you. His car pulled in right next to yours and...

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

What a coincidence! He saw me there when I...

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

He gave you an envelope and climbed right back in his car and drove a...

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Gaby, what's going on? What's all this about?

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

You tell me. Since when are filing papers folded into a regular envelope, not even slid into a manila one? Do you always grin from ear to ear when opposing counsel files with...

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

I...it was dark, you couldn't have seen his my face nobody was round he's jo joker...

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

Easy, BobbySon. No need to come unglued. I was the one in the dark, not you...in the corner, another fight with Angie on the cellular, got distracted and out of the elevator on the wrong parking floor, where neither you nor I, none of us is supposed to park there...security, the marshals, you know. After she hung up on me, I realized I had lost my way...in more than one sense. Have you too, Bobby? It wasn't a coincidence. You planned to meet him there.

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

It is not what you think, Gaby. It was nothing.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

I thought you said it was a filing. How much did that mobster lawyer file with you?

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Gaby! What are you saying there?!

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

Tell me! You can talk to me. We've known each other

for more than 15 years. You can talk to me...Come on!...Gosh, Bob, spit it out!!...Now!!!

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Fifty.

Chief Circuit Judge Gabrielli
Fifty grand!? Is that all this is worth to him?! He could get life, his third strike.

District Judge Jamieson
Not the case. A ruling, pittance of evidence, toss it.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI
I see. You're going to cash in on one slice at a time until there is no salami stick to beat him up with. For havens sake, Bob, you can't do that.

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON
Gaby, please, it is no big deal. Not like Gambino Senior killed anybody, at least not in this case. It's only dealing. A bunch of junkies! Why should we care for them when they don't care for themselves?

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI
They are hooked! And they hook others. What about all the mischief they cause to buy ano...But that's not the point and you know it, Bob! You just can't do that!

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON
You're not the only one with problems at home, you hear me! I've got two boys in college and it is killing me. Ivy League. Good boys, mine! \$44K...

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI
For two in college it is not...

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON
What are you talking about?! For each! That's tuition alone. Plus room and board, not in a dinky crowded dormitory...I have a name to maintain. They live in a hotel-like residence, for people of our standing...and security too, my boys. And a car for each. And I fly them in every time I can, need to see them. The phone bill is...Those casebooks! Even \$130 each! Those authors are the real extortionists. Gaby, please, I can hardly make ends meet! It is not as if I wanted to get rich! I just need...

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI
You're making over \$174,000 a year! and with all your speeches, your university course and...But that's not the point either. You just can't rationalize anything you want. You just can't do that!

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

This one time, Gaby, give it to me this one time.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

It is never once. You too get hooked. They hook you. Then everything goes. Soon it...

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

No, no! Just for them, my boys, while in college.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

It is never for one purpose. If more can be had, new 'needs' appear. I know! Angie does it. What I make with one hand she gives away with both to a new charity. She's punishing me! That it is not clean! Mother Theresa the activist. Her causes as surrogate children. With my money! And I can't do anything

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

She should know better. She's a lawyer too. Anyway, she does well with your money. And I do too. Just for my boys. They are good kids. You know them.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

I do. Very fine young men that...

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Plan to go to law school, both, in my footsteps! I can't disappoint them!

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

That can take years!

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Now you've got it! I have to look ahead. I can't stomach the thought that one day they won't have enough for...Please, Gaby, give me this, for my boys. My boys! If you had kids, wouldn't you...

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

I wish! She couldn't. You put me in a bind. This is wrong. My sources say that reporter, Woodstein, is thinking to publish it on the Internet if he has to...

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Dead on arrival! We can squash him!, can't mess with all of us. None of us can afford to let his dirt against any of us stick. We all have our peccadilloes, everything goes behind those no-reason summary orders, deals, at the club, and away, at the judicial junkets, everything really goes there!

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

Don't you dare threaten me, you son of a...!

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Gaby, I would never...you are my boys' godfather...but you are my boys' godfather.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

So I owe them! I must cut deals with all the Mafiosi that stand before us so I can keep my godchildren in a nice hotel. You are really a piece of work!

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Gaby, I didn't mean it like that. Just that we are in the same boat and...

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

Stop it, Bob! Just stop it! I got the drift.

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Thank you! Thank you, Gaby. For my boys, thank you!

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

But never in civil cases, where a party can get hurt...

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Unless both wealthy, then they won't mind a few...

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

No! I say no! Just the prosecution may lose. That's what I give you! And never in blood crimes.

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Yes, Chief, I promise. You won't regret it. Thank you. Why don't you come for dinner, with Angie, and you see my boys. They'll be home for the long weekend. Then you can quiz them again, as you used to. You'll see they are worthy it.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

I'll try. I'll tell her...Hey, I have an idea. Come home for poker, I call the gang. And you see her, hear her preach about another pro bono activity. You too would want to get rid of her. But she won't give me a divorce. My wagon has too much gravy. I hate...

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Gaby, Gaby, calm down! Take it easy. No need to let her righteousness get you. Sure, I'll go to your home, for you. But I am a disaster at poker.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

All the better for me! You're flush, you can afford it.

