

Problem Play

by

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CHARACTERS

CALEB Professor Caleb Hobson, 50s. Chairman of the Mathematics Department at a major university in New York.

MAY (*) Caleb's wife, Jana's mother, 50s.

JANA Their daughter, 24.

RALPH Assistant producer on the CBS magazine-format weekly television program, 'Sunday Diary'. 35 to 45.

HALLEY 24, an old classmate of Jana's in high school, now Ralph's assistant.

(MISS O) (*) 45 to 70. Founding Director of Jana's drama school. *MISS O does not appear onstage -- her lines are OVER. Since MAY is never on stage when MISS O speaks, an actress with versatility of voice should play both parts.*

CHARACTER PROFILES

CALEB Brahmin background, patrician demeanor; daunting intelligence -- a man who tends to make others stand straighter. Knowingly articulate and learned, he can employ a disarming charm and humor in service of a conscious public image.

MAY Cultured, but unpretentiously; educated (Wellesley), but not mathematically; old New England lineage, but relaxed, good-humored, openly loving with her

family. An underlying physical frailty that she refuses to cater to.

JANA Alert, imaginative, turbulent, restrainedly desperate. Pretty, but not robust.

RALPH Ambitious, shallow, non-smart. However, it's important that he not come across as a play-discrediting cartoon. Perhaps a deep, trained "radio-voice" will help.

HALLEY She comes on with all the trappings of a bubble-headed, ever-smiling, tv-game-show hostess, but...

(**MISS O** Full, commanding, theatrically-trained voice.)

THE SETTING

Time: Early September this year. The clock-time of the play is in effect one continuous scene starting at 4:05 in the afternoon. There are, however, several brief moments of stopped-time.

One set throughout: the parlor/library of a house in Riverdale, a residential section of New York City, just north of Manhattan.

The parlor does not flaunt wealth, but one can imagine that money has never been a worry here, as though such concerns were laid to rest generations ago. The room is non-trendy and non-minimalist, given over to the tidy clutter of cultured academics. We see books, most of them

unjacketed. There are house plants on a credenza, up. The not inexpensive furniture is committed to comfort rather than fashion (though we wouldn't be surprised to learn that some of the pieces are of valuable vintage).

The necessary items include a sofa center left; an end table with a small on/off switch controlling the OVER intercom; a fronting coffee-table; an ample easy chair center, that's obviously the chair of the man of the house; a chair at the other end of the coffee table; a hi-fi console far right, and a liquor cabinet down left. Other incidental trappings might include framed pictures of typical academic subjects -- the college campus eighty years ago, Caleb's track squad posing for their team photo in running togs thirty years ago, and a photo of the Indian mathematical genius, Ramanujan.

Up right there is a portal, through which we perceive an opening to the right (leading to the unseen kitchen), and a staircase that curves up and off right. Left, another portal leads, off, through a hallway to the house's front door. Window left.

There are several drops/screens that are in fact apparitional but which the characters accept as a matter of course. A sound-facility for voices and music OVER is required.

NOTES

A quick arithmetical puzzle is presented in Act Two and the solution is (purposely) not given onstage. In the playbill, on the cast/setting page, we have the following note:

The solution to the hotel-room problem presented in Act Two is printed in this playbill on page (XX).

In this playscript the solution is given on a separate page after the final curtain.

In the playscript, the split-numbers -- (1), (2), (3) etc. -- are not meant to indicate actual breaks of time. They are merely part-scene tags to aid company members in referring to the text.

SCRIPT NOTE

Deciding script-style for silent readers and the company simultaneously can sometimes be problematic. Many of the directions and word-stresses in the script are primarily for readers, to convey potential pacing, emphases, attitudinal postures and expressions, and other clues their inner eye and ear may not easily contribute. They are not an attempt to micro-manage the director or the actors, though perhaps they help in discerning authorial intent. I write this preemptive note for those hands-on theater-professionals who much prefer not to be treated as other than exactly that – professionals who know their art.

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PROBLEM PLAY

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ACT ONE

*[Curtain rises to reveal JANA, relaxed but motionless, on the sofa; and CALEB, standing center, his back to the audience. He is still; we can feel he is a man thinking about what he will say. Gradually we hear **OVER** the sounds of a large class of students arriving for their lecture -- scuffing shoes, the scrape of wooden chairs on the floor, indistinct chatter, the clap of books and notepads being dropped in place. CALEB turns, strides front. He will stroll left and right as he lectures. He wears a conservative jacket, tie, and dark trousers, but they are not academia's standard-shabby and elbow-patched; he has a good custom-tailor. His tone is patrician and confident, very much the star lecturer in command of the hall.]*

CALEB

Every September, on this first day of class, I begin with congratulations -- to all of you -- for being here. The curtain has risen for you on the purest, the most unambiguous, the most human course in the entire curriculum -- mathematics.

It's pure because it is unpolluted by agendas: In mathematics we manipulate numbers, not people. Our discipline is not a haven for those with social or personal missions.

(smile)

Mathematics, you might say, is uncalculating.

JANA

Oh Daddy, you've added madcap humor this year! "Mathematics is uncalculating!" No fears of seeming clownish?

CALEB

(moves back up)

First you say I'm intimidating, I should lighten it a bit, cater to the groundlings. Then, when I stoop to conquer, you criticize my posture.

JANA

You'll never make the Stoopers Hall of Fame, Dad. You asked, and I told: You're too formidable. You scare them.

CALEB

I don't scare them. The very word 'mathematics' does that. Did I tell you the Pentagon wants me for a new weapon of war?

(MORE)

CALEB (cont'd)

The idea is, when the enemy advances, I take a loudspeaker and roar "Mathematics!" Bang -- half of them go blind and deaf.

JANA

The other half you can incinerate with a lecture.

(rhetorical tone:)

"Your number-fire sermon starts the eyes, stops the heart, and locks the hinge of aspiration."

CALEB

"How pert a reprisal on the eloquent man, to beget a rhetorical daughter."

JANA

(no smile)

I am only a figure of speech, Sire.

CALEB

...I hate revising! It's like whittling my finger.

(moves down)

Mathematics is unambiguous because it is conclusively testable. In this class, the questions and the answers are unequivocal. Your grade will not be a function of anyone's taste, ego or emotions. So you don't have to smile winningly at the examiner -- nor does he at you.

JANA

But today you do smile winningly, yes?

CALEB

Because these are television folks.

JANA

Yes. Smile. Make them say, "Look: it's a genius, and it smiles! It's humankind!"

(mock aside:)

It is humankind...?

CALEB

(to "class")

As for being human, we may say that mathematics serves as a definition of man: Man is the animal that does mathematics. With that in mind, picture now the hierarchy -- the Mount Olympus -- of living things.

[Upstage a large blow-up of Hokusai's 'Fuji in Clear Weather' descends/appears.]

CALEB (cont'd)

At the bottom, the plants. Then the dumb animals. Then the few animals with flickerings of reason. Thus on up through levels of comprehension to the crown of our mountain, the peak of pure intellect -- the mathematician.

JANA

That's it. Cozy up to them.

CALEB

(gestures front, moves up)

None of these people will ever do real mathematics. They'll never roam those rarefied heights above the treeline on that mountain. At best they'll manage some arithmetic and think they're doing mathematics. But arithmetic is to mathematics as a bovine 'moo' is to Shakespeare.

[We hear MAY's cheerful, breathless voice OVER, from the intercom in their home.]

MAY

I'm sorry, I went to the bathroom again, but I'm back. I'm finding all this disgracefully exciting. Any sign of them?

JANA

Mama, you're really not supposed to be getting up and down. Where's Irma?

MAY

I sent her home. It was almost four. Are you excited, Caleb?

JANA

Dad does not display excitement.

CALEB

Dad is a dignified personage. Aristotelian demeanor.

MAY

He's excited, Jana. He's as pleased as we are. Your father on national tv! Because he's so smart! Or pretty. Which is it, dear?

CALEB

It's my charm, May. My cozy thing. The way I like to hang with the sophomoric, blow some weed, and rap about roots and radicals. Jana says I make mathematics yummy.

JANA

I know he's pleased. So I've been telling him to suppress his professorial mode for his gig on the tube.

MAY

Oh! I left my glasses in the bathroom. Be right back! And don't tell me not to be bouncing around, I need my glasses.

JANA

(to CALEB:)

Because we want to make you famous.

CALEB

To be famous is reputable; to want to be famous is vulgar.

JANA

Nay, Dad: Wrong sound: You want this -- so we want it for you. You already have your Olympian image on campus. You're so daunting they want to dip you in bronze. Today we court vulgar fame.

CALEB

I prefer image. Going on television is such a trivial thing to pursue. I mean acquiesce to. I think I'm ashamed of myself.

JANA

Father, to us you can admit you fancy fame.

MAY

As distinguished from his daughter. I'm back.

JANA

I'm photophobic. Daddy is phototropic.

MAY

...Halley called again today, twice. Did you talk to her?

JANA

Yes. She sounds very hyper.

MAY

But they're definitely coming.

JANA

Oh they're coming. The story was her idea, so it means a lot to her. And to Dad, so joy for all. Provided Daddy doesn't tear their heads off.

CALEB

Would that make a difference, do you think? I've noticed it sometimes spoils people's looks, but otherwise they're no worse off so what's the good of it?

MAY

Daddy will not tear their heads off, and you know it. He wants to enthrall them.

CALEB

May.

JANA

I'm worried about Halley's hyper. Dad does not like hyper.

CALEB

I can accept hyper, in hors d'oeuvre portions. Irrational is something else, sand in the salad. How about you today, Jah? You going to be okay?

[A beat of silence.]

MAY

I'm at the window. No creature stirs.

JANA

They'll be here, Mama. Halley knows the house.

MAY

I'm sure she does. She was here lots. I was sorry when she stopped coming.

CALEB

Which one was Halley?

MAY

You remember Halley. She had that cute ponytail.

CALEB

I don't take cognizance of hairstyles.

MAY

(affectionately)

Oh yes you do. Will they be bringing cameras in down there?

JANA

No, this is what's called a pre-interview.

CALEB

A test.

JANA

A test. And I thought, Father will like this because he's so testy! Only play-acting, Daddy!

CALEB

They're late.

MAY

They're not late. It's five after four. That's not late. Mathematics on prime-time television! What's next, medieval poetry? *Beowulf*! They'll think it's by Stephen King.

JANA

Mama, get back in bed.

CALEB

Whatever it is they have in mind, you can know that if it's on national television it will not be mathematics.

(MORE)

CALEB (cont'd)

It will be home entertainment.

(resumes lecture-stroll, down)

There are other somewhat comparable towers of human endeavor -- music, literature, science. At their peaks Beethoven, Mozart, Shakespeare, Einstein. In mathematics, there have been few at the supreme altitudes of Newton, Leibniz, Gauss, Ramanujan [rah-MAHN-oo-jun].

[Their pix soberly emerge at Fuji's pinnacle.]

CALEB (cont'd)

But between that ultimate summit and the treeline of common man are the other true mathematicians, those who understand and contribute.

[Pic of CALEB pops brightly just below the other four; a distinct ping! sound is heard.]

CALEB (cont'd)

In truth, however, you will not in this course be given even a glimpse of what such minds are capable of.

[CALEB turns up again to his chair. The Hokusai ascends out of sight.]

MAY

That should thrill a television producer.

CALEB

Ah, May, you overestimate me. For the tv folks I have my handy change-purse of one-syllable words.

(beams for the camera)

Sound teeth and sound-bites.

JANA

I've been coaching Da on his classroom persona too. He's agreed to revise his first-day lecture next week. Here's the new Dad.

[OVER: Pop fanfare as JANA frolics down.]

JANA (cont'd)

Yo! Students! It's your Pal Cal! So!: Mathematics! I trust you've all filled out your next-of-kin forms? Okay, strap on your pee-bags because here it is! Straight from its laughable appearance on Comedy Central! Let's give a ridiculous welcome to...The Calculus!

[OVER: fanfare and applause.]

JANA (cont'd)

Oh that's so *toi*, Dad!

MAY

And it's so you, Jah! Why don't you glide over on opening day and introduce your father to the class?

JANA

I am retired, Mama.

MAY

Jana, I retire every night.

JANA

...Halley's so up she doesn't sound like herself. Promise you'll go easy on her? Not humiliate her in front of her boss?

CALEB

I make no effort to humiliate people. Sometimes they just humiliate themselves.

JANA

But more often when they're with you.

CALEB

Not with me -- with my subject.

MAY

You needn't fret, your father likes Halley.

CALEB

Which one was Halley?

JANA

Her boss is a man. Take cognizance of which one is not a man. Be nice to that one. Be nice to them both if you want to be on national tv. I don't think you know your effect, Dad.

CALEB

I know my effect. And I promise I shall fawn on my audience like an Olympic figure skater.

MAY

It's enough to be polite. There aren't many things you can't do, but fawning may be one of them.

JANA

I hear you bounding about up there, Mumsy, so I'm shutting our end off until we hear the creak of that bed.

(clicks a switch on the intercom)

MAY

Oh you meany! I want to listen! Wait, where's my -- ? I'll be back.

JANA

(clicks intercom on)

Get in bed! That's our last sound.

(clicks intercom off; to "class":)

His picture was not Mount Olympus, it was Fuji.

CALEB

I know that.

JANA

'Fuji in clear weather', Hokusai, 1830.

CALEB

Not 'hoe-koo-sai'. 'Hoke-sai'. You don't pronounce the 'u'.

JANA

I know that. I only pronounce it to give you pleasure.
Mama does nudge.

CALEB

For you. Not for herself.

JANA

I believe that, about Mama. But "it's for you" is what all
the nudgers claim.

[Upstage dims; MISS O's voice is always OVER.]

MISS O

Your personal monologue, Jana?

JANA (cont'd)

*(addressing, say, the fifth row of
the orchestra)*

Miss O, I do not have -- and I'm unlikely ever to have -- a
personal monologue.

MISS O

Jana, we've talked about this. As a performer, you must be
willing to expose yourself.

JANA

I believe my assignment is not to expose myself, it's to
expose the character.

MISS O

Then why did you enroll in this school? You were aware of
our method.

JANA

Because of you, Miss O. I wanted to be exposed to you.

MISS O

Don't be nimble with me, Miss Hobson. Just be straight.

JANA

I am straight, you want me to be open. Why do I know you were not entirely open when you were twenty-four, studying with Mr. S?

MISS O

...I understood you were taking classes as a way of easing yourself back into your career after your...sabbatical. That's the way your mother explained it.

JANA

I thought she might.

MISS O

How is your mother?

JANA

Recouped, thank you. Occasional ups and downs. She'll be back for *Amadeus*.

MISS O

This is only my interpretation, but I infer she was going to stop her check-ups if you didn't at least take classes....

(pauses, but no response comes)

We would like you to participate in those classes, despite your...record of accomplishment. You wouldn't want the others to feel you have privileges because of who you are.

JANA

I hoped I was participating. I do any reading you ask. Any improves, any workshops. In any role you ask. Except an autobiographical one.

MISS O

...You say you "know" I was not entirely open. Can you really know what I was?

JANA

No. Only your character.

MISS O

What?

JANA

I'm sorry, I'm being intrusive.

MISS O

And we mustn't be intrusive, must we? What have you got to hide, Miss Hobson?

JANA

Miss O, you would find it inconceivable.

[Lighting back to normal.]

CALEB

Are you all here, Jana?

JANA

As much of me as there is, is here.

CALEB

You look...coiled.

[JANA shakes her head.]

MAY

I think I hear a car!

[JANA goes to the window.]

JANA

I think it's them.

CALEB

'I think it's they.'

JANA

It is! Them's here!
(hurries off left)

MAY

Hey you two, turn yourselves on! If you don't, I'll come down there in my jammies.

CALEB

(turns on intercom)

May, if you really want to observe this bit of vaudeville, I can come carry you down.

MAY

Oh, Caleb, we both see right through you -- because you're the purest crystal. You want this very much. And you should. So, no, I'll stay up here. It'll be like listening to the radio when I was a child.

