

**Some Of Us Kill
Werewolf In The Hall**

Two One Act Plays
by
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Some Of Us Kill

7-F; 2-M

Cast:

Minori Beleze:	20's – 50's	Afghan woman
Dirk Ryan:	20's – 60's	Captain, U.S. Army.
Todd Wells:	20's	Minori's friend.
Jessica Carroll:	20's – 60's	Dirk's wife.
Tilly Beleze:	30's	Minori's daughter.
Sgt. Hawkins:	30's	Minori's caseworker.
Interns (2)	20's	Females.
Tesla:	20's	Bartender

Time:

Present and distant future.

Place:

Afghanistan and Iowa

MINORI

My strange journey begins in 2010, at a U.S. Army outpost in Herat, Afghanistan, near the Iranian border. The briefing room is a tent, furnished with a folding table and two chairs. My interrogator is Captain Dirk Ryan.

DIRK

You're very good with a knife.

MINORI

Rapists deserve what they get.

DIRK

The mob wanted to kill you.

MINORI

Mob? Two old men. The fool's grandfather and an uncle. His father and brothers are in the mountains with your military. The old ones defend the old ways. Anything a man demands from a woman she must provide. I appeal to your humanity, Captain Ryan.

DIRK

We don't need the village against us.

MINORI

I understand. I speak good English. As you know. I am part English. I am not afraid to risk my safety to help rid my country of these evil men. I have heard that, in other villages, your military uses bilinguals like myself. I put myself at your disposal. If you wish.

DIRK

There's a waiting list.

MINORI

Would another candidate be too many?

(pause)

DIRK

Sergeant, escort Ms. Belize to the stockade. She's in protective custody.

MINORI

Thank you, Captain.

(Music to:)

DIRK

Headquarters. Captain Ryan. I need clearance on a local: Minori Beleze.

(Music to:)

DIRK

Sleep well, Ms. Beleze?

MINORI

Very well, Captain.

DIRK

We lost a field interpreter. Are you up to traveling?

MINORI

With a helmet and flak jacket?

DIRK

We can't lose someone with your talent.

MINORI

Language is one of my talents.

DIRK

You do pretty well with a knife.

MINORI

I can shear a sheep. Pluck a chicken. Harvest a crop. Defend myself. Make special anything that is commonplace.

DIRK

We move out at dusk.

MINORI

(to audience)

Soon I will be showing. Captain Ryan must arrange transportation to a military hospital. After, I beg transport to the United States or Britain. A clever girl who speaks the liberator's language will always succeed.

(Gun fire.)

(SHE screams)

(Music to:)

DIRK

Who was he?

MINORI

I do not know.

DIRK

He knew you. Killed two of my people to get to you.

MINORI

If you leave before they are defeated, I will be killed. To die without accomplishing anything is like bathing in dirt.

DIRK

Surviving I understand. What else do you want?

MINORI

I want freedom. To live as your women live. To choose a career. A lover. (beat) Stupid Afghan men.

DIRK

What else?

(pause)

MINORI

One of many sins punishable by death is being pregnant out of wedlock. I'm frightened for my child, Captain. Will you rescue me and my unborn? Will you, Captain?

(pause)

DIRK

A supply convoy from Kabel is due in the morning. When they leave here, you leave with them.

MINORI

What is my status?

DIRK

Cooperating civilian. After your child's born make your deal. Have a safe journey.

(Explosion.)

DIRK

(screams)

My legs!

(Music to:)

DIRK

(to audience)

After the investigation, I was given this possible scenario. Minori's intended assassin planted the bomb. The earlier attempt on her life was a diversion. The explosion got them into the compound. Was she the intended target? Was she a participant? (beat) I didn't participate in the investigation, or the hearing. I was busy with the Army cut doctors.

MINORI

(to audience)

The enemy almost over-ran the base. Many were lost on both sides. Two weeks after the assault I visited Captain Ryan at the military hospital in Kabul.

(Music to:)

MINORI

How are you, Captain?

DIRK

Super. You?

MINORI

Unharmmed.

DIRK

The baby?

MINORI

About to join us.

DIRK

What's your future like?

MINORI

I hope to be sent to England. As a translator.

DIRK

Don't they speak English there?

MINORI

What? Of course. Oh. A joke.

DIRK

I guess.

