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FREE:
COMPETITION VERSION

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT BY
Lindsay Price



Free: Competition Version
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Printed in the USA

Characters

2M+5W+2M/F+11AG

Jack: (M) 17. Senior in high school. Deeply cares for his family. Dating Jill.

Jill: (W) 17. Senior in high school. Can't wait to leave home for a new chapter. Dating Jack.

Mrs. Steel: (W) Mother. Harsh. Would do anything for her family.

Bonnie: (W) Teenager. A little conniving.

Betty: (W) Teenager. A little conniving.

Becky: (W) Teenager. A little conniving.

Mayor: (M/F) Jill's parent. Wants to present as a good person rather than be a good person.

Mrs. Brown: (M/F) Wants to be a good person but struggles.

Stranger: (AG) Wants the best out of this situation.

Robby: (M) Teenager. Guard. Guarding the food, but not well.

Townpeople: (x8, AG). These roles are identified by number in the script. They are all struggling and think they are doing the best they can for their family.

Guards: (x2, non-speaking, AG) Guarding the food, but not well.

Gender Notes

For any character identified as M/F, they have been identified as a specific gender in the script. You have permission to switch the gender and change pronouns & references to their gender.

For any character identified as AG, you have permission to identify them as a specific gender, depending on how you cast the roles.

For the Townpeople, cast whomever works best for your situation. If you want more or less Townpeople, you may redistribute the lines accordingly.

Setting

The “set” for this play is a large arrangement of food – a bountiful picnic, piles of food and drink, with numerous baskets filled to the brim. It should look beautiful and instantly appetizing. A great challenge for your tech students! What you’ll want is a large variety of fake food but also a way for the townspeople at the end to descend on the picnic and start eating. You could achieve this with mime, or by using a mix of real and fake food, carefully choreographing who eats what during the food frenzy.

Do not do the whole thing with real food. It will be more trouble than it’s worth.

SCENE I

Music plays as lights slowly rise on the scene.

The scene is a hillside on the outskirts of a small town. Centre stage there is a huge picnic laid out — piles of food and drink, numerous baskets filled to the brim. It should look beautiful and instantly appetizing. Off to the side, there is a large sign propped up against one of the baskets, which says FREE FOOD.

There are a number of bushes, plants and greenery scattered around the stage. There is a large bush positioned downstage right. When characters stand in front of this bush, they cannot see the picnic and are not easily seen by others. There is also a cluster of bushes upstage.

JILL enters the space in front of the downstage bush. She DOES NOT see the food. She has been running and throws her arms into the air.

JILL: I win!

JILL does a victory dance. She turns to see that no one is behind her. She looks offstage.

JILL: Jack? Come on, it's not that steep. Use your arms.

JACK crawls on stage, wheezing.

JILL: Took you long enough.

JACK: I'm not a runner, you know. *(collapses onto the floor)*

JILL: Victorious again!

JACK: Oxygen. O2. Air! *(he frantically gulps in air)*

JILL: Don't gulp like that. You have to breathe normally.

JACK: What do you think I'm trying to do? Stop grinning at me.

JILL: *(sitting beside him)* Don't you like my "winning" smile?

JACK: You're such a sore winner.

JILL: You're just sore.

JACK: *(he groans, sits up)* Did I mention I'm not a runner?

JILL: It's good for you.

JACK: So are Brussels sprouts.

JILL: Yeck. There's a huge difference. Running is good for you and it's fun.

JACK: Fun? Having my lungs come out my nose is fun?

JILL: (*she pushes him over*) Catch me if you can!

JILL leaps up, runs around the bush, and is immediately stopped by the sight of the food.

JACK: (*standing*) No more running! Can't we jog? Or saunter? How about a casual meander?

JACK rounds the bush and is also stopped by the food.

JACK: Wow!

JILL: Uh huh.

JACK: Someone is in the mood for a mighty big chow down.

JILL: I dreamt about going on a picnic last night. My stomach has been growling like crazy all morning. (*takes in a big sniff*) It smells so good.

JACK: (*sniffing*) Potato salad.

JILL: Strawberries.

JACK: Ham sandwiches.

JILL: Chocolate cake...

BOTH: ...with whipped cream.

JILL: Who do you think it's for?

JACK: No one from our town.

JILL: Why?

JACK: Do you know anyone who could afford to buy all this stuff?

JILL: I guess not...