CALEB

Then you get to bed. Bill said one more day off your feet. They're here. Jana's out there now.

MAY

She's right, you know. Be nice. You can lack forbearance on occasion. And be nice to Jana, too.

CALEB

When am I not nice to Jana?

MAY

Caleb, I may be the only person on this globe with whom you are infinitely patient.

CALEB

You never require patience. Occasionally Jana does, and I think I provide it. Aren't you concerned about her today? New people?

MAY

I want new people in her world -- it's not just her work she's left behind...

CALEB

She's still alive, May.

MAY

...I guess proper eavesdropping-form says I should shut my end off so they can't hear me cheering -- or shouting at you for being a bear. You people leave your end on! Over and out. Why do they say 'over'?

CALEB

(rises, faces front)

This course will appear orthodox. It will seem to have tests. You will seem to pass them. They will seem to be mathematics. But we shall only be pretending.

*(turns left, in a courtly stance,
the sovereign about to receive)*

2

(2) 2

[We hear muffled talk off left. Enter JANA, leading RALPH, who has a sling-bag on his shoulder. HALLEY follows, beaming.]

JANA

Dad, this is Mr...Invidair?

[RALPH strides forward, hand out.]

RALPH

Ralph Invidair, CBS.

CALEB

(shakes RALPH's hand; winning smile)

Caleb Hobson, PhD.

RALPH

(brightens, enjoys the joke)

Professor, I'm with 'Sunday Diary', and I want to thank you for letting us into your home. I hope we're not interrupting.

CALEB

No. I was just thinking about my opening-day lecture.

RALPH

Well, we're honored. And grateful.

CALEB

Anything for Halley.

HALLEY

*(still beaming, the inane superglow
of a tv-game-show hostess)*

Professor, you don't remember me, but I remember you vividly!

JANA

Of course Dad remembers you, Halley.

(to RALPH:)

Halley was around the house all the time when she and I were in high school together.

(to HALLEY:)

My Mom says hello. She still pictures you in your ponytail.

HALLEY

My ponytail! -- that's long gone! Later I took a course with the Professor at the university!

CALEB

Ah? What course?

HALLEY

(grinning like a groupie)

Oh it had some title. You were wonderful! You had us scared rigid! If we screwed up a problem, we knew we'd be stomped like that poly-bubble packing stuff -- that makes the popping sound?

CALEB

(pleasant smile)

I'm distressed to hear that. The Professor must be not only absentminded but deaf: He missed the popping.

HALLEY

Even the faculty trembled! "Professor Hobson has entered the building!" Where's Mrs. Hobson?

CALEB

She's resting.

RALPH

Professor, I don't know exactly how much Hal has told you.

HALLEY

Nothing! We didn't even talk. I arranged it all through Jana.

[Arms wide, HALLEY presents JANA -- our next guest! But JANA throws it to CALEB.]

CALEB

If I can help promote the image of mathematics, I believe I ought to do it.

HALLEY

(always beaming; to RALPH)

But I didn't reveal anything. You and I agreed: We want to watch the Professor's mind at work right in front of us.

RALPH

Oh, on the problem, certainly. But I wondered if the Professor had been filled in on the plot.

HALLEY

The Professor doesn't know the plot!

CALEB

You have a problem in mathematics, I understand.

RALPH

We do. But, to be fair, it's much more than that. I should probably start at the beginning.

JANA

Why don't you all be seated.

[CALEB sits in his easy throne, HALLEY on sofa, RALPH in the chair left of the coffee table.]

JANA (cont'd)

You're all together now, introduced. I should leave you to get on with this. I'll go be innumerate.

HALLEY

(smile instantly gone)

No! We need you! You have to stay!

RALPH

Stay -- so I can boast to my cousin I spent time with you.

CALEB

Jah, you know your Mom would want you to stay.

(Beat. JANA sits abruptly, on the end of the sofa nearer CALEB. HALLEY beams anew.)

RALPH

(to JANA)

You're just like your pictures.

JANA

Not at all. Not at any.

RALPH

Oh, yes-yes. Hal tells me you're retired. What a shame after such a start.

CALEB

Jana enjoys time by herself occasionally. She may start again.

RALPH

And she should. But quickish. My cousin was on a tv soap, she took time off to have a baby, and when she was ready to come back they said, "Oh, didn't you know? You died."

HALLEY

She died? Of what?

RALPH

A misadventure. She'd still have a job if she hadn't heard the old tick-tick of her biological clock. That's obviously not you; nevertheless -- given your great debut -- here's my sage advice: If at first you do succeed, try, try again.

[JANA, expressionless, gazes at RALPH as though she were looking through glass.]

RALPH (cont'd)

And you, Professor! Hal has told me all about you -- Chairman of the Department at the university. Outstanding lecturer. Leading textbook. Honorary degrees. She showed me your name in the paper, when you found something wrong in a three-hundred-year-old proof by Fermat. D'I get the name right?

CALEB

Wiles's proof -- of Fermat's theorem.

RALPH

I stand happily corrected.

CALEB

He then repaired the defect.

RALPH

(to JANA)

You must be proud of your Dad.

JANA

...Of course.

RALPH

Hal says he means the world to you.

JANA

No.

RALPH

"No"?

JANA

That's absurd. Mama's part of my world.

RALPH

I didn't, I didn't mean the whole world--

JANA

And this house. And those books.

CALEB

Jana.

RALPH

(his eyes roam across front)

Many books, many books. I can see it's a rich life you have, Jana.

JANA

No.

RALPH

"No"?

JANA

That's absurd.

CALEB

It's a rich life for all of us -- because of Jana. I may be a bit above the math treeline, but Jana's our true genius.

RALPH

Well, I know!

JANA

(sudden grin matching HALLEY's)

Halley, you're smiling too much.

HALLEY

I am?

[They beam madly at each other.]

CALEB

As one laughing hyena said to the other, "The trouble with you is, I can never tell when you're serious."

[RALPH laughs to encourage the mood and himself; HALLEY laughs merrily; JANA's beam holds briefly, soon lapses.]

RALPH

You should know, Professor: Hal did some research on you.

CALEB

Research? You did research on me?

HALLEY

Oh, did I! Of course, I knew you, and how you conduct yourself, but I wanted to show Ralph your wonderful credentials. I even saw your paper on Ramanujan [*ray-ma-NOO-jun*]. The Professor is a world expert on Ramanujan.

CALEB

Ramanujan. [*rah-MAHN-oo-jun*] You read that paper?!

HALLEY

Oh I mustn't pretend I could follow it. So I read about it.
(to JANA:)

Your father wrote a thing on Ramanujan [*rah-MAN-oo-jun*]. See, Professor? "Ramanujan"! There's some math you can teach me!

(rolls her eyes at her joke; to JANA:)

So he wrote this thing on Ramanujan's mock-theta functions -- whatever they are, right? And he proved that Ramanujan's ninety-first formula was correct.

JANA

I'm not surprised.

CALEB

It was a small contribution.

[HALLEY, beaming throughout, nods.]

CALEB (cont'd)

Well, not that small.

(affable-fellow smile)

HALLEY

Oh! And I also found out the Professor acted in college! He was in *Hamlet*! Now we know where Jana gets it!

JANA

How's your mother?

HALLEY

Fine, thank you.

JANA

Does she still garden? Mama always said Mrs. Nemein [NEH-mee-in] grew wonderful roses.

HALLEY

Yes, she still does.

CALEB

Now I remember. You're the girl who used to bring roses. Didn't I meet your father once? How's he?

HALLEY

(slight falter in her smile)

My father? He's gone.

CALEB

Ah. I'm sorry. Ralph -- may I call you Ralph?

RALPH

Of course.

CALEB

You were going to begin at the beginning.

JANA

-- Are you a mathematician?

RALPH

Me? Ha-ha! No, no! I'm --

JANA

-- Who's the mathematician?

HALLEY

(arms wide toward CALEB)

The Professor!

CALEB

Ralph, you were...?

RALPH

From the beginning. First I'll tell you what gave us the idea --

JANA

-- I thought it was Halley's idea.

RALPH

...! Oh it was, it was! She had a wonderful thought, and now it's my job to evaluate it, develop it, and, hopefully, to produce it. But, Hal's absolutely.

(to HALLEY)

Yes-yes? Is that fair?

HALLEY

Oh, Ralph, without you I know it wouldn't happen.
You're the sine [*rhyming with 'kine'*] qua non!
So I guess I'd be the tangent -- ha ha! Trigonometry joke.

CALEB

For my benefit.
(to RALPH)
May we hear it now?

RALPH

Right. From the beginning. There's a very popular column in Parade Magazine called Ask Marilyn. The writer of this column is one Marilyn vos Savant. Do you know the column, Professor?

CALEB

I can't say I do.

RALPH

It's huge. Thirty million readers.

JANA

I've seen it: Irma brings it in occasionally.

RALPH

Irma?

CALEB

She's our housekeeper.

HALLEY

I remember her!

JANA

She's nearly blind now.

RALPH

Blind? You have a blind housekeeper?

JANA

Irma is an old friend now. And she's still very useful.

RALPH

Ah. Well that's...real loyalty. Good for you. Good for you.
(to CALEB:)

May I...?

CALEB

Please.

RALPH

It seems when vos Savant was a little girl she took an IQ test and got the highest score ever.

(MORE)

RALPH (cont'd)

The so-called smartest little girl in the world. Now she's a big girl. Woman. Now she's billed as this great brain who can answer anything --

JANA

-- How high was her IQ score?

RALPH

Two-hundred-twenty-eight.

JANA

Wow! That's high! I bet that's yours and mine put together!

RALPH

...Heh-heh!...Anyhow, you send her a question, and she answers it in her column. This alleged genius woman. She's read by thirty million people every week. They trust her. The great Marilyn. The guru. But: Recently she printed a question and gave an answer that was...wrong.

(quickly, 'reasonably')

All right, to be fair, she's human, she actually can get something wrong. Except...she can't admit it.

JANA

What did she get wrong?

RALPH

(hands up, affable surrender)

To be fair, I shouldn't have said that. That, of course, is why we're here. With Hal. To ask the Professor. This I can say: It was a mathematical problem, and she's received thousands of letters telling her she's wrong. Whole math departments from colleges have signed some of the letters. Telling her she's wrong and asking her to print a correction. The math aside, my instincts tell me there's a great human story here.

HALLEY

Yes!

RALPH

Here's this self-appointed mastermind --

JANA

-- Oh-wow! That's a scandal! She gave herself that IQ test?

RALPH

No. Granted, granted. What I mean is, here's this woman has millions of trusting readers, but when she gets something wrong she can't admit it. The guru just stonewalls. "No-no, my answer was right," and waltzes on to the next topic. It's a tale of deception, by an impostor with thirty million what I call victims. It's not often you get a story with a built-in audience of thirty...million...victims.

(MORE)

RALPH (cont'd)

(smiles)

I'm talking like a producer, I guess.

JANA

You're talking like she cut your penis off.

[Startlement.]

CALEB

Jah --... I should warn you, Ralph, my daughter does a great deal of improvisation. At acting class. It tends to spill over into real life.

RALPH

It's okay, I get it, I get it: I once went to group therapy. I was warned she doesn't like attention.

(to JANA)

You really should take up acting again.

JANA

I never gave it up. I'm acting more than ever.

RALPH

You are? Where?

JANA

In my room. My playroom. My rec room. Halley, what is that smile?

CALEB

Mr. Invidair...

RALPH

I want to say there's nothing personal about this segment. To be fair, I never met the Marilyn woman, I don't want to meet the Marilyn woman. I'm only doing an investigative reporter's job: exposing pretentiousness and deceit wherever I find it.

JANA

Here's my sage advice: Don't expose yourself in front of Marilyn.

(scissors two fingers)

*[Lighting alters; focus on CALEB and JANA.
Others freeze. CALEB looks grim, stern.]*

JANA (cont'd)

You don't have to say it.

CALEB

The man's an ass, granted. But what was the point of getting these people here if you're going to flush them away with an antic disposition?

JANA

You're right, I know, I don't want to ruin this for you. But the man is ingeniously oblivious! And Halley -- that's not Halley.

CALEB

You're doing exactly what you told me not to do.

JANA

I shouldn't. I get tiny, wireless signals. "Intruders have entered the premises at..." From that....

CALEB

From that you soar off on one of your fugues -- which I'll never believe are completely involuntary. So, Jana, please: No more play-acting today. Either that, or tell me and I'll gladly send these people away.

JANA

Dad, I'm not the only one who's play-acting.

[Lighting back to normal.]

CALEB

Jana does enjoy play-acting, as distinguished from acting-proper --

JANA

-- I'll be good.

CALEB

You're always good. The excitement comes from not knowing what kind of 'good' you mean. Ralph: the problem?

[RALPH regroups; finds sling-bag.]

RALPH

The point is, Professor, if you agree with the other mathematicians, we hope you'll come on our problem and explain the program. I mean on our program and explain the problem.

(produces recorder, displays it)

May I, Professor?

HALLEY

We want a record of your professional mind doing its thing. I think you have a wonderful speaking voice.

RALPH

Wonderful.

CALEB

Thank you.

HALLEY

I only wish we had a camera now. I know it would eat you up!
(to JANA's expressionless gaze:)
Your father's going to be famous!

3

(3) 3

RALPH

Now what you've been waiting for: I present the problem!
You're on a quiz show.

HALLEY

(smiling brightly)
Game show.

RALPH

"Game show"! When am I going to stop saying 'quiz show'?
I'll start again. Picture yourself on a television game show.

JANA

What kind of game show?

RALPH

"What kind of game show"?

HALLEY

You're on a stage, and there are three big doors!

[Three doors descend/appear upstage.]

RALPH

Can you picture that? A tv game show.

CALEB

We're all picturing it, Ralph.

HALLEY

And a host. Or a hostess.

*[HALLEY, now upstage, grandly raises her arms
hostess-style, presenting the three doors.]*

RALPH

Behind one of the doors is a new automobile. Behind each of
the others is a goat.

[HALLEY peeks playfully behind the doors.]

JANA

What kind of automobile?

RALPH

An expensive one. A brand new silver Mercedes like Hal's. No,
wait, an American car. A BMW. It doesn't make any difference!

JANA

I was trying to do my part by picturing it. We have a history of cars in this house.

RALPH

It's a car. A nice car. I don't know what kind. A nice car. The host tells you:

HALLEY

(always beaming)

Choose a door. You'll receive what's behind the door you choose.

CALEB

Door number one.

RALPH

You choose door number one. But then...the host opens one of the other doors.

HALLEY

I open another door!

[HALLEY gestures, door three opens -- a goat!]

RALPH & HALLEY (simultaneously)

There's a goat behind it!

HALLEY

You'll want to know I always do this. No matter which door your first choice is, I always then open another door, and it's always a goat door.

CALEB

I'll want to know that.

RALPH

Why will he want to know that?

HALLEY

So he'll know that my motivation doesn't play a part.

CALEB

Which I assumed. I sense you're not a method actor constrained by a need for intricate motives.

HALLEY

No. My only motive is to show you a goat.

RALPH

(dismissing this irrelevance)

So that's cleared up. Now she asks you:

HALLEY

Do you want to stay with the door you've chosen? Or do you want to switch to this one?

*(indicates middle door, still closed
like door one)*

RALPH

She'll let you switch.

HALLEY

You may switch if you like!

RALPH

The question is: Should you switch?!

CALEB

That's your question. That's your "mathematics" question.

RALPH

That's the question. If you switch, are your chances better.

[CALEB looks at JANA who seems distracted.]

CALEB

Are you picturing it, Jah?

[JANA's head snaps up.]

JANA

...Yes. I'm picturing it.

CALEB

What do you see?

JANA

What kind of goat? An American goat?

CALEB

Any ideas about what answer I should give?

HALLEY

Oh, now, Professor, no help from the audience.

CALEB

"Help"? You are droll, Halley. Well, you're not the audience. Do you know the answer? Should I switch?