MINORI

I passed the preliminary written and oral exams. I have a second series to complete.
Then an assignment. Will you re-join your unit?

DIRK

What's left has been re-assigned. I'll finish my tour stateside.

MINORI

For a time your people thought I was involved in the attack.

DIRK

If you were, you'd be counting the decades, inside.

(pause)

MINORI

I'm glad you're doing well.

DIRK

I'm glad we're fine.

MINORI

May I show my appreciation?

DIRK

Careful. That's how you got in this predicament.

MINORI

Why, Captain. It's only a kiss.

(music to:)

DIRK

(to audience)

After months of therapy I was assigned to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Old lost-in-the-woods, as the base is lovingly called. It's a training center. Combat Engineers. Infantry. Artillery. I was at my desk, listening to the cannons, fighting the shakes, when I received an E-Mail from Kabel. From Minori's caseworker: Sergeant Hawkins.

HAWKINS

Last week the subject gave birth to a healthy girl, seven pounds, eight ounces. She went into labor after completing the advanced Military Occupational Specialty battery. She has been recommended for immediate placement. She listed you as a reference.

DIRK

Sergeant Hawkins. The advanced M.O.S. exams can induce labor, or horrific stomach upset. The Herat incursion cost me most of my men and women, and my legs. Ms.

Beleze was quartered on-post at the time of the attack. A giant question mark hangs over her head. Because of her family obligations she should be given passage out of Afghanistan. Recommendation for federal employment not recommended.

MINORI

(to audience)

Four weeks later I was flown to an air force base in the Midwest United States. I applied for U.S. citizenship. I was issued a green card and one month's lodging at a shelter. The counselors there placed me in food service. A squat and gobble hired me soon after. My file, with Captain Ryan's recommendations, was dispersed to all government agencies. I would never work for the Fed or for anyone doing business with the Fed. I tried to reach Captain Ryan, to get his help clearing my record.

DIRK

(audience)

Her E-Mails followed me to all my final assignments.

MINORI

My dear Captain Ryan. Perhaps you remember me.

DIRK

(audience)

Each time I wash the calluses where my knees had been, I remember her.

MINORI

Dirk, I scored well in the placement exams. I was not employed in any capacity, including entry-level clerical. Can you help?

DIRK

Sorry, hon, I'm fighting another war.

MINORI

(audience)

One reply. (beat) Two years later I gave up. I had Tilly, my baby. (beat) On a cross-country bus - Omaha to Iowa City - I lost my modesty.

(Baby crying)

MINORI

(to TILLY)

There, there, dearest. Mama will feed you. Sir, do you mind?

TODD

Mind what?

MINORI

My Tilly is hungry.

TODD

Will a buck do it?

MINORI

Do what?

TODD

Buy her a pint of milk.

MINORI

Uh, I nurse her. Will it offend you?

TODD

Not at all.

MINORI

My, my, you are hungry. (to TODD) Like what you see, mister?

TODD

I'm a hundred percent in favor of motherhood.

MINORI

I'm sure you are.

TODD

You look super. No offense.

MINORI

(to TILLY)

Have you a nice belch, dear?

TODD

After lunch, maybe.

MINORI

I was speaking to Tilly. My tiny Tilly. (beat) Good girl.

TODD

Nice name. Tilly. What's her mother's name?

MINORI

Minori Beleze.

TODD

Todd Welles. Going Far?

MINORI

Iowa City.

TODD

Family there?

MINORI

A job. I hope.

TODD

Economy's pretty solid there. What're your skills?

MINORI

Unskilled. Dishwashing. Busing. Second cook. Diners. Nursing homes.

TODD

I belong to the Up and Out Club. A dinner club in Iowa City. Hungry?

MINORI

That's kind of you to ask.

TODD

Kindness has nothing to do with it.

MINORI

It never is. I'm not a prostitute.

TODD

I'm not a john.

MINORI

I know you're not. You said your name is Todd.

TODD

A prostitute's male customers are called johns. What makes you happy, Minori?

MINORI

When Tilly sleeps. When I can afford to buy her little outfits. That makes me happy.

Buying her solid "chew" food when she's ready will make me happy.

TODD

Meeting new people on a crowded, sweat-stinking bus? Does that make you hopeful?

MINORI

I suppose. Ten more miles, according to the freeway sign.

TODD

At least we can share a meal; see where that takes us.

MINORI

Can't you afford two meals?