JACK: Besides, a person can't sneeze in their own bathroom around here without at least one person finding out about it. If someone had bought this much food, we'd have known.

JILL: Who's it for then? And what's it doing on the hill? And why did they leave it here?

JACK: (*holding head*) Too... Many... Questions... Can't... Process...

JILL: Idiot.

JACK: What are you asking me for anyway? Am I wearing a sign that says "Knower of all things concerning abandoned picnics?"

JILL: Usually the sign says "Please look after this boy. He has trouble spelling his own name."

During JILL's lines, JACK starts to chase her. JACK chases JILL around the picnic. They circle the stage and end up right in front of the sign, which stops them again.

JILL: What's that supposed to mean?

JACK: Free food.

JILL: I know what it says. But what does it mean?

JACK: I think, and I'm only taking a wild stab at this, but I think it means the food is free.

JILL: I know that!

JACK: See, I didn't get a scholarship for nothing.

JILL: But why is it free? And who's it for?

JACK: Us. We found it.

JILL: That's too easy.

JACK: The chocolate cake is calling you. (*in another voice*) Eat me...

JILL: (*thinking*) We come across an abandoned picnic...

JACK: (*trying to distract her*) Eat me...

JILL: ...and a sign and all of a sudden the food is ours? It's weird.

JACK: Eat me...

JILL: There's so much here. And it's not just picnic food. There's veggies and fruit too.

JACK: So, what do you want to do?

JILL: I don't know.

JACK: The sign says free.

JILL: Nothing is free.

JACK: We can walk away and pretend we never saw it.

JILL: Then we're being wasteful.

JACK: You don't want us to eat it, and you don't want to leave it?

JILL: That sounds complicated.

JACK: Not necessarily... we give it away. Would that appeal to your guilt-ridden sensibilities?

JILL: Yes! We'll take it down to the community centre. Set up a food bank.

JACK: Give it to the town.

JILL: Exactly. (*hugging JACK*) What a great idea! Let's start with the baskets.

She goes to touch one of the baskets. MRS. STEEL leaps out from behind the cluster of bushes upstage. She has a branch in one hand, which she waves at JACK and JILL.

MRS. STEEL: Get away from there!!

JILL: (*speaking at the same time as JACK*) Ahhh!

JACK: (*same time as JILL*) What the...?

MRS. STEEL runs to stand between JACK & JILL and the food.

MRS. STEEL: Don't you touch anything! It's mine.

JILL: Mrs. Steel!

MRS. STEEL: It's all mine. I turn my back for five seconds. I knew in my soul something was up and I raced back up here. (*gesturing to the food*) This is mine. Be on your way 'cause there's nothing here for you.

JACK: The sign says free.

MRS. STEEL: It's free 'til it's found and I found it before you did.

JILL: Says who?

MRS. STEEL: Finders, keepers. Losers, weepers. That's the rule.

JILL: That's not a rule, Mrs. Steel. It's a kids' rhyme.

MRS. STEEL: Call it what you like. But this food is mine.

JACK: What are you going to do with it?

MRS. STEEL: It's for my family. I've been praying for a miracle and I won't have the likes of you try and take it away.

JILL: Mrs. Steel, we're not trying to take anything away, but you have to be reasonable...

JILL tries to step forward to "talk". MRS. STEEL whips her with her branch.

JILL: *(same time as JACK)* Hey!

JACK: *(same time as JILL)* Jill!

MRS. STEEL: I told you to stay away and I meant it.

JILL: You can't scare us off with sticks!

JACK: There are lots of families who have been praying for miracles.

JILL: People worse off than you.

MRS. STEEL: Worse off. Me with five kids to feed and a husband with no job because the factory closed? Twenty years he worked there, for nothing.

JACK: My dad lost his job, too. So did my brother.

MRS. STEEL: Then I guess you should have gotten up earlier this morning. *(gesturing to the food)* This here is first come, first served, and that was me. It's not free any longer.

JACK: Come on, Jill.

JILL: No. I'm not going to let her do this.

MRS. STEEL: *(holding up her branch)* Get out of here!

JACK: Come on.

JILL: We can't let her...

JACK: Would you step into my office?

JACK guides JILL to the front of the downstage bush. They keep their voices low to make sure that MRS. STEEL doesn't overhear them.

JILL: What are you doing? We can't just –

JACK: How is she going to get all the food off the hill?

JILL: How is she...