RALPH

Wait! Sorry. Forgive me, but --

CALEB

Forgive me. I shouldn't have asked that. Halley seems to want a bigger role, so I thought I'd let her answer the question.

RALPH

No, no, Hal knows what her role is.

HALLEY

I'm just observing. Learning to be a producer. This is my first production.

CALEB

But you know the problem.

HALLEY

You mean, can I state the problem? Yes I can. You're on a game show --

CALEB

(holds up hand)

Thank you, Halley.

JANA

What kind of game?

CALEB

Shall we move on?

JANA

Oh! I have news for Mama! How could I have forgot! About a workshop.

RALPH

A workshop?

CALEB

My daughter and my wife are taking acting classes together.

RALPH

Acting classes together?

CALEB

I suspect that's what the good news is about.

JANA

That's right!

CALEB

You want to tell us now so we can --

JANA

-- No, no -- it's for Mama. Tell you later, Ma.

RALPH

...?...We all know about you, but your mother is going to acting classes? That's wonderful, I -- I heard she wasn't altogether well.

CALEB

She's well. She gets tired sometimes, but who doesn't? She goes to classes only to keep Jana company, and because Mrs. Hobson loves watching Jana perform.

HALLEY

As everyone does! Even in high school. She was in *Member of the Wedding* and *Anne Frank*, and she was -- beyond.

RALPH

I can believe that.

HALLEY

And then in college: *Glass Menagerie*. *The Heiress*. I saw every performance. I used to act too, but I couldn't come close to Jana!

RALPH

So when she went professional, the Awards shouldn't have been a surprise.

MAY (OVER)

They weren't a surprise.

RALPH

What -- ?!

CALEB

I said they weren't a surprise.

HALLEY

No, the surprise was -- I mean, after all the praise and publicity -- when you got shy.

CALEB

-- So that's it: they take classes together because I like them both to get out more. Ralph: the problem?

RALPH

...Yes-yes. Back to the problem --

CALEB

-- The question is: Should I switch?

RALPH

Right.

CALEB

You look anxious.

RALPH

Interested. Energized.

CALEB

And Marilyn said I should switch.

RALPH

--Yes! How did --? Hal?

HALLEY

He figured it out! He knows what good mathematicians must have said, so Marilyn must have said the opposite!

CALEB

Very good, Halley.

(to **RALPH**.)

You want my answer. You want to know if you have a segment.

[RALPH, mouth open, just nods.]

CALEB (cont'd)

My answer is...she's wrong. It makes no difference if I switch. When I'm down to two doors, the odds are fifty-fifty. Switching is wasted motion.

4

(4) 4

RALPH

Right on!

JANA

(to **HALLEY**.)

Is that what you hoped my father would say?

RALPH

It's exactly what I hoped he'd say!

[The three doors ascend out of sight; HALLEY moves down.]

HALLEY

Exactly. Professor, can you explain it in a way everyone will understand? I mean, you know what they're like out there. They're not the swiftest.

CALEB

I think I know what they're like, and, yes, I think I can explain it. Tell me, Ralph, have you ever played the lottery?

RALPH

I have. I mean, for my mother.

CALEB

Imagine a lottery...No, not a lottery -- a raffle. One of the tickets is guaranteed to be the winner.

(MORE)

CALEB (cont'd)

Now imagine that in this raffle they reveal the winning number by the teasing method of reading out losing numbers. It's not this one, not that one. Each time a number is read, if you're still alive, your chances are better. You agree with that?

[RALPH nods, all smiles.]

CALEB (cont'd)

That holds whether there are three tickets -- or three million. If you get down to two tickets -- yours and one other -- both have an equal chance. The only thing that would make you switch and think you're helping yourself is... mysticism. Perhaps your Marilyn is a mystic?

RALPH

That's it! She's obviously wrong, but she won't admit it.

HALLEY

Don't you hate it when people won't admit things?

CALEB

She has to be right: her public image is at stake. Her self-image.

RALPH

She set herself up as a target, we didn't. And we've found the marksman to hit the bull's-eye.

[CALEB strolls toward the liquor cabinet where, he'll become involved with bottles, etc.]

CALEB

There's a memorable line in *Animal Farm*.

RALPH

What line is that, Professor?

CALEB

They're talking about their communist society. "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." Is that what this Marilyn believes? That some fifties are more than other fifties?

HALLEY

Will you say that on tv?

CALEB

No, it's a bit too...

HALLEY

-- But you should say it!

RALPH

Hal's right. Tv thrives on...
(clenches fist)

CALEB

I suppose I could frame the idea less scornfully.

HALLEY

But you want to be memorable! Dominating! This is mathematics' moment on national television! Let's make it as exciting as...a gunfight at OK Corral!

CALEB

A "gunfight". That's not the first image that comes to my mind, but I'll try to do the right thing by mathematics, Halley. Looks like 'Sunday Diary', Jah!...Jana?

[CALEB turns center toward JANA, who again snaps back from apparent reverie.]

JANA

Sorry!

CALEB

You'll have to give me some performer-hints. And pick my tie.
(now clearly enjoying himself)
Do you take alcohol, Ralph?

RALPH

(glowing; this Prof is terrific!)
I've been known to take alcohol. As a reporter I must hew to the facts: I do, from time to time, take alcohol.

CALEB

It's now the cocktail hour, and the problem is behind us. What would you like? I have some excellent single-malt scotches. Jah?

[JANA shakes her head.]

CALEB (cont'd)

Jana never bibs. Halley? Single malt?

HALLEY

Yes please!

CALEB

Ralph?

RALPH

Single malt!

[CALEB turns back to the cabinet.]

HALLEY

Oh! Jah! Remember that one you wrote:
"There once was an old maid from Malta,
Who never had been to the altar --"

RALPH

-- What are you talking about?

HALLEY

Someone unmarried from Malta? A "single malt"! Jana and I used to make up limericks together. Jana was so risqué! 'Member, Jah? Oops! Shouldn't have said 'member'.

(whoops giddily)

Jana wrote one about that horny Senator in Washington? "An upright old member of congress -- "

CALEB

Maybe I should have offered you a Shirley Temple.

HALLEY

Too ribald [*RYE-balled*], huh?

CALEB

I wouldn't say that. I might say too ribald [*RIB-ald*].

HALLEY

Oosh!

(bends, faking stomach blow, beams)

Professor, there's one more thing we need, need, need when we tape at the studio.

[HALLEY retrieves a small note-pad from a pocket as CALEB hands drinks to her and RALPH.]

CALEB

And what's that?

HALLEY

(peering at her notes)

Well, the way Ralph sees it, we give Marilyn's answer, and you show what the right answer has to be -- with your raffle thing. And that's good tv. But Ralph explained to me why it's not the best tv! Ralph, I have to give you the credit here.

[RALPH hesitates, nods.]

HALLEY (cont'd)

He said, in the best mysteries and thrillers the good part isn't just when they catch the villain -- it's when they explain how he blew it!

RALPH

Yuh -- perfect technique to take this Marilyn down a peg.

[CALEB raises his glass.]

CALEB

To Ralph, and perfect technique.

*[CALEB sips, HALLEY barely wets her lips, RALPH
downs a mouthful.]*

JANA

That's all this is about? -- taking her down?

HALLEY

(always beaming)

It's natural, Jah! We just want to put the great guru in her place. Professor, you want to take Marilyn down a peg, no?

CALEB

Miss Nemein, I don't think Marilyn is up a peg.

HALLEY

So what we need is, when you're on camera, tell us what ran through Marilyn's mind -- pinpoint how she blundered.

CALEB

And how, pray, am I to know what "ran", if that's the right word, through her "mind", if that's the right word?

HALLEY

Oh you'll figure that out! You already knew she'd say "Switch!".

JANA

Will Marilyn be there?

RALPH

We'll sure try to get her! Halley puts my point very well, which is: if we're going to do the job, let's do the job -- right on camera!

HALLEY

You should enjoy this, Jah! I heard you were offered the part of the young genius-girl in *Seeing the Island*.

JANA

I didn't take it.

HALLEY

I know, but not because you couldn't do it. Why'd you turn it down?

JANA

The lights. They make my eyes tear.

HALLEY

I don't believe that. Anyway, no lights here.

JANA

This isn't about mathematics.

CALEB

You're right about that.

[Upstage dims; CALEB, HALLEY and RALPH sit, conversing inaudibly. JANA moves down.]

MISS O (OVER)

Jana, Mr. Stewart tells me you declined the role in *Seeing the Island*.

JANA

Yes.

MISS O

You do know there are ten actresses here who would give anything for that part.

JANA

It's a wonderful part.

MISS O

And you're perfect for it!....I arrange for the producer and director to be here for the reading -- and you say no.

JANA

If I'd known it was an audition, I wouldn't have read.

MISS O

Don't be naive -- you know that play is being mounted, and those people were sitting right in front of you.

JANA

Miss O, there are always people in this room for class readings. I don't look at them, or if I do I don't see them. I was naive: I didn't realize what you were doing.

MISS O

It was for you, Jana....Why do you do readings at all?

JANA

You ask me to. I like...gestating the character.

MISS O

To what end if you'll never accept another job? With your proven talent!

JANA

I agreed to take classes. Small classes. To practice -- not to go into practice. There are painters who paint in satisfied solitude, gardeners who raise roses no one else will ever see. I've read of pianists who'd prefer to play solely in private.

MISS O

But acting is not a private pursuit!

JANA

It is for me now, Miss O.

[JANA moves back up. Lights up.]

5

(5) 5

RALPH

(rises)

So we're done! This has gone very well.

HALLEY

(consulting note-pad)

Professor, could you give a kind of wrap-up statement? -- a summary of the meaning of this episode. Along the lines of Ralph's original, big theme.

RALPH

...I feel that'd be worth having, Professor.

HALLEY

Something profound -- but colorful. About Marilyn.

[CALEB reflects; rises; adopts lecture-mode.]

CALEB

How often pretenders in life say, "I was excellent in my sphere. When my efforts did not seem to succeed, the faults were in my boss, my partners, my public. If only they had been up to standard!" In this way the pretenders, unmarked, swagger to their unmarked graves.

But mathematicians cannot do that. We work alone, we leap that chasm alone, and there's no one else we can blame if we go down. When you ask the meaning of this episode, you're asking about the dangers of high aspiration with no safety-net of self-delusion.

Fighter-pilots talk about "the right stuff". I talk about the treeline: Either you're above it or you're not, and when you see you're not, you can't just blink it away.

So we have to feel for this Marilyn after our "network production".

(MORE)

CALEB (cont'd)

What will it do to her sense of self-worth when we've exposed her nationally-syndicated blunder on a fourth-grade probability problem? If she can't blink it, how is she going to live with it?

HALLEY

That was wonderful, Professor. So, by blowing this problem, Marilyn has -- what? In a single memorable line.

JANA

Too prompt, too prompt.

CALEB

By blowing it in such a public way, she has holed her good ship 'Ego' far below the waterline.

HALLEY

Marvelous. It'll be great if you say that on tv, right Ralph?

JANA

I won't be watching.

HALLEY

What?

RALPH

Then you'll miss a great show! This'll be sensational!

JANA

I won't see it.

HALLEY

(bubble-headedness gone)

You won't watch the show?!

CALEB

Jana watches stories on television -- "fiction" things like movies -- but never live contests, no "reality" shows. She was too empathic watching real events. If it was ice-skating and a skater fell, Jana would yelp with pain. Women's tennis finals sent her running from the room. She has an actor's gift for identifying with --

HALLEY

-- Jana, you'll miss this? My first production?

RALPH

Excuse me? Whose first production? Hal, I give you a lot of leeway, but you're a researcher, this isn't "your" production. Here's my sage advice: Don't be the stage-hand who asks, "How'd you like my show tonight?"

JANA

Oh to see the saw and so to say.

JANA

When I was eight, my father and I played scenes from Shakespeare together. Here in this room.

RALPH

She's a very...unusual girl, Professor, I admire you.
(*shakes his head with sympathy;*
picks up his sling-bag)
We're off. I'll call you, we'll set up a time.

HALLEY

Who are your telephone buddies? People who'll see it and call to talk about it.

JANA

No one.

HALLEY

"No one"? You used to be on the phone lots.

JANA

I don't do that anymore.

RALPH

You read the paper, yes? This story has already been on the front page of the *New York Times*. After this, your father's picture will probably be in the *Times*.

JANA

I don't read the paper.

RALPH

You don't -- ? Everyone reads the paper.

CALEB

Jana gave up the paper a few years ago.

HALLEY

It wouldn't be the same anyway. Jah, I'm proud of this. I used to go to all your shows -- I want you to see my show.

JANA

I want to see your show.

HALLEY

Just not on tv.....If that's the only problem, I have the solution: I'll put the show on right here. Now.

RALPH

What?

JANA

I'd watch that.

RALPH

"You'll" put it on?!

CALEB

-- Didn't we just do exactly that?

HALLEY

The more I think of it, this way I can present the whole thing -- the denouement, the ending! Director's cut.

RALPH

"Director's --"? There's no "director's cut" --

HALLEY

-- We do it as an improv! And here's the inspiration: You, Jana...play Marilyn!

[HALLEY's hostess-beam comes back up.]

RALPH

Hal, what the hell...?!

HALLEY

You'll be thrilled, Ralph! You've seen Sandy prepare guests with stress-improvs. Professor, this'll be for Jana and you: She gets to see the show, and you don't get any surprise questions when you're live in the studio!

CALEB

I rather doubt any questions could surprise me, but more than that, I don't think Jana really wants --

[A brilliant smile to match Halley's transforms JANA's face.]

JANA

-- I play Marilyn!

HALLEY

(arms spread wide)

Our next guest -- !

RALPH

Professor, this, I, look --

CALEB

-- You want to do this, Jah???

JANA

Yessss!

[CALEB stares dubiously at JANA. To others:]

CALEB

.....I don't think Jana's in the right frame of mind --

JANA

-- Daddy! I'm only play-acting!

CALEB

That's what worries me.

JANA

Dad, I want to see it. Here. I'll be Marilyn... Dad!

HALLEY

(to CALEB)

You rehearse your opening day lecture -- think of this as a rehearsal!

JANA

It's only a rehearsal. See -- I'm here.

(does a relaxed turn; looks very natural)

I'll be good.

RALPH

I just want to wrap this up! I'll go, I'll stay -- someone decide!

CALEB

Aren't you in charge?

HALLEY

Of course he's in charge! Ralph: Sandy would love this.

*[RALPH gapes indecisively; CALEB peers at JANA -
- who turns and beams at HALLEY.]*

HALLEY (cont'd)

...Okay! Let's put on a show!

*[OVER: applause and fanfare; RALPH sits; JANA
and CALEB remain standing, ten feet apart;
HALLEY with tv-sparkle moves up; three doors
descend again.]*

HALLEY (cont'd)

Our guest today -- Professor Caleb Hobson!

CALEB

*(an eye-roll at Halley's excess;
then casual dignity, unchallenged;
to JANA:)*

It's a game show. You choose door one.

HALLEY

And I open another door!

[HALLEY opens door three, revealing a goat.]

CALEB

It's a goat. A loser.

HALLEY

And I ask Marilyn: Would you like to change your choice of doors? You may switch to door number two, if you like.

CALEB

Do you switch, Jah?

HALLEY

Marilyn.

CALEB

Marilyn. The question is, does it make a bit of difference to your chances if you switch. Think.

JANA

I've thought.

CALEB

And?

JANA

I switch.

CALEB

You switch.
(indulgent smile)
Jah switches.

HALLEY

Marilyn.

CALEB

(small frown)
And why would you switch? Tell us what is...running through your mind.

JANA

Call it a feeling I have.

CALEB

A "feeling"? That's Marilyn's reason -- a "feeling"?

HALLEY

So you switch to door number two!

[HALLEY throws open door number two. A car!]

HALLEY (cont'd)

It's a car! Marilyn wins!

[HALLEY applauds merrily. OVER: audience applause and a fanfare.]

CALEB

(overriding the applause)

Halley. Halley. One time out of two Jana will win if she switches --

HALLEY

Marilyn.