TODD

Just an expression. Like breaking bread. We don't break anything. Don't you see?

MINORI

I see quite well.

TODD

Uh, okay.

MINORI

Where do you expect this meal to take us?

TODD

To wherever we are meant to be.

MINORI

To your dinner club.

TODD

Beyond that, I hope.

MINORI

(softly)

I don't know.

(Music to:)

(Clatter of dishes)

MINORI

Mr. Welles, that was delicious. Truly, it was.

TODD

Coffee?

MINORI

Water is fine.

TODD

Tell me about yourself.

MINORI

I've had my adventures. And you?

TODD

Flat feet kept me out of the service. I sell insurance. Deacon in my church. I just came back from a regional meeting in Omaha. I could have driven. Something told me to take the bus.

MINORI

The high cost of motor fuel?

TODD

That was part of it.

MINORI

My choices were: stay in Omaha and collect unemployment benefits. Or walk here. Or take the bus.

TODD

The divine hand, stirring the pot.

MINORI

Whatever you say.

(Music to:)

DIRK

(audience)

My grand daddy used to say: We're born, looking at three strikes. If we're born with the thirst, we have eight hundred strikes to suffer with. (beat) My war continued with the battle of the bottlea losing battle for awhile. I drew disability. The monthlies were

direct deposited and the bank had power of attorney to pay the bills. I was too busy doing that uncorking thing that drunks like to do. Best exercise there is, opening a full bottle, gazing at-the contents, licking the cap before that first pour. Back then Overholt was cheap and potent. I bought it by the case. I gave away my books. I had no desire to read anything, except labels. After four or five years - I hated reading calendars - I developed ulcers, stomach to stumps. The booze, by then, wasn't helping; I spent the days and most nights fighting shadows. As they increased, so did the thirst. And the blackouts. I sold one of the add-ons and was about to sell the other one when I found myself with a caseworker, and a long four months at a V.A. rehab center. Sober, I looked around for something to fill the time sober, endless time. The local five hundred watt A.M. radio station, KSLZ, needed a night DJ. Minimum wage.

(Music to:)

DIRK

(announcing)

Aw-right, lads and lassies, this is your Kay-sleaze late night delight two hundred pounds of pulchritude between the two turn tables Ryan Number One with Moodah and the Mayhem, kicking the kilocycles!

(Music up and out)

DIRK

On the job I drank coffee. Off the job it was tonic water Sober, I wanted companionship. My group therapy friends were married. The Finer Diner coffee sippers were solitary types; invites to enter their realities weren't given. So, for human warmth it was the Sip and Chin, next door to the station. Being there tested my commitment to sobriety. One night, lip-deep in tonic water, my life got better.

(Bar sounds)

JESSICA

Mind if I join your party?

DIRK

It's just me and that guy sleeping over there.

JESSICA

Tesla pointed you out.

DIRK

I don't take requests.

JESSICA

Keep playing good music; that's my only request.

DIRK

I'll take my bow, sitting down.

JESSICA

It's sad - a talent like you - alone. Buy you a drink?

DIRK

Buy me two, if your budget can handle it.

JESSICA

May I introduce myself?

(pause)

DIRK

Waiting for a drum roll? Like mail delivery on Saturday, it isn't coming.

JESSICA

Like our drinks. Still in the bottle, I guess.

DIRK

Hey, Tesla! Over here!

JESSICA

Jessica Carroll. High school girls coach. Volleyball and every other ball.

DIRK

First offense?

JESSICA

Yes.

DIRK

They start here. Stay awhile. Move on.

JESSICA

I'm staying.

DIRK

Same here. I own the shack off the highway.

JESSICA

I rent a sleeping room in Ma Bailey's boarding house.

DIRK

Wow. She never rents to people she doesn't know.

JESSICA

Or strangers who aren't sent by someone she knows. I liked that movie, too.(beat) She put up a for-rent sign on the teachers bulletin board. (beat) So, besides radio, what else have you done?

DIRK

Growing up here I mowed lawns, shoveled snow, delivered the weekly paper. Delivered groceries in the family car. The Army, right out of high school. K.S.L.Z. right now.

JESSICA

Ryan Number One sounds comfortable on the air.

DIRK

After Afghanistan, who's afraid of the microphone?

JESSICA

First radio job?

DIRK

While I was doing physical therapy at Walter Reed, I played CD tracks on their closed circuit system.