JACK: She's only one person and her family doesn't know. At most, she'll only be able to take what she can carry.

JILL: Which won't be much, leaving the majority...

JACK: For the town.

JILL: What do we do?

JACK: Wait her out?

JILL: I'll get my dad. He'll know exactly how to handle this. (*she hugs JACK*) Back in a flash.

JILL exits. JACK peers through the bush at MRS. STEEL.

MRS. STEEL: The bush isn't that dense. I can see you. (*JACK comes out from behind the bush.*) Where is she going?

JACK: Jill – um – had to go back to town.

MRS. STEEL: Gone to get her father, no doubt. Well. Let him come. Let him and his goons come. Let them try to lay one finger on me, I'll take them all, I'll...

MRS. STEEL pauses. She knows she would not win. She throws down the branch and falls to her knees.

(*praying, not to JACK*) I know I haven't been good. It's been so hard lately. Please don't let them take it away. Please. (*getting up off her knees, trying to hide her tears from JACK*) I'll give you whatever you want. Just please go get my husband and the boys. What do you want? Money?

JACK: I'm not taking your money.

MRS. STEEL: You want food? Get my husband and I'll give you a basket. Two!

JACK: Mrs. Steel.

MRS. STEEL: As much as you can carry.

JACK: No.

MRS. STEEL: Half. I'll give you half, I'll give you...

JACK: Stop it! We're gonna wait for the Mayor. We're gonna divide this up fair and square.

MRS. STEEL: That's your girlie-girl talking. Rich people are always into sharing.

JACK: It was my idea.

MRS. STEEL: What are you doing with her? She's not your type. Doesn't she usually date football players and pimple-faced boys on the debate team?

JACK: I like her.

MRS. STEEL: You're the next charity case for the Jenkins clan. Clean up the boy from the wrong side of the tracks.

JACK: I am not a charity case.

MRS. STEEL: Her parents probably put her up to it.

JACK: It's not like that! (*walks away*)

MRS. STEEL: I'm sorry. You don't have to get mad. Talk to me. How's your mother?

JACK: (*she's not*) She's fine.

MRS. STEEL: Is she still not feeling well?

JACK: She's alright. Melody sent her a real nice card. Could you thank her for me?

MRS. STEEL: You should thank her yourself.

JACK: Yeah, well...

MRS. STEEL: Whatever happened between you and my Melody?

JACK: Nothing.

MRS. STEEL: I used to really enjoy your visits on Sunday afternoon.

JACK: It just didn't work out.

MRS. STEEL: Is she not good enough for you?

JACK: Of course she is.

MRS. STEEL: She was nuts about you. Crazy. At least you had the decency to break up with her proper before going out with Little Miss Jenkins.

JACK: Me going out with Jill had nothing to do with Melody.

MRS. STEEL: You promised to take her away from here.

JACK: I never did! She's the one who had it in her... it doesn't matter.

MRS. STEEL: Not to you.

There is a moment where JACK and MRS. STEEL look at each other. MRS. STEEL breaks away and turns to stare at the food. She looks up.

MRS. STEEL: *(looking up)* If you want to punish me, so be it.

MRS. STEEL starts to fill her pockets with food.

JACK: What are you doing?

MRS. STEEL: I'm not waiting for my "fair share."

JACK: *(moving forward)* You can't do that.

MRS. STEEL: DON'T YOU TOUCH ME! If you knew what was good for you, you'd grab what you could. When was the last time your mother had a good meal?

JACK: I don't know.

MRS. STEEL: Don't turn your back on your own, Jack.

MRS. STEEL grabs two baskets and exits. JACK stares at the piles of food.

JACK: There sure is a lot here.

He hunkers down and stares at the food. He reaches out a hand, just to touch one of the baskets. Suddenly, he wrenches his hand back and moves as far away as he can.

(to self) Jack, Jack. What are you doing? You just spent five minutes giving grief to Mrs. Steel and you're ready to do the same thing! *(stares at the food again)* Maybe she's right. My mom could use a good meal... No one is going to miss one basket. Right? *(he touches a basket and jerks his hand away)* Everyone should get a fair share. But still... it's not for me. If it's for my mother, it can't be bad, right?

He picks up a basket and starts to drag it off downstage. BETTY, BONNIE, and BECKY enter in front of the downstage bush.

GIRLS: Hi, Jack!

JACK drops the basket and backs away from it.

JACK: What is with people on this hill this morning?