CALEB

(grim)

...And one time out of two she will win if she doesn't switch.

(to JANA:)

You said you thought. Now you say you merely felt?

JANA

I feel evidence. And my feeling says...switch. Shall we try it? A bunch of times?

HALLEY

Fabulific idea!

CALEB

(to HALLEY)

Trial and error? You want to resort to trial and error on the simplest probability ratio known to man? Open door two, then door one, door two, door one, door two, door one, until it's clear what fifty-fifty means? I thought your little improv would be a farce, but that's a tragedy. Let me ask you: Would you figure out the odds of heads or tails by flipping a coin fifty or a hundred times?

HALLEY

(beaming gives way to a role-playing look of shallow impudence)

I don't care: I'm with Marilyn. I don't think you've found any error in her thinking. You're just insisting. Well, Marilyn insists right back.

CALEB

(as if to himself)

Do you know, I've been unfair in my day to the ruminant ungulates of this world. You can teach a bovine to find the barn. It'll moo for you. On the other hoof, a vegetable is forever blunt.

HALLEY

Now, see, that's the spirit! Okay, the real truth is I'm just trying to goad you a little. It's a director's trick for getting actors up to fighting form.

CALEB

Ah -- the professional at work. Why don't you play Marilyn? And I shall teach. Said he optimistically.

HALLEY

No, Jah is Marilyn.

CALEB

...All right, this time I'll appeal to feelings. Assume there are a hundred doors.

JANA

Dad --

CALEB

-- You pick one and figure your chances are poor. But then the hostess -- our Halley here -- takes away ninety doors. Says, "The winner was never among those ninety." You're now one of ten doors, not a hundred. Doesn't it feel like your chances have improved? Either one of you. Halley? Do you have enough data? You want to know what color the doors are, perhaps?

HALLEY

I'm just observing.

CALEB

(to JANA:)

...No answer?...Nothing? Now we know what ran through Marilyn's mind.

HALLEY

Marilyn? Tell him.

CALEB

Tell him what? Do you have an illuminating remark, Jah?

HALLEY

Marilyn.

CALEB

What?

HALLEY

She's Marilyn.

CALEB

She's not goddam Marilyn. She's Jana. She's my Jana. She always has been, she always will be. She's Jana.

(MORE)

CALEB (cont'd)

Now: Jah: When I reduce the number of doors from a hundred to ten, don't your chances feel improved?

JANA

No.

CALEB

"No"?

JANA

No. That's not the feeling I'm getting.

RALPH

You've got one chance in ten! That's better than one in a hundred.

JANA

Halley, how lucky for you to have a boss as smart as Ralph.

CALEB

Jah, don't get too far into the part. We're here. Here. We're talking about the doors. If we remove ninety of them, I don't think I'm wrong in saying: Your chances...feel...improved. Now...let's say...instead of removing...ninety...doors...the host removes...ninety...seven...doors!

JANA

I love it when you talk so slow, Daddy. It makes me feel like a little girl again.

HALLEY

You are going a little slow.

CALEB

(straightens; adopts beatific smile)

I'm going too slowly for Halley. How unimaginable. Don't you hate it when people go too slow? I'll speed up. There are now three doors. Three raffle tickets. Your chances feel better than ever. Would you agree with that, Jah?...Yes, you agree with that.

HALLEY

Do you know a J.E. Neville?

CALEB

...Are you speaking to me?

HALLEY

Yes. J.E. Neville?

CALEB

No. I do not know a J.E. Neville. And does he have the remotest connection to these proceedings?

She. **HALLEY**

"She". **CALEB**
(turns away from HALLEY)

Halley, what am I seeing? **JANA**

You think I look different? It's my hair. **HALLEY**

No. It's not your hair. **JANA**

Something else is different? **HALLEY**

No. Something else is the same. **JANA**

Remember two years ago when People ran that picture of you? At the Awards ceremony? You looked wonderful! I'm in that picture! Right behind you! **HALLEY**

I saw you. **JANA**

Then why didn't you talk to me? **HALLEY**

I didn't talk to anyone that night except my Mom and Dad. **JANA**

Why didn't you accept the award yourself? **HALLEY**

Could we perhaps postpone this discu -- **CALEB**

-- I thought, my hair was all teased and maybe you didn't recognize me. And you remember I bumped into you outside your class -- you and your Mom -- about two months ago? **HALLEY**

Ladies... **CALEB**

Yes: Ladies! The Professor wants to get on with this. **RALPH**

CALEB

Three doors --

HALLEY

-- and I asked about --

CALEB

-- Now the hostess removes another door. Says the car never was behind that door. See her as eliminating another raffle ticket.

[Door number three rises out of sight.]

JANA

We don't know what Halley's been doing --

CALEB

I stipulate what she's been doing! From the set of all doors you didn't pick, she's been removing doors behind which the prize never was! Now there are two left. Yours and one other. You're down to two raffle tickets. Two!

JANA

Dad, slow down --

CALEB

Just answer! Don't the chances feel better than ever? You wanted to talk about feelings.

JANA

(pause, then sudden smile)

Oh, Daddy! Last week I was reading in my room when I realized that I'm a governess. I didn't decide it, I realized it. And I wasn't even reading for the role. "As Jana Hobson awoke one morning from uneasy dreams, she found herself transformed into"...a governess. In England. I take...

My Earl Grey tea,
By the pearl gray sea.

CALEB

Ah, Jana. A mystery scenario. They always arrive so unexpected. To fly you elsewhere.

JANA

On a horse with wings. That ever happen to you?

HALLEY

Why a governess?

JANA

What? Oh that's just me -- play-acting again.

CALEB

Jah, forgive me, I need to take you through this. I have a weakness: I do rise to twerpy challenges --

HALLEY

And I'm challenging you.

CALEB

Only in the narrowest possible sense of the word, Miss.

HALLEY

I'm only being goofy 'cause that's when you get the most interesting.

CALEB

Ah. "It's for me".

(turns back to JANA)

You're down to two doors.

JANA

Numbers are fun. You can play with those magnetized numbers on the refrigerator door. Turn the '5' upside down and you get an 'S'.

CALEB

-- Your chances were one in a hundred when there were a hundred. One in ten when there were ten. Now there are two doors! One! Two! Your door, and one other door!

(turns to HALLEY)

No! This was your idea: You answer! First see if you can count two doors, Halley. Then see if you can dope out how -- which I confess I cannot -- how, when asked "What are your chances?" -- while there is just your door and one other goofy door -- just how, despite whatever feelings your inner hookah is fuming forth, you can possibly give any non-insane answer except fifty-fifty! One in two! Even money!

[HALLEY, silent, merely beams the unperturbed smile of a dash-board doll.]

CALEB (cont'd)

Look at her. Good God. Education's curse.

(sits in his chair)

6

(6) 6

RALPH

Listen, Hal, I think we have what we need here --

HALLEY

No. Professor, I hear what you say, but why do I still think I should switch?

CALEB

-- Because, Marilyn, you are a yam. An eggplant. You are a botanical freak: a mammalian hardy perennial.

HALLEY

See, Ralph -- I told you it'd work! He gets sharper and sharper.

CALEB

I've admitted I do rise to wormy bait.

JANA

Daddy, you're being wrong right now --

CALEB

No, I'm just being a little goofy, like Halley. To get her up to fighting form. Though I admit I can't approach her gift for goofy.

HALLEY

(smiling, but somehow less vapidly)

We should stop here. I think you're ready.

JANA

(to CALEB)

You're going too fast.

CALEB

"Too fast"? How can I go too fast in a tricycle race?!

JANA

Look at me! Can't you pick up that I'm seeing something? Feelings are not causeless.

CALEB

No, but they can be senseless! Lunatic! "I feel -- I feel I am a fried egg!"

JANA

Me too!

CALEB

I'm done rising to that bait.

HALLEY

No you're not.

(to JANA)

You're afraid you'll upset your father if you don't watch him on tv, but it's all right, you've upset him before, and he got over it.

CALEB

What are you alluding to?

HALLEY

When she turned seventeen.

CALEB

-- Wha?! -- Are you -- Can you possibly --?!

HALLEY

You know: On her seventeenth birthday?

(turns to RALPH)

When Jana turned seventeen --

CALEB

That is nothing Mr. Invidair wants or needs to hear about!

HALLEY

I don't care about him. I care about Jana. Besides, what's to hide? It's no disgrace. Lots of teenagers try to commit suicide.

[Startlement, except in JANA, wandering up.]

JANA

Oh, Halley.

HALLEY

I even thought about it once or twice. Because I was angry -- but then I thought: Anger is a door to satisfaction.

CALEB

What in God's name makes you bring this up at this juncture?! Have you no sense whatever?

HALLEY

What's wrong? Is there something to be ashamed of?

CALEB

Can we hope that you are only woefully obtuse?

RALPH

Ouch! -- ha-ha! Professor, I want to thank you for your time. We should look at your calendar --

CALEB

Miss Nemein, I have had my fill of you --

RALPH

I agree: It's time for Hal and myself to go.

JANA

(smiling broadly, benignly)

Halley and me, Ralph. 'Myself' is a reflexive pronoun. No supper for you. Halley, better get on to the problem while you can.

(sits serenely on the sofa)

RALPH

Oh, God.

(looks at watch despairingly)

CALEB

Ralph, let's call it quits for the day. Give me a call -- I'll come to the studio. Jana's not herself today.

JANA

(beaming)

I'm a governess now.

HALLEY

(beaming)

Jana was actually terrific at math. The best in our class.

CALEB

Yes, she is mathematical -- she can also be a little histrionic.

JANA

Interesting that in Etruscan, 'hister' with an 'i' meant 'actor' -- thus 'histrionic'. And in Latin 'hyster' with a 'y' meant 'womb' -- thus 'hysterical'. And 'hysterectomy'. For someone like me, who's too histrionic, what's needed is a hysterectomy with an 'i' -- to remove the actor.

CALEB

Jana, can you just be off for two minutes now?

JANA

(still the moon-broad smile)

I'll get off if you'll get off!

CALEB

And will you goddam stop smiling! It's most inappropriate!

[JANA's fierce concentration rivets all. They gape as she forces the grin down, but it pops back again; OTHERS react audibly as one. She forces it down again, it pops back again, and they react as one again. And yet again.]

CALEB (cont'd)

Oh for Christ sake, then smile, Jah! Play-act!

(to HALLEY:)

You too! Radiate the world with your reasonless beaming!

7

(7) 7

[With a mighty struggle worthy of a demon wrenching control of the outer body, JANA fights the grin down once more, catapulting out of her seat at the moment of mastery. She lands adroitly on two feet, poised like a cat.]

JANA

(to RALPH in a transformed, demanding voice:)

You had a question!

RALPH

(startled)

Well -- as a matter of fact I did!

JANA

Let's have it!

RALPH

Uh, are you feeling well, uh--?

JANA

That's not your question!

RALPH

No! It's not!

JANA

Let's have your cramped, schoolboy question!

CALEB

Jah, no "elsewhere" now -- please!

RALPH

I was just wondering -- how'd you try to commit suicide? I always wonder things like that.

CALEB

This we do not get into --

[CALEB moves toward JANA, but she steps away.]

JANA

-- Pills and alcohol. I read somewhere that would work. But the pills were old, and they'd lost their power or something. Pills should have warnings: "For suicide purposes best taken before" kind of thing.

RALPH

...But where'd you get the pills?

JANA

I stole them from Halley's mother.

HALLEY

My mom has shelves of them!

RALPH

(still rattled)

Why? Why'd you do it?

CALEB

Jana -- you're on the air!

JANA

-- Why? Because I didn't have any pills of my own! My Mama never took that kind of pill.

HALLEY

He means: Why did you want to quit the company?

JANA

Oh, that's what he means!

CALEB

(interrupting forcefully)

You want me to answer that? I can answer that!

JANA

Right. And no one can stop you. My father can answer anything.

HALLEY

You believe that?

JANA

(her voice has modulated)

When Jana was a little girl, about seven, they were at the zoo, and Jana asked a question, and her Dad had the answer, and Jana said, "Daddy, how come you know everything?"

HALLEY

And what did your father say?

JANA

Tell her what you said?

CALEB

No.

(sighs exasperatedly)

...I said, "I don't know everything, Jana, as you will come to realize when you get older." Jah, don't let this show go more astray than it already has --

HALLEY

-- When did you finally see your father doesn't know everything?

JANA

Jana always knew it. That's only what you ask your Dad when you love him and you want to make him feel good.

CALEB

Ralph --

HALLEY

-- Professor, you were going to tell us why Jana tried to commit suicide.

JANA

No he wasn't. He's right -- your show is going astray.

HALLEY

It's all right. I already know.

JANA

She knows nothing.

HALLEY

Oh but I do.

JANA

Stand clear -- imagination abhors a vacuum.

HALLEY

I do know: the test.

CALEB

....Ah! So she does know! She knows the backstory. The emotion.

(to JANA)

Tell her what you told the therapist when he asked why!

(to RALPH:)

It's really quite banal [*BAY-nal*].

HALLEY

As distinguished from banal [*ba-NAHL*].

CALEB

D'you know, in another mood you'd probably strike me as merely hilarious. An amusing caricature. Right now, however...

(back to RALPH; unperturbed tone, a chat about a mundane event:)

It really is banal [*BAY-nal*]. Jana was in high school, starting her senior year at Horace Mann.

(MORE)

CALEB (cont'd)

She happened to be in a down mood, in the way teenage girls often find themselves -- when she got back the results of her first test in calculus. She had flunked. This drove her mood even deeper, she hid the exam and brooded about it for a few days, and then...

(shrugs)

Later on, when she was recovering, she was as baffled as we all were. All she could say was..."It seemed like a good idea at the time."

JANA

My Dad the thespian.

CALEB

No. Thespis was a poet. I am a mathematician.

HALLEY

World renowned.

CALEB

As it happens. The world of mathematics.

HALLEY

Did you ever ask yourself why she flunked math, if she was so mathematical?

CALEB

...I'm trying to picture you with a ponytail. Actually, it's easy. In your shallow, ponytail way, you think you're on to something deep.

HALLEY

Oh I am on to something. You could've taught that whole course to her in one week --

CALEB

-- This discussion is over. I've already given you far more time than you merit, and now what you merit is to be shown the door.

(sudden anger)

One-tenth the mathematics Jana knows is ten times what you'll ever know!

JANA

(looking elsewhere)

-- Hear that? A creature stirs. Listen.

HALLEY

And she thinks you should switch. You haven't persuaded anybody. Certainly I'd switch.

CALEB

Oh well that's devastating!

RALPH

What are you saying, Hal? I'm persuaded! I think this went very well! We've got a segment here!

HALLEY

No, Ralph. He's shown us he has no notion what ran through Marilyn's mind.

JANA

But you do, don't you.

CALEB

Mr. Invidair, who in fact is in charge here? I explain this miserable Marilyn problem in terms so simple, so undeniable, only a traumatized cow could fail to understand it, and she claims that she doesn't get it. And she would imply my own daughter doesn't get it.

(to HALLEY:)

At our altitude, you, Miss, are oxygen-deprived. Jana does understand it. Marilyn may not, even the governess may not. Jana does.

RALPH

Wait -- to answer your question, I'm in charge here, and I say we go.

JANA

No. Halley hasn't shown me her production.

HALLEY

That's right. Maybe the Professor can't teach, but I can.

CALEB

...Ralph, I'll go to your office and tape for you. But Halley has been so generous with her goofiness I think I should give the sweet thing all she's asking for: Right here. Now. Let's try one last time.

(strides extravagantly, a parody of a ruminating lecturer)

I must come up with a new pedagogical device! Since the poor girl hasn't understood a word said here today, not one word on any subject, I should translate it into the language of television! Guns! Gore! Fit the study to the student! I have it, by God! Halley's "good part", made for tv!

[a brief sound of massive wings beating.]

JANA

There! Again! He's coming.