TESLA

Last call.

JESSICA

Buy me a coffee?

DIRK

Diner's closed.

JESSICA

How about that shack near the highway?

(Music to:)

MINORI

(audience)

Todd got me a job at the Up and Down dinner club. I washed dishes and bused tables from four to four. The one room apartment Tilly and I shared was in the basement of a converted two-story house five blocks from the club and three blocks from Tilly's day care. After work Todd and I went for coffee. That was the routine for a year.

(Music to:)

(diner sounds)

TODD

Minnie, are you ready to become more than just my friend?

MINORI

What are you suggesting?

TODD

I'm not suggesting - I'm offering to become Tilly's father. Your husband.

MINORI

What about your wife?

TODD

The divorce is almost final. I don't want to push you into a decision.

Then don't.

(Music to:)

MINORI

(to audience)

For two years he kept proposing. I kept refusing. I didn't want to hurt him. I couldn't be his mate. I don't know why. It would be easy. I was never a believable actress.

TODD

Minnie, my bed's like main street in winter. Without the potholes.

MINORI

I can't. Not right now.

TODD

I'd be good to you and the wee one.

MINORI

Haven't you been? Of course you have. Someday, perhaps, we can be what you want us to be.

TODD

That's it?

MINORI

For now. (beat) In Herat I was pressured into committing an act that I still regret. I don't mean getting pregnant. The enemy threatened my parents, my unborn. I betrayed the only country willing to free Afghanistan. What you want, Todd, I cannot provide. I won't be coerced into the decision you want. I'm sorry, Todd.

TODD

Me, too.

(Music to:)

DIRK

(audience)

Jess moved in, one room at a time, beginning with the kitchen. Spaghetti and meatballs. Polish dogs and kraut. Corned beef and cabbage. Red beans and rice. Baked chicken. Chili. Lean ground beef with chopped onions. Rib eye. And, when she knew me better, it was scrambled eggs with melted American cheese, at dawn. Bacon so crisp it splintered. Twice toasted English muffins that'd make the Queen Mother proud. One year went by. It was June again. We sat on our porch, a pitcher of iced tea on the table between us. She reminded me of our anniversary. She didn't have to.

JESSICA

Remember, honey?

DIRK

Before we met, my elbow-bending created a breeze.

JESSICA

A summer howler.

DIRK

Slowed me down. Your gift.

JESSICA

The sacrifice was yours.

DIRK

One day, one minute at a time.

JESSICA

In the shower, the girls give me a look. I'd love to give them something to see.

DIRK

Have you seen a doctor?

JESSICA

An Ob-gyn in Iowa City.

DIRK

What's he say?

JESSICA

She said I'm healthy. Our babies should be, too.

DIRK

How many? Two?

JESSICA

T-O-O. As in: "also."

DIRK

Not if their old man's a lush.

JESSICA

Whenever you're ready.

DIRK

I'm ready now. My brain's telling me to wait.

JESSICA

We will.

(pause)

DIRK

Jess, at Fort Leonard Wood, my field first sergeant's name was: Jenks. The troops called her: Jinx. When she ran them on those twenty-five mile strolls through the Ozark foothills with full field pack, her recruits felt jinxed. One afternoon in July when it was a hundred and five, while the company prepared for equipment and barracks inspection, we sat in the office and talked. Her private life, off post, was structured.

She and her husband, a supply sergeant, would sit in the kitchen, share a beer. Talk about their day. Go over the mail. Scratch the dog's ears. Wash up. He made the salad. She made the rest of the meal. Saturday morning, after Formation and Inspection, they'd grocery shop. Saturday night they took in a movie or square danced at the Waynesville Community Church. After, they stopped for steak sandwiches and tall tappers. If it was me I'd skip the sandwich, go right for the "wet." I'd pour it down until I ran out of money, or the bar ran out of booze, or I passed out in a puddle on the floor. The booze-a-torium in Waynesville slapped a limit on how much they'd sell me. I could back slide. Until I can handle the thirst and know that I can, no kids.