BETTY: Don't have a fit, Jack. It's only us.

JACK: What are you doing up here?

BONNIE: We always hike on the weekends.

BECKY: Keeps us in shape.

GIRLS: Uh huh.

JACK: *(trying to redirect the GIRLS offstage)* Well, I won't stop you.
Happy hiking!

The GIRLS take in a deep breath.

GIRLS: We also smelled something...

BETTY: ...heavenly.

BECKY: Something...

BONNIE: ...delicious.

GIRLS: We never go this way but...

They take in a deep sniff, move around the bush and notice the picnic.

BONNIE: Hey!

BECKY: Look at all this food.

BETTY: It smells so... beautiful.

The GIRLS rush forward and JACK tries to get in their way.

JACK: *(jumping forward)* Don't touch it!

GIRLS: *(jumping back)* Oh!

BECKY: No need to be rude.

BETTY: We wouldn't dream of touching your picnic.

BECKY: Even though there is enough here to feed an army.

JACK: It's not mine.

GIRLS: Oh?

JACK: It's for the town.

GIRLS: Oh...

JACK: We're gonna set up a food bank. Give a little bit to everyone.

BONNIE: If it's for the town, how come you were sneaking off with a basket?

JACK: I wasn't.

BETTY: Where's your better half?

GIRLS: Jack and Jill went up the hill.

BECKY: And who knows what they do there...

BETTY: (*coming across the sign*) Hey girls, look at this.

JACK: Don't you have anything better to do?

BECKY: Free food.

BONNIE: Free food?

GIRLS: (*to JACK*) Not yours.

JACK: I never said it was mine. I just said it was going to be for the town.

BETTY: So, we could take some if we wanted to...

GIRLS: ...and you couldn't stop us.

JACK: It's for the town.

BONNIE: I'm from the town and my family could really use some of this.

BECKY: And mine!

BETTY: And mine!

JACK: And they'll get some. Everyone is going to get a share.

GIRLS: Uh huh.

BECKY: How much?

JACK: I don't know.

BETTY: Come on, girls.

They start towards the baskets. JACK tries to hold them back.

JACK: Wait! Why can't you just wait?

BETTY: What would Jill say if we told her we saw you sneaking off with a basket?

JACK: I wasn't sneaking!

BONNIE: But you were.

BECKY: Don't get us wrong, we don't really care what you do.

BONNIE: But if you want to play fair, play fair.

BETTY: If you want to play another way...

JACK: Alright. Take one basket.

BECKY: (*picking up a basket*) Pleasure doing business with you.

GIRLS: Bye, Jack!

The GIRLS leave.

JACK: There go the three biggest mouths in the entire town. Maybe this isn't such a good idea. Maybe we should let people fend for themselves. Maybe... I should take a basket, and be back before Jill gets here.

He pauses for a moment. Then grabs a basket and exits. Music plays. Blackout.

SCENE 2

The lights come up on a spotlight downstage where the MAYOR stands.

MAYOR: I know times have been hard. These past few years have been a struggle. It is an honour and a privilege to be standing here today, able to distribute this gift to all of you. After a lengthy discussion, the town council has decided every family will fill out a form giving a detailed description of their situation and then we will divide the food according to need.

At the end of the speech, the lights come up full. The food is now cordoned off and GUARDS continually patrol the area keeping the TOWNSPEOPLE away from it. JACK and JILL are there as well, but stand apart. As the lights come up, the MAYOR should move

so that he is addressing the TOWNSPEOPLE instead of the audience.

TOWNSPERSON 1: That's not fair!

TOWNSPERSON 2: Why should some of us get less?

TOWNSPERSON 3: Some of us deserve more!

TOWNSPERSON 4: What do you mean, "deserve"?

TOWNSPERSON 5: My kids are twice as skinny as yours.

TOWNSPERSON 6: I'm not filling out nothing!

TOWNSPERSON 7: I say, if the food is free, what are we waiting for?

TOWNSPERSON 8: Everyone for themselves!!

The TOWNSPEOPLE verbally and physically react. Some people begin to push forward, arguing about who should get what. They are kept back by the GUARDS.

TOWNSPEOPLE: (*chanting as they push*) Free food! Free food! Free food! (*continuing*)

MAYOR: (*speaking over the above action*) Now, folks. If everyone is going to push and shove, I'm going to have to make this a restricted area. (*now commanding*) Back away! Now!