CALEB

(cocks his head, ogles HALLEY like a silent-movie mad scientist)

(MORE)

CALEB (cont'd)

Picture this! It's a game show! But not with mere doors -- no! We line up ten people!

JANA

You hear? That's Pegasus!

[A distant sound of knickering, and huge wings. The three doors ascend; down comes a line-up of ten people -- faceless cut-outs, all girl-women, like the silhouettes on the doors of ladies rooms; they are bathed in tinted light; only JANA and CALEB will ever see them; the sound of giant wings beating grows louder and louder, and their shadows pulse massively on the scene. The shadows -- and the sound -- abruptly stop.]

CALEB

Can you picture them?

RALPH

What? Picture what?

JANA

I do! I see!

HALLEY

-- Let's say I'm picturing them.
(but she is not looking at them)

CALEB

Now, this host is a baaad man! And he says to the ten people -- you're one of them, Halley --

HALLEY

-- Is Jana one?

JANA

Yes. There I am.

CALEB

"I'm going to kill all of you but one!" What are your chances of surviving? One in ten, of course -- if we exclude the host's motivation. Then --

(gunman-crouch, faces cut-outs)

He kills seven of them!

[CALEB mimes shooting, seven rapid gunshots are heard, seven cut-outs fall -- leaving only numbers one, four and seven.]

CALEB (cont'd)

But look! You're still alive!

HALLEY

Is Jana still alive?

JANA

"Still"?

CALEB

Follow me here! It's perfect for your sit-dram mentality!
Now the host kills another one.

(shoots; cut-out number four falls)

You're still there!

HALLEY

I'll always be there, Professor. Continue. We're down --

[An agonized cry from JANA; the sound of the beating wings returns; lighting stage-right turns garish; HALLEY and RALPH freeze, unseeing; JANA wrenches herself right]

JANA

Aaah! I do it, Daddy! My shot now!

[CALEB steps uncertainly into the garish light, as JANA turns to the cut-outs; HALLEY and RALPH, perhaps now in a pale blue light, continue to stare at the spot he vacated.]

CALEB

No, Jah! Jah --!

JANA

Yes! It's my call!

[JANA fires; no cut-out falls; instead, a melon-sized hole appears in the abdomen of cut-out number one; it glows like an orange fire-ball. CALEB howls and doubles over in pain; he writhes and screams aloud. The sound of wings climaxes, the light goes blinding-white -- then sudden silence, normal lighting; the cut-outs ascend; CALEB, seemingly removed, enervated by a devitalizing memory, wanders back center; JANA remains facing up at where the cut-outs were; she is erect and immobile, but relaxed, in the way of one beyond the postures of grief. HALLEY and RALPH unfreeze, oblivious to this past moment.]

HALLEY

Continue. We're down to two people.

CALEB

Eh? No, we're finished.

HALLEY

No we're not finished --

JANA

*(turns front; a voice without
passion or hope:)*

-- Behind one door there's a nice American car. Behind the other there's a cow. Not a big cow. A calf. But the calf is finished.

CALEB

Jah? Jana!

JANA

MOOOO!

CALEB

Jana!

(rushes to JANA and holds her)

Jah.

JANA

Mooooo!

RALPH

Hal, we go now!

HALLEY

No we don't go now! Now is what we came for! Now we reveal the plot! Hold on, Jana -- the good part is coming!

JANA

Moooo!

RALPH

What are you saying? Can't you see she's flipped?

HALLEY

It's time for my segment! I am going to produce, Professor, and you have got a problem!

RALPH

I don't believe you!

JANA

Moo-Moo-Moo --

CALEB

(still holding JANA)

Jana, Jana --

HALLEY

So far we've heard the bull snort, and the bull rage, and you've made Jana moo --

CALEB

You hideous girl -- it's you who've done this!

HALLEY

I have? I've made Jana moo? Well, now, Professor, I'm going to make the bull moo!

FIRST ACT CURTAIN

ACT TWO

[JANA is down right in spot; all else is black; she is obviously talking to us -- not Miss O.]

JANA

A personal monologue. What I did on my summer vacation.

I spent two weeks in a hospital during July the year I was sixteen. I was two miles from home. My mother thought I was a counsellor at a salubrious camp in New England. I was hospitalized not because I'd tried to kill myself -- that came later. I was there because I'd had...a misadventure. After which my father took charge, arranged everything, and came to the hospital every day. He looked...folded at the waist with concern for me, and how I would live with it.

To me, it was like being told I have a terminal illness. That news is supposed to be followed by depression, anger, denial, acceptance. I was never blessed with the denial, or the acceptance. After a trembling, self-pitying summer, I came home, and that September I went to bed with suicide. But in my inexperience I could not arouse him: He was impotent with me. The effect on Mama was ravaging, and I knew I couldn't try again as long as she lived.

That's when I truly became an actor. I preyed on plays, like a spook seeking a host.

Earlier that year, in the spring, my father had tried to protect me -- but not forcefully enough: He warned me about my... infatuation, but he didn't make me stop. A firm word - can you imagine my father not being up to that?

In September, he was too forceful: He found me, saw the pill-bottles, knew in an instant what I'd done. He picked me up like an overnight bag -- he's strong -- and seven minutes later I was in an emergency room...being "saved".

Now he is a collaborator, daily, in an improv I detest. Because like all non-theatrical improvs, its goal is deception. To deceive myself?: Love it. But it's to deceive Mama, and that I hate. Still, I know it's the better good, and I have to do it. So though at odd moments I may resent him a little, I do love him. I don't know anyone who isn't resentful sometime. Except Mama. She doesn't resent anyone. Oh but I think she would!

(BLACKOUT)

HALLEY

(Down left, under tinted spot)

Jana went effectively nuts in her teens. Before that she was vivacious, very funny, and so healthy you could cry. If she hadn't been so fiber-optic smart, and ingeniously generous -- so outgoing and in-taking -- she'd have been a nauseating stereotype -- the blemish-free girl-next-door in a 1940s musical. I wasn't alone in being...devoted to her.

She was in school plays from the time she was ten. Her stage presence was the same in all her parts: a joyful, irresistible, shallow, shadeless, MGM sparkle that seemed totally unacted, totally natural. It was only after she cracked that she became unnatural -- unnaturally great. From then on, the rest of us in those plays looked like...origami.

Whatever the cracking event was, it happened just before she turned seventeen. She went strange, abandoned all her old friends, and tried to kill herself. It was the same year we heard my father was killed, somewhere in Oregon, by some woman he screwed over, we think. Jana's attempt was supposed to be a secret, but she had to tell me because there was a big thing about where she got the pills -- until they found the bottles with my mother's name on them. So I knew she'd tried. But when I asked why, she seemed elsewhere, unable to hear. Flunking that math test was bizarre, she never flunked a math test in her life. Unless she wanted to?

When she began acting again at school, she was suddenly so good she was spooky. After college, at twenty-two, following two unearthly professional successes, she gave into whatever it was, and just went home. Left the stage, ignored movie offers. Coronation, abdication, within one year. No one ever sees her now, except May and him. At those classes, I'm sure no one sees her. She hardly leaves the house except to go to that school. And with May to May's doctor. Mrs. Hobson has what I think is a heart condition of some kind. That's the Hobson family now -- nineteenth-century gothic.

I used to come to this house three or four times a week when I was sixteen. He was civil enough, in his seignorial way. But you knew he expected nothing worth his time would come from you. I did take a math course with him in college, and, no, don't, with cheap-cliche analysis, figure he must have flunked me and so I hate him. He didn't flunk me. In fact he gave me an A-minus. In fact I have a little talent for math. Not the "pure" math he's famous for; my talent is in applied math. And my mother never stops telling me I have a very cunning mind. Which is useful if you want to have a little fun.

(BLACKOUT)

9

(9) 9

[Lights up, revealing all four in the same positions as at the Act One curtain.]

CALEB

Do you want to go upstairs? What was your good news for Mama? Tell me what you want!

JANA

(moves away from CALEB)

What I want. Let me think, what could I want? What's lacking?

HALLEY

No, she can't go upstairs -- it's no fun if she's not here. It's not worth doing!

CALEB

"Fun"!? You're having "fun"?!

HALLEY

Not yet. But I'm about to.

CALEB

Do I have it right that you employ this person?

RALPH

Hal!

HALLEY

No, Ralph! I'm helping you, you stump! You came for a good show? Now you get it. Courtroom drama. Smug expert witness, fumbling prosecutor. And in the final scene you learn everything was carefully planned. The reversal. Climax. Catharsis. Mrs. Aristotle has sex!

CALEB

Good God.

RALPH

Hal, Hal, now you're going a little over the top --

HALLEY

Ah. Sorry. Restraint. I shall assume a dignified demeanor. Cool logic personified. As I challenge you, Professor. I say I'll prove your solution is totally screwed up. You should have switched. But you can't switch, can you?

RALPH

What?! Have you gone ape?

HALLEY

Not ape. Cow. And I'm saying the bull flunked. I'm challenging you, Professor. You ready to take me on?

CALEB

If I understand you -- and I'm sure I do -- I'd just love it, jolly fun, but...I can't: I promised my daughter I wouldn't tear your head off.

HALLEY

Oh Jana, that's sweet of you but you mustn't worry.
(exultantly, to the world at large)
I am so ready for this!

JANA

Daddy, don't stop, I want to see what Halley's television show will be like.

CALEB

...? You actually want me to wrestle with this...--

HALLEY

Yes! That's what she's saying! So do it! For Jana! Let's go! I want to hear the bull moo!

JANA

It's only play-acting, Daddy.

CALEB

(to HALLEY)
But where's your funny costume? We're in Disneyland, I presume?

HALLEY

(smiling brightly)
That's right. Disneyland. And I'm calling you out -- to a math fight at the OK Corral.

RALPH

This is bonks, this. -- What should I do?

CALEB

Calling me out. This is what you actually came for, isn't it. Your real objective.

HALLEY

No -- doing it in your own parlor came to me only twenty inspired minutes ago.

RALPH

(advancing on HALLEY)
Hal's lost it. We're leaving.

HALLEY

(dancing away)
No! What's past is foreplay! So what do you say, Professor? I'm here!

RALPH

You are not here! You are gone! As soon as we get back I go straight to Sandy and you are gone!

CALEB

Tell him his employee was a juvenile who's seen too many movies.

JANA

Dad, do this. It'll keep your image polished.

CALEB

You're serious? I know precisely what this twerp is about.

HALLEY

You couldn't dream what I'm about.

CALEB

I know this: You have the mind of a terrorist suicide bomber.

HALLEY

No. Close. Bomber. But no suicide.

CALEB

I must say: You have caught my attention.

(to JANA)

You want me to do this.

[JANA nods, calmly smiling.]

CALEB (cont'd)

...With your indulgence, Ralph -- we're off to the OK Corral!

HALLEY

Sit, Ralph. And keep your legs crossed.

RALPH

(sitting left of coffee table)

Why don't you just pour gasoline on yourself and light up a Marlboro?

CALEB

Start. I'll even let you draw first.

HALLEY

Start. Start with your obvious assumption that whenever it's down to a choice of one out of two it's fifty-fifty which is the winner.

CALEB

I never said that.

HALLEY

I didn't say you said it, I said you assumed it. We'll really get nowhere if you can't follow distinctions like that.

CALEB

(cool)

I never assumed it.

HALLEY

Ralph! Suppose we had an IQ contest -- Marilyn against you. What are your chances? There's only two of you. Of course, I realize it's a grotesque mismatch, laughable really, and a nightmare scenario for you. But I'll ask: Do you really think it's fifty-fifty? It's one out of two.

RALPH

Bye-bye, Hal. Banzai!

CALEB

The example doesn't apply.

HALLEY

You, Professor. I happen to know you were on the track team at Princeton, and you ran the mile. Research! Suppose we had an elimination tournament of all the other mile runners in the world. Then the winner of that tournament races against you. Just the two of you. One of the two will win. Fifty-fifty?

CALEB

The example doesn't apply.

HALLEY

Oh? I rather thought it did.

CALEB

You "thought"?! You should have told us when you were thinking! I feel like I missed Halley's comet! Now I have to wait seventy-six years till it happens again!

(to RALPH)

I beg forgiveness, but every once in while I do something reprehensible -- like watching a Friday-night fight on pay tv. Tonight, mea culpa, it's to be a *soupc*on of child abuse.

HALLEY

(prances in a circle around CALEB)

You can say I led you on. See, what I was thinking was, your opponent in the mile race has already won a big elimination tournament and you haven't.

CALEB

Now, isn't that remarkable. That's exactly what I was thinking.

HALLEY

Well it seems obvious -- I mean, to anyone but a yam -- that the way we get down to two doors --

CALEB

(moving to coffee table)

-- You'll need a refill to sit through this, Ralph. Ever notice how people can prattle on without being slowed down by their ignorance? Because ignorance is a frictionless universe.

HALLEY

Aw, you said I caught your attention, but you're still not listening. It's okay -- I think I made my point. Which is: having only two finalists doesn't always mean their chances are fifty-fifty. But that wasn't the real bomb.

CALEB

(at liquor cabinet)

No. Halley will now really bomb. Ralph, I hope you have your tape running.

RALPH

I do! And it goes straight to Sandy the minute I get back.

HALLEY

Promise? Well, we mustn't waste tape -- not while the great man is being sooo cooperative!

(moves down to examine something hanging on the fourth wall)

You had a copy of this picture in your office. A Hokusai? [*hoe-koo-sai*] Is this an original Hokusai?

CALEB

(sly smile)

It gives me pleasure to hear you say it.

HALLEY

Means something to you, I "presume". A dormant volcano. How cute. I used to have dreams about you. About your whole family. They stopped, but then they started again two months ago. Why's that, I wonder?

RALPH

It's almost six! Could you maybe save your fascinating dreams till next year some time?

HALLEY

You should hear my dreams for you, Ralph.

[HALLEY moves upstage, gestures grandly; the three doors descend.]

HALLEY (cont'd)

Let's do it! You're on a game show!

CALEB

Ah! Back to your cunning trial-and-error analysis?
(gives glass to RALPH)

HALLEY

Precisely. We're about to witness a trial, and an error.

CALEB

Someone give Halley a coin to start flipping. Never was a penny more fitting for someone's thoughts.

HALLEY

Your flipping example doesn't apply.

RALPH

How long is this going to take?

HALLEY

(turning back to the game)

Oh not long at all. One game, I'd guess -- and then the Professor's game is up. Okay -- Prof chooses door one. Canny choice. Then I -- as I will always do -- open a loser-door from among the two doors you didn't pick. I'll never open your door --

CALEB

-- I'll ask you to focus on the analogy I suggested: It's like a raffle --

HALLEY

-- People always do this. You come up with an argument they didn't think of, and they just suppress it and repeat their own argument.

CALEB

It's obvious -- in a raffle, or in your simple-minded game show -- that each time the number of possible winners is reduced, your chances are increased --

HALLEY

That's not obvious. In fact it's quite wrong.

CALEB

'It's wrong'. This is why scholars hate to teach. It's like requiring Olympic athletes to coach kindergarten track teams.

HALLEY

You want to hear why it's wrong?!

CALEB

Halley, calm down! Just listen!

HALLEY

I'm calm! I'm very calm! And I'll listen -- but why can't you listen?

JANA

(risen; now wandering up)

"There once was a girl from the West Side,
Whose obtuseness was really her best side.
Far less delicious,
The side that was vicious -- "

RALPH

-- I repeat!: How long is this going to take!

HALLEY

Ralph, think about what I'm saying. It's fun watching you try to think.

RALPH

(rises)

You do realize you're out of a job.

HALLEY

Oh! My wonderful job! Helping morons slant a story. If the story isn't killed by an old-boy phone call to the boss's boss.

RALPH

Here's my sage advice: Never hire a rich girl.

(glances at CALEB and JANA)

Oh. Sorry.

(looks at his watch)

I am wanted downtown. Professor, you and I can make a studio appointment --

HALLEY

No we don't stop now! We're coming to the good part! Jana, you're not paying attention!

JANA

Oh I am. I'm enjoying the preview. Go on.