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Yes, Sir! I can!...But you, well, what you need...He said that, the lawyer, invited me to a party, private, with some girls for fun. For you that's

what...you can come along. He said gentlemen's honor.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

He said that?! Gosh, it has been so long! And longer since it meant anything. All this pressure at home, at work. We need it. But it can't be at his place. Uhm, Nicky has a cottage by the lake. He can prepare it nicely. We could go there, say, to fish.

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

The gang boys need it too. Even she. She told me how she skimps on data on the mandatory judicial financial disclosure reports. They are public and yet. The reviewers don't care. Everybody does it.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

But if Woodstein got proof of hidden assets! That's what he is sniffing for...Have we all lost our way? Peccadilloes? We sent people to jail for...

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

So what! His paper won't publish it. And take all of us on? Life tenure! We have it. What we don't have is a salary three, five, ten times as much in private practice. Public service? The people get us, the best and the brightest, but pay us...confiscatory. That's it. A taking without compensation.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

Skip it, Gaby. You sound like that Mafioso lawyer. You need to cut down on the time you spend with...He is not going to be there, is he?

DISTRICT JUDGE JAMIESON

Of course not! Just us. He'll only arrange it. And the girls very discreet or they end up with the fish in the Hudson River. Gambino Father too or he ends up in Sing Sing with his head in his hands courtesy of the defense lawyers in our debt. They know people inside that for a TV in their cells or more phone time will do it. Gaby, it is going to be alright.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI

I hope so. A new experience! meaningful...and more frequent. Waiting for those judicial junkets...My clerk thinks everybody in the City is looking at her. I'll talk to Nicky. He can't write even a Christmas card but he is superconnected. Lots of people owe him. That's how he got the cottage. And he will owe me. I'm glad we were able to resolve that other matter satisfactorily first.

INT. THE CHAMBERS OF THE CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE - DAY

The Chief is on the phone.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI
Hey Nicky, how are you, old boy!?

DISTRICT JUDGE NICKY
Gaby! How's it going?

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI
Real good. I wanted to let you know again how much I enjoyed that last judicial junket.

DISTRICT JUDGE NICKY
Me too. I learned a lot about fly fishing.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI
Without doubt they are very educational. Listen, my assistant got the photos that she took of me...of us at the junket. I think Millie will like them too.

DISTRICT JUDGE NICKY
You'r too thoughtful! My wife is making the album for all the gang this time and she's driving me crazy 'cause she don't want to miss no photo.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI
I'll send them to you right away by courier. By the way, I found this thing about you that has been lying on my desk for months, you know...What's the story about it?

DISTRICT JUDGE NICKY
You mean the misconduct complaint? Well, so long ago. I think one of the clerks told me that one of those had come in. Gaby, there is not'ing to it. You know how things go. These little pro se people come into your court out of their wits after being hit with a suit or revved up by a petty offense they just whipped up from a teapot into a tempest at law. Their nervous, misunderstand everything you say, exaggerate everything you do and don't understand not'ing 'bout how things are done in the local practice of a real courtroom.

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI
Nicky, you don't have to tell me. I remember how things were when I was in district. Today I just give them a summary order: Affirmed! Affirmed! Affirmed! and move on.

DISTRICT JUDGE NICKY
How I envy you!, Gaby. I try as much I can to get rid of these pesky mudslingers to write with my

clerk for the high profile cases with pedigree names. Anyway, you can't shortchange the honchos with big law firms. They have the means to go up to you and make you look like a hack...

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI
and you end up calling in your IOUs with us to fix it! Nicky, Nicky! I know the drill. Well, I'm so glad we have discussed this matter fully. Sorry I even mentioned it. But don't you sweat it. I'll give this complaint the good shot. I have a form for them too: Dismissed! Dismissed! Dismissed!

DISTRICT JUDGE NICKY
You do that and thank you so much, I really appreciate what you'r doing for me with those photos. Send them right'a way. I think you gotta one when Harry was startled awake by his first fish ever...and fell from the boat into the lake! We'r gonna be teasing him until we meet you guys at the circuit conference!

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI
You are such a jerk!, Nicky. You know that? A friend doesn't do that to a friend...alone. I'll help you! I'll write a note on the back of that photo that it has been submitted in a disability complaint against him as evidence he also falls asleep on the bench. Make sure the gang is with him when he reads it. With his leaky bladder after dozing for years at boring squabblers, he'll do it in his pampers laughing!

DISTRICT JUDGE NICKY
You'r too thoughtful! You genius!

CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE GABRIELLI
Listen, Nicky. About your cottage by the lake. Perhaps one day...

DISTRICT JUDGE NICKY
Say not'a nother word, Gaby. Whenever you want it for you and company. Just tell me when and I'll tell the carekeeper to get it skipin' spanking. His and girlfriend are totally mute 'cause they ain't got no papers. I think their from Mexico and she from somewhere in Central America near Ecuador. They've been mine for years. The honchos that recommended my nomination use them every time...I mean the cottage for fundraising for state judges...and other things too. I let them, just a little thank you to friends...

Appendixes 1-5

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⚙️ Most Visited

🌐 Getting Started

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👤 Users

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⚙️ Settings 1

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