MRS. BROWN pushes her way to the front.

MRS. BROWN: Please! Stop!! The longer we fight about this, the longer the food sits there. I don't know who deserves more or needs more. I'm happy to take anything I can get and I don't want to lose out because we can't stop arguing. Fill in your form and leave it at that. Please!

TOWNSPERSON 1: Who decides who gets what?

MAYOR: Once the forms come in, I will read them all and –

There is a rumble as some people like this and some don't.

MRS. STEEL: No offense, but your family and my family don't exactly get along. You might decide that you don't like me enough to give me any.

TOWNSPERSON 4: You shouldn't get any!

MRS. STEEL: (*looking around*) Who said that?

TOWNSPERSON 4: Your kids can't keep a secret.

MRS. STEEL: You keep your mouth shut or I'll shut it for you.

TOWNSPERSON 4: Just you try it!

MAYOR: (*trying to regain control*) I would behave in the most objective manner.

TOWNSPERSON 5: How do we know?

TOWNSPERSON 6: What if Mrs. Steel is right? What if you play favourites?

TOWNSPERSON 7: If this ain't gonna be fair, I'm not filling out anything!

TOWNSPERSON 8: Everyone for themselves!

Another roar runs through the TOWNSPEOPLE. Some argue, and others try to stop the arguing.

JILL: This is crazy!

JACK: They're never going to be able to work this out.

JILL: I wish we never found it!

JACK: Too late now.

A piercing whistle stops everyone in their tracks. A voice is heard.

STRANGER: Sounds like you could use some help.

MAYOR: Who said that?

The sea of people parts and the STRANGER comes forward.

STRANGER: I did.

MAYOR: And who are you?

STRANGER: A traveler.

TOWNSPERSON 1: Traveling where?

STRANGER: Around. Anywhere the road takes me.

MRS. STEEL: (*darkly*) How touching.

STRANGER: I was passing by when I heard yelling coming from the hill.

TOWNSPERSON 8: Don't concern yourself.

TOWNSPERSON 2: Yeah. Mind your own business.

STRANGER: Sounds like you have a problem. I could offer an objective point of view.

MRS. BROWN: That might be a good idea...

MRS. STEEL: We don't need an outsider butting into our lives.

TOWNSPERSON 7: That's right.

TOWNSPERSON 3: You keep on passing by.

STRANGER: I'm just trying to help.

MRS. STEEL: We don't need it!

TOWNSPERSON 7: What if you want in on the deal?

TOWNSPERSON 4: That's right!

TOWNSPERSON 6: What if your help comes with a price?

TOWNSPERSON 5: Maybe you try to make off with as much as you can handle.

TOWNSPERSON 1: You're here to steal what's ours!

TOWNSPERSON 8: You won't get it!

They start to advance on the STRANGER. MRS. BROWN throws herself in front of the STRANGER.

MRS. BROWN: NO! Stop it! (*the TOWNSPEOPLE are quieted*) We are not a lynch mob. We do not attack strangers because we assume they mean to do us harm. We are civilized people and we will act accordingly. (*the TOWNSPEOPLE grumble.*) Is that clear?

MAYOR: Thank you, Mrs. Brown.

STRANGER: Yes, thank you. (*to TOWNSPEOPLE*) I don't want your food. How can I convince you of that? What if I were to sign a contract?

TOWNSPERSON 6: A contract is just a piece of paper.

TOWNSPERSON 5: Paper is easily ripped and torn.

STRANGER: What about something a little more concrete? What about my life?

There is a murmur among the TOWNSPEOPLE.

JILL: What's that supposed to mean?

JACK: I don't know.

STRANGER: If I cheat you in any way, you can have my life to do with as you please. Put me in jail. Put me to work. I'll do anything for as long as you like and I won't complain.

MAYOR: It still seems...

MRS. BROWN: I don't like it.

TOWNSPERSON 4: I do!

TOWNSPERSON 6: Shows seriousness!

MRS. STEEL: Mrs. Brown is right. We need an outsider.

TOWNSPERSON 5: Someone who doesn't know us.

TOWNSPERSON 1: It's a great idea!

TOWNSPERSON 8: Where are those forms?

JACK: (to JILL) What do you think?

JILL: It sounds weird.

There is a flurry as people get the forms.

MAYOR: (handing out forms) Here you are, here you are. No shoving, please. There's plenty for everyone. Now, why don't you take these home to your families and...