HALLEY

When we're down to two doors, you say it's always fifty-fifty, right? So you'd never switch -- that'd be "wasted motion", right?

CALEB

By golly, you can actually follow something. Better hurry -- it'll get away!

HALLEY

Oh, Professor, are you going down!

CALEB

You are deluded. Megalomaniacal -- you know what that means?

HALLEY

Yuh. It means I know I'm right and you're wrong.

CALEB

(with cool condescending slowness)

If...in a raffle...you are down to just two tickets...there's no rational argument, no non-mystical reason, no non-lunatic justification for believing that switching makes any... difference... whatever...to your chances. So, yes, it's wasted motion to switch your raffle ticket for the other one.

HALLEY

Screw the raffle example! Focus on the game show! When you choose a door, you know it has one chance in three of being the winner, right? Two thirds of the time the winner is one of the other two doors.

CALEB

Yes. At first.

HALLEY

If we play a million games, you will always stick with your original door, which had one chance in three when you chose it...and you believe...you'll win...half those million games.

RALPH

Just for God sake open a goddam goat door, yes-yes?

HALLEY

Two thirds of the time the other two doors will have the winner, and they'll always have at least one loser. So you know I can always open a loser door among those other two. Yet you think that when I do reveal a loser among those two, I improve your chances.

RALPH

Hey! I'm talking to you!

HALLEY

Oh, Ral, curb your dog! He's in so far over his head he's a statistic!

RALPH

(to the world at large)

-- ?! I'm in bedlam here. This is outer space --

HALLEY

Here: Suppose this: Suppose right after you choose a door, I always give you a chance to switch to the other two doors! I don't open anything yet. I simply say you can stay with that one door, or you can have the other two doors. Both of them.

(MORE)

HALLEY (cont'd)

Think hard, Professor: Can you see why that is identical to the original switch-offer?

RALPH

No! You're changing it! It doesn't need changing!

HALLEY

I think you're the one needs changing, Ralph. Or, if you don't now, you will in a minute! We'll call your Mommy to bring a fresh diaper.

(to CALEB:)

All right, back to the original. I can always open a loser door among those other two, so when I do it, it does not change the odds that two thirds of the time the winner is one of those two!..Professor, did you just blink?

[The three-door panel ascends out of sight; the Hokusai, with all five pix in place, descends; CALEB's mouth has sagged open; something unlikely happens to his posture.]

RALPH

Hey, Nemein! Take a pill!

HALLEY

Your position is absurd, Professor! You must have made a mistake, Professor!

RALPH

Nemein, if you think this math gobbly-gook is suitable for tv, you don't have the brains of an elevator operator!

HALLEY

Getting the right answer is fun, but even more fun is seeing what just blundered, if that's the right word, through your handicapped mind, if that's the right word. Exactly why did you screw up?

RALPH

Nemein!

HALLE

I shall teach you why -- said she optimistically. Here, in one sentence, Professor, is your world-class blunder: You didn't see that your chances don't improve when one of the other doors is eliminated because you're not in the elimination tournament!

RALPH

What elimination tournament?

HALLEY

Ral. Look, we'll take up a collection for you after.

(to CALEB)

(MORE)

HALLEY (cont'd)

In a tiny tournament confined to the two doors you didn't choose, one of them gets eliminated. So the chances of the other one increase because it's still true that two thirds of the time the winner is among those two doors!

RALPH

No -- you just eliminated one of them!

HALLEY

Oh God, Ralph, please shut up! This is no time for humor.

(to CALEB:)

So the other remaining door's chances are much improved, but your chances don't change at all do they, Professor? They're still one in three! Being the sweet thing you are, Professor, tell us you now happily agree your first answer was pathetically, wretchedly stupid, and that if you switch you win two times out of every three! ...You want to test my lunatic answer? A bunch of times? Or would that make for a tragedy?

[CALEB's pic on Fuji disappears; a distinct ping! sound is heard; the Hokusai rises gravely out of sight; CALEB turns and walks with unfocussed eyes to the liquor cabinet.]

HALLEY (cont'd)

Professor! You blew a fourth-grade probability problem! Welcome to the OK Corral -- where you've just been outdrawn and outgunned! Exposed! I know you can't "blink" it, so my question is: How are you going to live with it? Better yet, the people you've conned into thinking you're a "genius" -- the ones who've been fooled and intimidated by you all their lives -- how are they going to live with you?

[CALEB is standing, facing the cabinet, back to the others, mixing no drink.]

10

(10) 10

HALLEY (CONT)

No. I was wrong. This wasn't the OK Corral -- because he isn't Wyatt Earp. He...

(grandly presenting our next guest)

...is the Wizard of Oz!

CALEB

(barely audible)

I see where you're going.

HALLEY

As the prosecutor in the movie says: I can't hear you.

CALEB

(only slightly louder)

I said, I see where you're going.

HALLEY

You "see where I'm going"?! And you're not there yet?

[CALEB turns and walks slowly back to his chair. His mouth is open but silent. He is peering at the carpet as though noticing the astonishing pattern for the first time. JANA moves down.]

JANA

All right Halley, you've done your job --

HALLEY

-- I explain the problem in terms so simple, so undeniable, that only a traumatized cow could fail to understand it, and you're not there yet?!

[CALEB seats himself with geriatric slowness.]

JANA

It's done. Let him alone now.

HALLEY

Professor, if I'm wrong you must tell me! I want to know if I have the right stuff! I couldn't stand to be one of contemptible masses below the treeline! When I could be up there where nothing grows!

CALEB

(raising a weary hand)

Enough.

HALLEY

"Enough"? He says "enough". But why doesn't it feel like enough?

[Enter MAY, coming slowly down the staircase.]

MAY

He said "enough". And I say "enough"!

JANA

Mama!

HALLEY

Mrs. Hobson!

JANA

Mama -- you're bad to come down. How good of you to come down.

MAY

The door, Halley. Door four. Use it, please.

HALLEY

Have I said something wrong? I just want to ask: How's your self-image now, Doctor Hobson? Is your good ship 'Ego' holed below the waterline?

MAY

(moving to CALEB's side)

You may stop, Halley!

JANA

(to RALPH, indicating HALLEY:)

Take her. Go.

RALPH

Professor, what -- am I missing something?

HALLEY

You'll find out the next time you go to make wee-wee!

JANA

(to HALLEY, smiling)

Thanks, Halley, you've been a brick. You may leave now.

HALLEY

"Thanks"? "I may leave now"?

JANA

Yes, you've been a life-saver. Mama, you should sit.

MAY

I'll sit when I need to.

(stands at CALEB's chair)

HALLEY

Jah, exactly what do you think just happened here?

RALPH

Oh my God I forgot to shut the tape off!

[RALPH heads for the recorder but JANA jumps and beats him to it; she ejects the tape.]

RALPH (cont'd)

That's mine!

MAY

No -- it's not yours. It's my husband's.

(JANA hurries the tape to MAY, who puts it in CALEB's lap)

RALPH

But I need it to get her fired!

JANA

Aren't you aware that she has quit?

MAY

And that my husband has chosen not to go to your studio? I think, Mr...Ralph, you should take your producer and leave.

RALPH

(the implications, if not the text, have finally sunk in; he begins to stalk HALLEY)

What have you done? What have you done to me?

HALLEY

(backing away)

I solved the problem. I stopped the bull.

RALPH

You shit! You ruined my segment!

[RALPH tackles HALLEY, floors her.]

JANA

Oh!

[JANA hurries to the fray, followed by MAY.]

RALPH

(pinning HALLEY on her back)

I'm gonna strangle you! You talked me into this! I put myself on the line! This was gonna be my first segment!

MAY

Stop this!

[With a struggle, JANA and MAY manage to pull RALPH off HALLEY and shoulder him right.]

RALPH

No! Lemme kill her! I'll do it on camera and demand producer credit!

HALLEY

(scrambling to her feet; to JANA:)

You said "thanks". You mean you now see your father for what he is?

MAY

Your thoughtful visit is over, Halley. You must go now with...this man.

HALLEY

I can't go with him!

JANA

Then walk.

HALLEY

No! He walks! It's my car! Oh! J.E. Neville! Jana, listen to this! Professor! Janet Elder Neville? Janet Elder?

[CALEB's head jumps minutely.]

HALLEY (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Came across her in my research. Turns out Janet Elder proved Ramanujan's ninety-first formula twelve years ago! In fact, she proved nine of them. But there were over a hundred, so proving only nine is a very small contribution, wouldn't you agree, Professor? Even a veggie would agree with that.

MAY

Why are you doing this?

HALLEY

(tapping her head)

Why? Because I'm an artist? Pursuing the truth?

MAY

I don't think so. There's something else -- lower down.

HALLEY

Ah, here we go: "Halley's motive."

JANA

I know why. It's because he has crushed you.

HALLEY

(points at CALEB)

He? I crushed him! I tore his head off!

JANA

(cool mock mystification)

Him? I didn't mean my father.

HALLEY

...! You say that to me? He is gone! He's buried in Oregon!

JANA

No. He only died in Oregon.

HALLEY

(anger)

You --!

(sudden blank, then cool smile)

...Ah, right.

(MORE)

HALLEY (cont'd)

Let's force Halley into that handy disposal-unit, the cliche motive. Explain her away. Halley hates all fathers. Or she hates all men. Either way, means your Dad is okay, it's just me. No, let's try she's jealous -- or is the right word 'envy'? The Professor's my expert on that one. And jealous of what? Oh, name anything, it'll serve. Or how 'bout simple anger? Iago did it because he was passed over for the big promotion. "Yeh-sure". Maybe I'm that kid in Salinger who throws a stone at the little girl just because she's so beautiful. Any cheap pretext to dismiss will do. How unworthy of you, Jah. How banal. [BAY-nal].

(to CALEB:)

See, Professor -- 'banal'! Aren't I a good student?

MAY

Halley, you missed Iago's most pertinent line: "He hath a daily beauty in his life/That makes me ugly."

JANA

You go, Ma!

HALLEY

...Whatever he was before, look at him now: Good God. Education's curse.

(to JANA)

And look at you. Where's that MGM sparkle gone?

JANA

(smiling)

I'm not sparkling? I feel like I'm sparkling!

MAY

Look at you, Halley! What happened to you?

HALLEY

I grew. I'm of the world now. But Jana is no longer of this world. Two months ago, when I bumped into you near your acting class, I saw something besides love in your eyes. Anxiety? I asked her about her "retirement" -- her I-quit-the-world seclusion -- and she almost took off --

(flaps arms like wings)

-- with those clever verbal flights of hers. Remember how you tried to cover for her? With a jolly speech? Filled with laughing...and with what else? Torment.

MAY

With protection. We protect each other in this family.

HALLEY

Mrs. Hobson, I know her withdrawal pains you deeply. She's quit life, and I'll bet you have no idea why. Take it from me: she'll do nothing to relieve you. You'll get only the surface courtesies she has for everyone. Nothing serious, nothing that really involves her.

MAY

...You are...cruel.

[MAY sags wearily onto the arm of Caleb's chair; HALLEY, shaken a bit, backs away.]

JANA

(pointing at HALLEY)

Don't you go anywhere.

(going to MAY)

Mama?

[MAY signals she's okay.]

JANA (cont'd)

She's wrong, Ma. I have more good news --

HALLEY

-- Jah, why? Why have you done this to yourself? And to the rest of us? I thought you...had everything.

JANA

(to MAY)

I'll tell you later.

HALLEY

You can still escape if you do it now! Don't stay in thrall to him! To that!

JANA

(cool, primed, now turns to HALLEY)

Now you.

HALLEY

Tell me you realize what happened here tonight. Your Dad is a world-renowned fake.

JANA

No -- he's a world-respected mathematician.

HALLEY

Not any more he won't be!

JANA

Oh, I think so. You saved his reputation! Poor, unprovided girl, jingling with disappointment and frustration -- wait till you realize what a big mistake you made tonight!

HALLEY

I did? Didn't you follow anything?

JANA

I followed you, Halley. I even led you, when I saw what you were after.

HALLEY

You "led me".

JANA

You planned a prime-time assassination. On national television.

HALLEY

No -- prime-time self-destruction. Was anything less going to get you out of here? You think a nice quiet heart-to-heart over tea would make you see? I know what his image is to you, and to the academic world --

JANA

As Dad noticed, you do crave a starring role --

HALLEY

And I am a star. I'm the star -- and writer -- of a small masterpiece. And I'm a producer who knows what pleases an audience. Ten-thousand arrogant mathematicians -- with him as their spokesman -- line up against one lone woman: you think the satisfying ending is they're right and she's wrong?! These two don't have a clue, and they didn't know what hit them until it was all on tape. I have a gift for this.

JANA

Where's the tape? Not the little audio thing -- I mean the film my father would have made in the studio. Where's that, Halley?

HALLEY

....Forget the tape. The important thing was that you should see him exposed! When you began to go loony -- the governess, the mooing, "Can't watch! Won't watch!" --

JANA

So no tape?

HALLEY

...The tape is irrelevant.

JANA

Oh? No tape means no prime-time destruction. It came to me: I should get you to perform right here, get you to show Marilyn's answer is right. That way no public exposé, just a vicious, undocumented party game. No one will ever get to see your masterpiece of malignity, your star production.

HALLEY

You saw it.

JANA

Did I? Maybe the governess saw it, or the moo-ful cow, but I don't recall it.

[Full comprehension grips HALLEY. Then a twirl of frustration. Then stillness again.]

HALLEY

Always acting.

JANA

Always. Just between us hyenas: Ain't it great, the last laugh?

HALLEY

...I'm supposed to believe you pulled my strings...

JANA

It's funny -- you never took direction well when you acted.

RALPH

You pimple! You are a wart on the face of television!

JANA

She doesn't think she's a wart. She thinks she's a Hickey.

HALLEY

...This whole family personifies denial! You are a genius -- at abandoning people, walling them out, and walling yourself in! You still don't see him! Or yourself! Or me! How apt you should keep a blind housekeeper. Now I know why you never answer letters: You're not dead, but you are buried -- in the family mausoleum. Mummified.

JANA

Mummified. I have a flair for it.

MAY

(rising)

Goodbye, Halley. My best to your mother. Tell her she should take pride in the way she's raised...her flowers.

HALLEY

.....Oh, Jah...What a shame...What might have been. You have it wrong, it wasn't malignity. My problem was always my optimism... Well, bye-bye forever to the girl-most-likely.

(brightens as she prepares to leave)

No need thank me, people, my art is reward enough. And my search for truth! Professor! Now you can tell your grandchildren you not only saw Halley's comet, you were hit by it!

(one last beaming-hostess pose)

Halley exits left to grudging applause!

11

(11) 11

RALPH

What a shit she is! She mousetrapped me! She ruined me!
Why'd she do this to me?

MAY

She's in the car. We'll call you a taxi.

JANA

You are a hack, sir.

RALPH

This is all fun for you, isn't it! I'll call my own taxi.
(displays a cell phone)
Where the hell are we?

JANA

This was supposed to be our den, exempt from public haunt. So much for our geography. At the corner there are street signs.

RALPH

You are deranged! And you know something, you have a very dirty mind!

JANA

Thank you! All is not lost.

RALPH

(seizing his sling-bag)
Bonks, all of them! They keep a blind housekeeper! Every living thing in this house is cracked!

MAY

Not my plants or my birds, they're the soul of reason. I have a bird named after you. Guess which one!

[As RALPH goes slamming out:]

MAY (cont'd)

It's called a myna bird!...Maybe we've been unfair. Halley's not powered by jealousy and rejection. It may simply be cheery malice. Like a fun-loving serial-killer.

JANA

You are bad, you know.

MAY

Jana, sometimes the worst, and sometimes the best, in life comes from being bad. I'm all right, Bill said three days in bed. I've given him two. I'll give him another day when I'm older.

[JANA moves to CALEB's side. MAY studies both of them, and, sensing the silence, fills it:]

MAY (cont'd)

That Ralph lacks a sense of humor...He wanted to cut Halley into twenty-minute segments.

(silence; MAY resumes, same tone:)

You were right, Caleb: Halley was a terrorist bomber -- blew up her own show, and her job. She'll probably go into social work.

(more silence, same tone:)

Irma will be happy you decided Marilyn was right. Irma likes Marilyn.

(silence; down-to-earth tone:)

I am aware, Caleb, that you made a mistake. You gave the wrong answer. And I'm aware you're suffering agonies of humiliation.

(moving to CALEB's side)

I know your father. At this moment his shame gland is hemorrhaging. And he's afraid.

JANA

Afraid?

MAY

He's such a fool. The last mile-race of his career, the Ivy League championship, he expected to win. He told me how he was going to do it. Bold and handsome with confidence, he described all four laps of the race ahead of time. Completely under his control, it would be. But the race itself was chaos, with bumping and shoving and runners blocking other runners from getting free. On the last lap the boy from Harvard...was it Harvard, Caleb?

CALEB

(has been staring out as if shell-shocked but has evidently been taking in what MAY is saying; with no livening of expression:)

Brown.

MAY

Brown. Skinny legs, I remember. Caleb's legs were beautiful. Still are, to me. This boy from Brown escaped the pack and began to pull away. At last Daddy got free and chased after him. He was gaining but the boy from Brown reached the finish line first. Daddy, I thought, would die. Not on the track but afterwards, when he'd showered and dressed, and come out to find me on the grass. His face --

(She has been lightly touching him; now she covers his eyes with a loving hand.)

-- his face was like a twelve-year-old boy's, who's lost, and ashamed, and something more: He looked terribly afraid.

(MORE)

MAY (cont'd)

He actually thought --

(takes her hand away)

-- this fool -- that he'd lost me. That I'd scorn him, because someone else ran faster, and that I'd leave him. No doubt for the skinny boy from Brown. Who went on to come in, what? Seventh in the national championships?

CALEB

Ninth.

MAY

Ninth! Oh what an active love-life I would have had!...Your father made a mistake today. But he's made mistakes before.

(to CALEB)

Remember when you bought that French car?

(to JANA)

You need a mistake about cars? -- apply to Daddy. And you can see how much it's made me stop loving him. Our master of logic is a slave to imagination! I think that's where you get it.

JANA

I'm sorry, Dad...I owe you an apology.

[CALEB does not respond.]

MAY

Caleb, Jana is trying to make nice. You should, too. She did something very clever.

CALEB

(distantly, not looking at her)

You're all right, May?

MAY

Yes, I'm all right.

(kisses CALEB's cheek; turns up)

At this moment I guarantee what he's frightened about is you. I'm going to leave you two to kiss and make up while I do dinner. Don't, Jana -- your night off, I'm fine. Irma already did most of it.

(pauses, says toward plants:)

I'll just go fry up a few canaries and pick some of these greens for a salad.

(to plants:)

Only kidding, gang!

[Exit MAY]

JANA

Dad...time to get back on the horse.

CALEB

...What? A jackass on a horse?
(his head sinks back; eyes close)

JANA

Dad -- listen to me. I do know how to maintain a character. That's what you have to do now. Maintain. Remount Pegasus. Now.

[JANA backs quietly right as stage dims, goes dark, except for CALEB's chair and downstage in front of him. Silence. Reminder: MISS O is always miked, and we hear her voice OVER.]

MISS O

Mr. Hobson.

CALEB

(startled awake)

Uh? --

MISS O

You want to read for the Professor, I presume. Have you had a chance to study the role?

CALEB

(rises unsurely, shuffles forward two steps, looking at a loss)

Awa, ah, yuh -- yuh --

MISS O

Begin, please.

CALEB

(nods jerkily, starts at a jabber but gradually acquires a modicum of control and loony confidence)

Eight-hundred-thirty-seven times four-hundred-ninety-four equals four-hundred-thirteen-thousand-four--- No, that's mere arithmetic, you want higher math. Shakespeare wrote eight-hundred-eighty-four-thousand-six-hundred-forty-seven words. Or thereabouts. Counting inflections, he used twenty-nine-thousand-sixty-six different words. Roughly. Basic vocabulary, eighteen-thousand words. Approximately. Latin should be required. Agricola arat. Terram arat. The farmer plows, he plows the land. Here we see the nominative and accusative endings nicely displayed, as well as some naked cognates with English. At Princeton when I was twenty, I played tennis and Polonius. Miss Nemein played Marilyn -- and me. Those are called zeugmas. Because. And therefore. Q.E.D.

MISS O

Professor, perhaps a bit more...

CALEB

No, wait -- I know.

(takes another step forward; voice more fluid but still "reciting"; he remains auditioner-immobile)

The capital of Sikkim is Gangtok. Ted Williams's lifetime batting average was three-forty-four. Ramanujan died in 1920 at the age of thirty-two. His wife, Janaki, [JAH-na-kee] lived another seventy-four years. She knew no mathematics whatever. They had no children.

MISS O

You ride well.

CALEB

Good seat. Chairman's seat. The Chairman must seem worthy of the Chair.

MISS O

Feeling better?

CALEB

About what?

MISS O

You're coming along. Let's try the passage on page sixty where the Professor explains J.E. Neville. Book, please!

[JANA walks into the spotlight with a script, hands it to the baffled CALEB, points to a page, murmurs something, exits right. Caleb studies the page briefly. His alertness grows. He moves down. As he reaches his usual lecture mark, he is in his normal, confident mode, though he does not stroll. Holds script at his side, may even gesture with it, but has no need to consult it.]

CALEB

I know Janet Elder's proof of ninety-one. It's a proof. It's sound. But it's not elegant. The signal mark of Ramanujan's mathematics, besides its genius, was its lack of rigor. He leaped from one formula to another without ever setting down necessary deriving steps. We now know that some of these leaps, a very few of them, were simply wrong. Thus the labors of mathematicians since his time to prove his formulae, to show how you can validly proceed from one to the next. And do it with economy, which is at the heart of mathematical beauty. Elder took fourteen steps to get from ninety to ninety-one. I did it in eight.

MISS O

(not quite approving)

Well, that was...revealing. Displays scholarship, I suppose.

(MORE)

MISS O (cont'd)

If we could skip to page seventy. The student has just mentioned the young woman who spoke at the last class. Now she asks, "Was her Marilyn problem really mathematics?"

CALEB

(one glance at the page, then a smile and confident definitiveness)

It was not. At most it was arithmetic, and arithmetic is to mathematics as a bov--...as hopscotch is to grandmaster chess. Different... skills. Oh it's fun. The sort of thing you could always trick Einstein with. But party tricks are not mathematics. I'll give you an example. Three men go into a hotel, ask for one room. Clerk says, that'll be thirty dollars. Each man hands over ten.

After the men go up to the room, the clerk realizes it's only a twenty-five dollar room. He gives the bellhop five dollars to bring up to the men. Bellhop decides to give them back only one dollar apiece, and donate the two dollars to charity. So the room cost each man nine dollars. That's twenty-seven. The two dollars to charity makes twenty-nine. What happened to the other dollar?

That one is baffling to some people. Even mathematicians. I personally had no trouble with it, but I saw Richard Feynman take almost thirty seconds to figure it out. Because it's not mathematics -- it's sleight-of-tongue. Three-card monte. Home entertainment -- not a test of mathematical ability!

(briefly self-satisfied; then a rill of uncertainty animates his face)

...Was that all right? Did I ...?

MISS O

That was fine, Mr. Hobson. But I wonder if all this isn't a bit defensive...

[JANA enters from right.]

MISS O (cont'd)

Ah! Jana. You'll know what to tell him.

[JANA takes him aside, speaks to him softly. We cannot make out her words but she is clearly coaching him. He is nodding as he takes on board what she is advising. JANA exits right, into darkness, taking script; CALEB, now composed, assumes lecture posture.]

CALEB

May I?

MISS O

Please.

CALEB

(strolling now; our original Prof.)

Mathematics may come easier to some than to others, but it comes to no one without thinking. I've seen the greatest minds on this globe bungle problems because they let their tongues be faster than their brains. You've heard of the famous Marilyn problem? I want you to know I myself flubbed that one at first hearing. Of course when I thought about it the right answer came to me -- which yields a lesson. You -- and any great mathematician -- are the same in one regard: There's no quicker way to shoot ourselves in the foot than to shoot from the hip. An occasional silly mistake can be a meaningless nuisance, but if you repeatedly make them, you're disqualified. The great Ramanujan taught me anyone can make a mistake. Now, if he could -- with thinking -- what are you going to do when you don't stop to think at all?

[Applause OVER; CALEB steps gracefully back, bows with dignity.]

MISS O

Oh, Professor, brilliant! The number of shrewd things you do with that response!

CALEB

Absolutely. Three, four things done at once there.

MISS O

Wonderful approach to rebuilding the Professor's character. Inspired play-acting.

CALEB

-- What? "Play-acting" --? Actually, when I say "The answer came to me", I should admit --

MISS O

-- It's well-known that when the great ones play-act the role, they become the role.

CALEB

-- Uh, yes, uh, but, no, no --

MISS O

-- My best to Jana and Mrs. Hobson.

CALEB

(uncertainty; his poise gone)

Uh -- yes --

(he somehow realizes MISS O is gone)

Wait!

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(13) 13

JANA*(from the darkness right)*

Dad, when did you first know you would never be a great mathematician?

CALEB

Well, see, that's -- Another point Miss Nemein was confused about is, the mark of genius is not freedom from error. Great poets can be trite at Fenway Park. But being able to verify a truth isn't evidence of genius either, I know that. A sedulous accountant can do such things. In my world, greatness is the ability to discover new truths, new constellations of truth! It's the ability to -- create!

(Bolts right, but we hear the thump-sound of someone hitting a wall as he is bounced back by the darkness; tries again tentatively but he cannot exit; he is confined to the spotlight)

Aargh! I hate it!

(glares up at the spotlight)

Have you no feelings?

JANA

You should talk about this now, and then never again. Tell me when you knew you'd never be creative.

CALEB

(composed, or, perhaps, resigned)

...About twenty-five years ago. By that age, either you've begun to create or you know you never will. That's the curse of intelligence. It gave me the wit to see what truly great would be, and the woe of knowing I'd never be it....But then, I did create! I --

(turns toward JANA's voice with the start of an exultant smile, but stops abruptly, as though recoiling from saying the wrong thing)

...I wrote a basic textbook.

JANA

Now in its tenth edition.

CALEB

...Yes.

JANA

World renowned.

CALEB

As it hap--...well, yes it is. Best selling calculus textbook ever --

JANA

-- Is it creative, Father?

CALEB

"Creative"? Well, uh -- pedagogically it is! I was the first to.....No...It's not creative. No.

JANA

We are alike. Far more than you concede.

CALEB

What? Jah? What?

[No response. Agitated, he barges upstage only to encounter the darkness/wall again. He tries other sides of his spotlight cell -- no exit. He retreats to the shadow behind his chair and crouches; we see him strain to peer right as he emits a Kowalski-like bellow:]

CALEB (cont'd)

Jana!

[Lights up abruptly. CALEB, staring right, does not find JANA until he turns back and discovers her standing at the liquor cabinet.]

JANA

I thought I'd have a wee dream. How 'bout you?

CALEB

(rising, still slightly disoriented)
 ...No -- I'm working on one...You...?
(points at JANA with the glass)

JANA

(leaves bar, holds up the glass)
 Only Sprite! You were brilliant tonight.

CALEB

(recovering; no joy)
 Wasn't I.

JANA

You were. Your improv is such benign and dexterous deceit -- play-acting at its best.

CALEB

"Play --"
(quick gesture front)
 -- she said 'play-acting'. Why that awful word?

JANA

It's your word, you gave it to her.

CALEB

To make a distinction! I honor acting: It's a pursuit.
'Play-acting' is a flight.

JANA

That's right. I mount Pegasus, and we fly away.

CALEB

Pegasus is a mythical beast.

JANA

So are the flights.

CALEB

Flights from what?

JANA

Oh, Dad. Reality.

CALEB

No! We have to face reality!

JANA

Why? When your hand is in the fire, you pull it out.

CALEB

Reality is not fire.

JANA

It is for some, Dad.

CALEB

It's what we live in! You can't pull your hand out of what
we live in.

JANA

Of course you can! You know it's true -- you've been doing it
for decades. The night I tried to quit the company: There I
was, in the emergency room, still groggy from the pills and
your excellent single-malt, my throat sore from the stomach
pump, and there was Mama asking me: Why? So I pretended to
Mama I couldn't speak, because... And then!

(arms spread, presenting CALEB)

Enter Lord Farrago of Contrive, inventing. Conjuring a
fictional math test out of thick air. Trying to keep Mama's
hand away from the fire. And Dad, you don't want your own
hand in flame either.

*[Garish new lighting ignites the stage; JANA
bounds up, gestures, the three doors descend.]*

JANA (cont'd)

Now for a more realistic game show! Choose a door!

CALEB

(startled into compliance)

One! Door one!

JANA

Door one!

[JANA gestures and door one opens to reveal roaring flames, accompanied by inferno music.]

JANA (cont'd)

Professor -- you want to stay with door one? Or would you like to switch? You may switch if you like.

CALEB

Door two!

[JANA gestures, door one closes, inferno music ceases, door two opens revealing a coffin, with funeral music.]

CALEB (cont'd)

No! No! Door three!

JANA

Of course! Door three!

[Door two closes, funeral music ceases, we hear a distinct neigh, the beating of enormous wings; we see their stage-enveloping flutter-shadow, as the doors rise out of sight and the Hokusai descends; at the peak we see emerging pix of Newton, Leibniz, Gauss, Ramanujan -- and Caleb, all on the same level. "Triumph" music rises in the hall, climaxing with CALEB's pic. CALEB regards the array with stupefied awe. After a moment, JANA, with a wide dismissing gesture, makes the entire apparition disappear. Brief sound of hoof-beats departing. Silence, normal lighting.]

JANA (cont'd)

See? Door three -- that's the one to pretend to.

CALEB

That's your view of me. Pretender. Play-actor. I sham, I scam, therefore I am.

JANA

What you are, I am. Ask me to explain governess.

CALEB

(sigh)

All right: Explain 'governess'.

JANA

I think it means: I raise only other people's children.

CALEB

Oh, Jah --

JANA

It's also what I do as an actress: I raise the writer's children. It's all I can do now.

CALEB

(turning away)

Jana --

JANA

Dad -- you tell me to face it, and then complain when I do face it.

CALEB

(turns back, with discomfort)

I want you to face it --

JANA

You do. But you shouldn't. Never say, "Let's face it!" unless facing it can fix it. "Oh but facing it is the first step to getting over it!" No. It's not. Facing it is the first step to suicide. Not facing it is the first step to survival. "How pathetic you can't be honest with yourself." No. How lucky.

CALEB

You need to find a way to go on with your life!

JANA

My life.

CALEB

Yes. Your life. You still have a real life even though...you can't have children....because...

JANA

Reaching for a euphemism? How about: Because I've had a surgical "procedure": With a 'Y'! Or how about an irony: They took my hyster out, but another hister slipped in.

CALEB

...It is not a life-ending event! Millions of women live with it! Women after menopause can't have babies!

JANA

Dad...I was sixteen.

CALEB

I'm saying, the fact that you can't have a baby --

JANA

-- It's not solely a baby I can't have. Here's a riddle: Who is it can go again and again, but never, ever come again?

CALEB

...In any case...It's nothing to hide from!

JANA

Oh? Then why are we both so determined to hide it from Mama? Why not make her face reality? Don't tell me what I ought to feel about this. I feel the way I feel, and neither you nor all my disapproving sisterhood can change that, because "ought" has no dominion in our hearts. Look at you: You feel devastated tonight. "Oh but Daddy, you ought not to feel that way! You're so much more than just a mathematician! You shouldn't let it bother you that you're not up there with Newton and Ramanujan! You're being silly!" "Oh ho ho! You're so right, come to think of it! There! All better!" Let's get Mama in here and fill her in on me, and when her heart stops, we'll just tell her to snap out of it.