TOWNSPERSON 3: No way. I'm filling this out right here, right now.

TOWNSPERSON 2: I want mine on the top of the pile.

TOWNSPERSON 8: Who's got a pencil?

MAYOR: Before you all get started, I have an announcement. I want to say, in front of the people in my town, that my family will not be filling out a form. We will concede our share so that a little more can go to all of you.

There is a round of applause.

JACK: Did you know he was going to say that?

JILL: Not at all. Wow. I can't believe it!

She runs to hug her dad.

STRANGER: That is very generous of you, Mayor.

MAYOR: It is the least I can do.

TOWNSPERSON 1: Shut up, I'm trying to think!

Four TOWNSPEOPLE step forward as the rest work on their forms.

ALL: In your own words, please describe your present situation.

TOWNSPERSON 4: Times have been rough since the factory closed.

TOWNSPERSON 5: There aren't any jobs here but there's no money to move my family anywhere else.

TOWNSPERSON 6: We can't take the risk.

TOWNSPERSON 7: So we sit and wait for better days.

TOWNSPERSON 4: And to be honest...

ALL: To be honest about my situation...

There is a pause as they consider what they will write to get the most food.

TOWNSPERSON 5: I have been out of work for two years.

TOWNSPERSON 6: I'm all alone with my three children.

TOWNSPERSON 7: We've got four children.

TOWNSPERSON 4: Seven children.

TOWNSPERSON 5: Twelve children.

ALL: All under the age of ten. *(they scratch that out)* Eight. *(they scratch that out)* Three.

TOWNSPERSON 6: It's madness.

TOWNSPERSON 7: Jobs are scarce these days.

TOWNSPERSON 4: There's nothing in these parts.

TOWNSPERSON 5: Nobody's hiring.

TOWNSPERSON 6: My house is falling apart.

TOWNSPERSON 7: I need a new roof.

TOWNSPERSON 4: I only have one leg and one arm.

TOWNSPERSON 5: I have no legs and a chemical imbalance.

TOWNSPERSON 6: I have no legs and no arms. I am a stump. And I live on the second floor. I have to climb stairs.

TOWNSPERSON 7: Surely you can see I need more than my fair share.

ALL: Please help.

The TOWNSPEOPLE continue to write furiously. The MAYOR calls out to JILL.

MAYOR: Jill, can I have a word with you?

The MAYOR pulls JILL aside. They are facing downstage, away from the people.

JILL: Dad, I'm so proud of you. I can't believe you did that!

MAYOR: Let's move over here away from the crowd.

JILL: Um, sure. What's up?

MAYOR: (*bring out a form from their pocket*) Take this form and fill it out. Quickly, girl, fold it up. We don't want people to see.

JILL: (*folding the form*) But you said...

MAYOR: That was for the town. We deserve just as much as anyone else.

JILL: Won't you look a little silly carrying a basket when you've...

MAYOR: Never you mind. It will all be managed. Make sure you do it in secret and don't tell anyone, especially Jack. We wouldn't want anyone to get the wrong idea.

The MAYOR walks away. JILL stares after him as MRS. STEEL approaches JACK.

MRS. STEEL: Don't you want your form?

JACK: (*taking it*) Thanks.

MRS. STEEL: Did you follow through with that idea we talked about yesterday? (*JACK doesn't answer*) I hope you did. All your mother needs is a decent meal, just like the ones my sons got last night.

JACK: (*loudly*) What are you doing here, anyway?

MRS. STEEL: Lower your voice. Ha, ha, ha, you're such a kidder, Jack.
(she pulls him to the side) I do whatever I have to for my family. So should you.

MRS. STEEL walks away and hands her completed form to the MAYOR. During the following, everyone else hands theirs in, too. JILL walks over to JACK.

JILL: Hey.

JACK: Hey.

JILL: What did Mrs. Steel want?

JACK: Huh? Nothing. What did your Dad want?

JILL: Oh, nothing.

MAYOR: That's it, everyone. Hand those forms in, right over here.
 Now. I am going to go back to my office and organize them for our new friend here and...

There is a general cry of dismay.

TOWNSPERSON 1: Back to your office??

TOWNSPERSON 8: I don't believe it.

STRANGER: That won't be necessary.

MAYOR: We want this process to be organized.

MRS. STEEL: You want to read our forms!!

There is a general cry of agreement.