CALEB

All right -- all right --

JANA

I'm small, Dad. I despise my self-pity, I hate it, but hating it doesn't stop it. I have a twin in my gut, and she rules in there. She grieves, yearns, trembles. She won't stop trembling -- until I go elsewhere.

CALEB

It's that "going elsewhere" that scares me!

JANA

I always show up for dinner, don't I? Tonight I was away a few times, but I was here when you needed me. ...It was your student who first said, "stop trembling". "Stop trembling, it's only going to make this harder." Wasn't till the third time he said it I realized he meant harder for him. But I couldn't, by an act of will, stop...

CALEB

...I curse the day I let you come to that class eight years ago.

JANA

You didn't "let" me, you invited me. You thought I'd be impressed. And I was. By the guy who sat down next to me... You warned me: "Beneath his gloss he is callous, brutish." But he didn't look brutish to me. He looked beautiful. And smart: auditing advanced calculus for the fun of it! And older: He was in medical school! Isn't it broad that now he's an obstetrician? I'll bet his resume doesn't list

(MORE)

JANA (cont'd)

his first operation -- a botched abortion...I understand you, Dad, because we are alike. We are both ...barren.

CALEB

You're not barren! -- only biologically.

JANA

(beaming mock celebration)

And you're not barren! Only mathematically! Dad: You want a creative brain. I want a uterus. We can't have them. It's irremediable. There's no repair, no cure, ever. I can't say "Why me?" or "It's so unfair" -- I know why me. And that that's my real life now. But, Dad, real life is a first draft, and first drafts are never perfect, so you and I revise history, undo it, go elsewhere.

Miss O said one becomes the character if he acts it well enough. I agree, I do it all the time now. But solely acting the role doesn't do it for you. You're not loony enough. You also need ceaseless confirmation from the audience: Behold Professor Hobson, the Great Man of mathematics, the Genius. Hail, Hobson! Which is why you feel threatened now.

CALEB

I feel -- the way I feel -- because that was an agonizingly simple problem, and I got it wrong --

JANA

-- No. Genius makes mistakes -- you said it. It's not that you got the problem wrong. It's that you got it wrong in front of an audience. That Halley knows you got it wrong.

[CALEB starts an 'I-don't-care-what' protest--]

JANA (cont'd)

Stop! Answer this: What was your great fear as she went out the door? Be honest!

CALEB

...That she will tell people.

JANA

Yes -- she poked a tiny hole in your emperor's robe, and you're afraid it'll all unseam like run-silk. Your subjects would gape, their confirmation would cease, and you'll dwindle into ordinary. But that won't happen. You'll lecture again, resume your Chairman's seat, accept honorary degrees, publish another paper. Mending and brocading the fabric. It's worked for twenty-five years.

(shifts to lighter tone)

Anyway, you can cheer up, Emp: Halley won't tell anyone. In her masterpiece she was denied her climax. Mrs. Aristotle suffered coitus interruptus -- because she didn't see the plot. She blew it. And she knows it.

(MORE)

JANA (cont'd)

By now, her mortification has choked her pride into silence. As for Ralph, he'll say he talked to you, and you confirmed what he suspected all along: Marilyn was right and Halley was wrong.

CALEB

...I was so blinkered by my... Oh God! You actually figured it out, didn't you. The problem. Did you?

JANA

(affectionate tease)

Don't know, do ya!...I knew everything in the room was wrong, Dad. But I also knew I had to get Halley to ambush you here, and not in the studio. Otherwise the PhD goes on C.B.S., and then it's R.I.P.

CALEB

Well, I'd have been vulgarly famous!

JANA

And that way Halley couldn't fail to see that in a moment of pathetic, wretched stupidity, she had ambushed herself...We can't keep our acts straight, you and I. You're the mathematician, which means you're supposed to be a lonely genius. I'm allegedly an actor -- for whom the bright lights are oxygen.

CALEB

Why is that, Jah -- that you run from bright lights? -- if you think they're the saving Pegasus I need? Phil Schwartz called me after those first reviews and said, "Can you get your daughter to give interviews, talk to the media? She can get the Award!"

JANA

Ah: Phil. To me, the role of "actress!", "personality!", is ignominious glory. Playing "Jana Hobson", with lines too spurious for words. He wanted to set up dates for me with movie stars, and one-on-ones with proper-interviewers: "You can talk to me! About boyfriends, family plans, what you long for. We'll have a few laughs -- a few tears would be nice!" Photo sessions felt like a visit to a pornographer: "All right -- now fake ecstasy, fake bliss!"

CALEB

You fake with your mother. We both do.

JANA

I perform with Mama. In a supporting role -- to the part she's chosen for herself. Because she's also a close friend of Pegasus. Are you aware she's never made herself ask why I stopped going out with boys eight years ago? Is it possible she hasn't registered there's no sign that I ever have a period?

CALEB

You could help her more than you have, Jah. She does need more help.

JANA

I know that, I could see that today.

CALEB

...You're right, I did want to be up there at that summit. Newton created the calculus! Ramanujan -- imagine him! Self-taught, in a remote, backward town in southern India a hundred years ago -- chalking lightning on a lap-slate. But I've never seen over the horizon, and genius does that. Still, I did have one moment of Olympian creativity -- with Mama: You, Jana, are more than I ever imagined or could reason my way to. You've been more heart-startling, more nourishing, more huggable than any Ramanujan.

JANA

My Daddy Thespis...

CALEB

No, this isn't Thespis. And it isn't the mathematician...I'm your father...

*(pauses; pushes down with a breath;
goes on:)*

My creating is behind me -- and in front of me: You can still create. I've watched you...see over the horizon. You've made me feel that rarest of human emotions: Genuine awe. What a great actor can do to us is the most intimate, personal thing possible between two people fifty feet apart. You can do that. And that's creation. What you can do would bring more awe, pleasure, and relief than a hundred Ramanujans.

JANA

(fighting tears)

...Oh, yummy, a hundred Ramanujans.

CALEB

Forty-thousand Ramanujans could not make up the sum of what you mean to Mama. Today, your friend -- your ex-friend -- came to hurt. And she was content to hurt your mother --

JANA

-- Oh but she helped Mama.

CALEB

She did?

JANA

She told Mama she could see her pain. When she added: "Take it from me, she'll do nothing to relieve you..." The problem with self-pity is how little room it leaves to pity others. Oh, that it should take someone pitiless to teach me that!

(MORE)

JANA (cont'd)

Who'd have thought Halley could be The Mother of Compassion!
 ...Miss O tells me they still want me for *Seeing the Island*.

CALEB

I don't...? -- is that stage or film?

JANA

Stage.

CALEB

And so?

JANA

And so -- the bright lights again.

CALEB

You'll do it?!

[JANA nods.]

CALEB (cont'd)

Oh Jah!

(hugs JANA, who hugs him back)

JANA

Eight times a week I'll embrace your reality. I'll just hug
 it to death. For you and Mama. Just think, Daddy, I can be
 acting and play-acting at the same time!

CALEB

Oh, Jah, your mother, she'll...! And Nemein! She'll eat her
 heart out! No, that's impossible. It'll drive a stake
 through the cavity where her heart ought to be!

JANA

(springs to her feet)

What's the definition of the calculus?

(forestalling a speech:)

The shortest definition!

CALEB

...The mathematics of limits.

JANA

"Limits"? How 'bout 'limitations'?

CALEB

We don't recognize that term.

JANA

Oh yes we do.

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(14) 14

[JANA moves down; stage lights dim except for an ample spot on the lecturer's area.]

MISS O

I think we should talk, Jana.

JANA

I have a personal monologue for you, Miss O. I'm a lecturer at --

MISS O

-- Jana, it is the mission of this school to prepare young talents for a professional career, by which I mean performing on a stage, in front of an audience, in public --

JANA

--I'm aware of --

MISS O

-- Forgive me: Part of that is sheer encouragement. I must be able to supply that. I don't think you have any conception what you mean to the other students here. I accepted you because I thought you'd be an inspiration to them. But you don't seem to want a public career. You seem to disdain it.

JANA

No, I don't disdain it. I want it.

MISS O

What?

JANA

I want it. There's no life without it. Oh! I didn't tell Mama her good news! I have to tell her tonight.

MISS O

Wait! I know her good news, but do you have good news for me?

JANA

If you think it is: My sabbatical is over.

MISS O

Oh Jana! Jana, that's so splendid! Is it true? "Seeing the Island"?

JANA

Yes. And vice versa.

MISS O

Oh! If only I could think of someone to quote, I know I could tell you how pleased I am! That our school has brought you back! Everyone will be ecstatic!

JANA

Please: Miss O: I have a personal monologue --

MISS O

-- It will so encourage them in their acting --

JANA

-- I'm a lecturer, who's still rehearsing, still drafting --

MISS O

-- I'm sorry, yes, your personal monologue. You're a lecturer. I shall be silent for your lecture.

[JANA turns, takes two or three steps up; her back is to the audience; she is still; we can feel she is a woman thinking about what she will say...She turns again, moves down.]

JANA

Today our subject is the human calculus. We shall consider limitations. The story of most people's lives is: how important our limitations are to us -- and what we do to live with them.

Their importance depends on how much they erode, or destroy, our dreams. There are two kinds of dreams -- one is the modest, natural hope for sufficient food, shelter...perhaps offspring.

The other dream craves not just vitality but triumph: world-class achievement and celebration. To yearn to be an idol, you must once have idolized. Pity those who have unmatchable idols when they're young.

We tend to have less sympathy for the second dreamer when he is thwarted. But we shouldn't. We may think such exalted aspirations are silly or even vaguely offensive -- or we may think them brave and ennobling. Either way, the sharded hopes of a would-be Olympian can be, in their soul-sealing way, as painful and life-threatening as most biological deprivations.

The two dreamers are alike in how they live with limitations that are beyond remedy. They have one of four responses. They don't live with them: they kill themselves. Or, incomprehensibly, they accept their limitations, and shake off their dreams with the unconcern of a rain-wet dog.

Third, they drug themselves; fourth, they fool themselves. Drugs and delusions: We usually feel they're unworthy, but we should be slow to condemn them. We give morphine to a dying soldier. And sometimes add a little play-acting: "You'll be up and around in no time, soldier." Don't say to me, "But morphine will take the soldier out of reality." No, he'll be in reality: He is dying.

(MORE)

JANA (cont'd)

And consider how often we try to help the failed dreamer by saying, "There are other satisfactions, other ways to be happy in this world." We tell them, "You can adopt another dream. And if you're anything like the rest of us you can make it seem just like the real thing...with a little imagination."

Limitations, and how we deal with them. Everything follows from that.

(begins turn up, turns down again)

Oh, there is a fifth thing that people do. They embrace reality: they acknowledge their limitations, but remember their dreams, review them daily -- and suffer two hours out of every three in their waking lives. These people "face up" to things. They are honest with themselves. The most enduringly painful limitation of all.

[JANA turns, strides up; lighting back to normal; CALEB is in his chair; he looks up at her with a glum smile.]

JANA (cont'd)

(brightly)

It's lucky I love you, because you're the only man I'm ever gonna get!...Ooh, I shouldn't have left you alone, you're still hurting. That's not all bad, you deserve a little hurt: You were wondrously offensive today.

CALEB

"She led me on!" And I followed her down.

JANA

So: up! On your feet! We have to practice our improv.
(holds her arms out to dance)

CALEB

We dance?

JANA

We tango -- the play-actor's chosen dance. To celebrate.

[CALEB rises; JANA gestures toward the hi-fi console stage right; its doors swing open and the player-platform slides out. We hear music - a tango. JANA and CALEB immediately snap into tango position. JANA's mad, balcony-visible smile of Act One returns like a bolt. CALEB madly matches it tooth-for-tooth. They swoop into the dance with extravagant panache.]

CALEB

(beaming)

To celebrate your return engagement?

JANA

(beaming)

No -- to celebrate you! You dodged a comet tonight, Dad! Suppose you had actually gone on network television?

[They twist, dip, cavort.]

JANA (cont'd)

Oh how close we came! How lucky we are! Isn't it dreamy how lucky we are?

[MAY hurries in happily.]

MAY

What are you doing?

[JANA and CALEB continue their dance.]

JANA

We're just horsing around.

CALEB

Jana brings out the actor in me.

JANA

I have to nag him.

CALEB

She tells me my fawning needs work.

JANA

And that all the world's a stage.

MAY

I came back because you never told me your news.

JANA

Oh!

[JANA goes to MAY; CALEB stops dancing.]

JANA (cont'd)

No! Keep dancing!

[CALEB, solo, is not at a loss. He glides and struts with total commitment. He scoops the audio-tape off his chair, tosses it on the floor, and stomps it.]

JANA (cont'd)

Look! He's got some things you just can't teach.

MAY

Daddy is a genius.

JANA

Well, Professor Weinberg did tell me Dad is one of the top eight pure mathematicians in the world today.

MAY

I don't mean that. I mean -- with all due respect for Mount Olympus -- he's been a genius as a loving husband, and a loving father, and that's all the genius I need in my Caleb. Tell me your news.

[JANA whispers in MAY's ear; MAY is joyous.]

MAY (cont'd)

No! Did you tell Daddy?

[JANA shakes her head; MAY hurries down toward the smiling, dancing CALEB.]

CALEB

We dodged a comet tonight, May!

[CALEB grasps MAY and they dance.]

MAY

Caleb -- !

CALEB

What was I thinking?! Sell mathematics on network television? What a delusion!

MAY

Caleb! Jana and I are going to be in a staged-reading at school! We're in *Amadeus* together! And the parts are just perfect, I mean for us.

CALEB

(beaming, dancing)

So? Tell me.

MAY

Jana plays Constanze! -- Mozart's wife? It's a wonderful part!

CALEB

And?

MAY

Oh I have a much smaller role. I'm Teresa -- the wife of Antonio Salieri.

[CALEB comes to a halt; grin disappears; music groans down and out; he stares at MAY.]

MAY (cont'd)

It's a nice part, though. I don't have any lines so I don't have to say anything. I can just be there.

[We hear the oven-timer bell.]

MAY (cont'd)

Oh! For whom the oven-timer tolls! For thee!
(moves up, smiling)

JANA

I'll have more news for you at dinner, Mama. Big news.

MAY

Oh good! I'm nineteenth century, I love news.
(pauses)

And Jah, you mustn't let Halley bother you. Who cares if you're retired? It's nice having you around the house.

[Exit MAY. JANA looks stunned by May's comment. The hi-fi thumps back into its console. JANA and CALEB shuffle together, join hands, move down, where they stand side-by-side, gazing front with flabbergasted looks on their faces.]

MISS O

Ah, the Hobsons. And your personal duologue, I presume. Keep in mind, this is your last moment on the stage, the moment in which, with a soaring chandelle of celestial rhetoric, a galactic strew of diamantine diction, you indite in heavens' memorial the essence of the play. We grow still. We listen.

[CALEB, staring front, looks baffled. JANA, composure regained, watches CALEB.]

CALEB

...MoooOOO?

JANA

Nay, Dad: Wrong sound. Neigh!

[We begin to hear the third-door triumph-music again. CALEB whickers gently, builds to a whinny. His look of bafflement dissolves. OVER we abruptly hear a stentorian neigh and the sound of approaching hoof-beats, and we see the pulsing shadow of giant wings. The music rises. CALEB bends slightly and JANA mounts him piggy-back style. CALEB turns and heads up in an equine canter, whinnying, but the music, the neighing OVER, and the sound of massive beating wings soon drown him out.]

JANA commences a slow, graceful flapping of her arms like a sea bird, or, perhaps, a winged horse, as the music fills the stage and...]

FINAL CURTAIN

**SOLUTION TO THE HOTEL ROOM
PROBLEM**

The two dollars for charity should not be added to the twenty-seven dollars the men paid; it comes out of the twenty-seven dollars. They did pay twenty-seven dollars, but only twenty-five of it was for the room. Of the original thirty dollars, three went back to the men, the hotel kept twenty-five, two went to the bellhop's charity.