STRANGER: It seems to me that everyone wants this decided as soon as possible. It might be better if I read them right away. *(takes them from the MAYOR)*

MAYOR: Of course. Why don't you come down the hill and I'll set you up...

STRANGER: I think I'll sit here. The view is beautiful.

MAYOR: It'll be dark soon.

STRANGER: I have a flashlight.

MAYOR: It gets cold.

STRANGER: I have a sweater.

TOWNSPERSON 2: What's the matter, Mayor?

MAYOR: Nothing. Why don't we leave our new friend in peace and quiet to...

STRANGER: I don't mind if people stay. (*smiling*) As long as they're not reading over my shoulder.

MAYOR: Yes. Well. Read away!

As people start to settle, MAYOR approaches JACK and JILL.

MAYOR: Hello, Jack. How are you?

JACK: I'm...

MAYOR: (*not listening*) Good, good. I need to steal Jill for a moment.

He pulls JILL to the side so that no one can hear their conversation.

MAYOR: Have you filled out that form yet?

JILL: Look, Dad, I wanted to talk to you about...

MAYOR: There's a change in plans.

JILL: Dad!

MAYOR: We're going to take a two pronged approach. Sometime tonight, my men are going to sneak a basket away. And I want you to get into a conversation with the stranger and slip the form into the pile. (*JILL does not respond*) Alright?

JILL: I don't want to.

MAYOR: I didn't ask if you wanted to. I'm telling you to do it. It's for our family, Jill.

Music plays. The MAYOR walks away. Lights fade.

SCENE 3

A series of tableaux to show the waiting TOWNSPEOPLE. They should look like snapshots. The blackouts between each picture should be as short as possible.

1. Lights up. Everyone is actively staring at the STRANGER. Lights down.

2. *Lights up. Everyone is getting tired. The STRANGER is still reading. Lights down.*

3. *Lights up. Everyone is asleep. The STRANGER is still reading.*

It is the middle of the night. The STRANGER sits upstage with a flashlight, facing away from the group. Everyone is asleep and dreaming of food. The GUARDS stand at attention. Music fades.

TOWNSPEOPLE: (*dream-like voices*) Free Food. Freeeeeeee Fooooood.

BETTY, BONNIE and BECKY sneak on downstage to stand by one of the GUARDS – ROBBY.

GIRLS: (*whispering*) Psst! Hey, Robby.

ROBBY: Shhh. People are trying to sleep.

BETTY: So. You get to be a guard, huh?

ROBBY: (*proud*) That's right.

BONNIE: You must be pretty important.

ROBBY: The mayor hand-picked me special.

GIRLS: Wow.

ROBBY: Shhhh.

BONNIE: It sure does look like an awful lot of food.

ROBBY: Sure is.

BETTY: Do you ever think about taking a basket?

ROBBY: (*shocked*) No.

BONNIE: Not even one?

BETTY: For your family?

BECKY: How's your family doing, Robby?

ROBBY: Not too good. We got a huge hole in the roof that leaks like crazy when it rains.

BETTY: Must be cold too.

ROBBY: Yeah, sometimes.

BONNIE: Wouldn't it be nice to have a big bowl of soup?

BECKY: Some fried chicken?

BETTY: Potato salad?

ROBBY: Oh, I love potato salad.

BETTY: You do? Well, Becky's got some, don't you Becky?

BECKY: Uh huh. (*pointing off*) It's over there. Why don't you come with me?

ROBBY: But what about my post?

BONNIE: Betty and I will keep an eye out.

ROBBY: Well...

BETTY: We'll whistle if we see anyone. Promise.

ROBBY: OK.

BECKY leads ROBBY behind a bush.

BETTY: That was easier than I thought it would be.

BONNIE: Shhhhh. Where's that wheelbarrow?

BETTY: Just behind the bush. Let's start loading.

They quietly take some baskets offstage. The TOWNSPEOPLE turn in their sleep.

TOWNSPEOPLE: (*dream-like voices*) Free Food. Freeeeee Fooodood.

The lights change to focus on two of the TOWNSPEOPLE.

TOWNSPERSON 2: Look!

TOWNSPERSON 3: What?

TOWNSPERSON 2: Johnny is asleep on his feet.

TOWNSPERSON 3: What about the other guards?

TOWNSPERSON 2: They're not looking this way. We could slip out a few things.

TOWNSPERSON 3: What about the forms?

TOWNSPERSON 2: We deserve a little extra, don't you think?



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