(Music to:)

MINORI

(to audience)

I was promoted to hostess. It took five years for this to happen. I saw Todd occasionally. He kept his membership in the club. We exchanged dispassionate looks while I seated him and his hungry harem. I suppose I could have faked an interest. I was exhausted. I couldn't fake a sneeze in an Iowa alfalfa field in August. Last year Todd married a widow, moved to Omaha, Nebraska. She owned property there. Days she harassed her tenants. Nights she performed at comedy clubs in and around Omaha. Last month my employer filed bankruptcy. I wait tables now. Wash dishes. Twelve hours every day. I feel my age plus twenty years. (beat) Tilly loves first grade. She is the only joy in my life.

(Music to:)

JESSICA

(audience)

Well, it happened. Two years after we married, Dirk Junior arrived. Healthy. Loving. Dirk Senior managed K.S.L.Z. Then last year, when the talk format invaded Iowa, Dirk became manager of Iowa City's fifty thousand watt clear channel A.M. station.

DIRK

(to audience)

Jess accepted a coaching slot at a senior high school in Iowa City. Junior has no problem with day care.

MINORI

One night, after my shift, I phoned day care. They kept Tilly overnight. I needed a time-out. At five A.M. ,fighting the tightening chain around my ribs, I called nine-one-one. Stabilized, in the E.R., I slept.

DIRK

Hey, sleepy face. Sleeping the day away?

MINORI

Dirk, you found me.

DIRK

I'm always with you.

MINORI

I miss you. I never slowed down enough to realize how much.

DIRK

We have all the time in the world.

MINORI

Oh, Dirk. It hurts.

DIRK

For an instant.

INTERN #1

She's flat-lining!

INTERN #2

Crash cart!

(Music to:)

JESSICA

(audience)

The years passed like motorcycles on the freeway. Dirk Junior followed his father into broadcasting. He hosts the morning show on satellite radio: R.F.I. That stands for Radio Free Iowa, which it is not. Dirk Number Two, as he calls himself, married one of Iowa City's loveliest: Vicki Hawkins. Dirk Number Three is eight months old.

JESSICA

(to DIRK)

Hon, I told the kids you had sales meetings this afternoon. I can't babysit; I have to referee a teacher, parent, student free-for-all.

DIRK

Principals don't take a day off?

JESSICA

This one doesn't.

DIRK

Well, there's a day care near the station. From the outside, it looks clean.

JESSICA

Tanya, the new drama coach, drops hers at the Play Pen. For one afternoon our number three will be safe. I will call. Here's the address.

(Music to:)

DIRK

My wife called about your keeping our grandson this afternoon.

TILLY

Yes, Tanya Miller is your reference.

DIRK

That's right. Are you licensed?

TILLY

By the city and state. The certificates are on the wall there.

DIRK

What's your background?

TILLY

A life-long resident of Iowa City. Master's degree in education. I'm working toward a doctorate.

DIRK

My sleeping angel's in good company. Where do I sign?

TILLY

Will you excuse me while I run your card? Feel free to browse.

(Music to:)

DIRK

That photo on the wall, next to your license. Is that your mother?

TILLY

And the baby is me.

DIRK

Tell me about her.

TILLY

She fled Afghanistan during the war. Did restaurant stoop labor here. Died way too young.

(pause)

DIRK

She could take anything commonplace and make it special.

TILLY

She made our basement apartment a cozy, warm sanctuary.

DIRK

No men in her life?

TILLY

Mom was too busy.

DIRK

Did she talk about Afghanistan?

TILLY

Dodging mortar attacks kept them moving. That's all she said.

DIRK

Well, miss, I have to see a man about a dog.

TILLY

I've enjoyed our conversation. If you must buy a dog, I won't keep you.

DIRK

That's just an expression. Where's your bathroom?

TILLY

Right over there.

(Music to:)

DIRK

(to audience)

While I doused my face with cold water, I wondered: did I have the right to ruin Minori's life? (beat) We were at war. We had to be vigilant, and pray for wise choices.

(Music under)

DIRK

(to audience)

But forgive me if I blink rapidly and fade to black.

(Music up to:)

(Theme)

END

Werewolf In The Hall

5-M

Cast:

Norman Swift:	30's.	Werewolf
Jim Snivel:	50's.	Mayor
Bill Wisden:	40's.	CEO, The Wisden Company.
Warren Greggs:	40's	County Assessor
Man:	40's	Bum

Time:

Night. June, 2011.

Place:

In and around Freeman, Nebraska. Population: 400.

Story:

Greedy politicians try to take over a Midwest village. Benevolent werewolf tries to stop them.

NORMAN

(to audience)

I own the hardware store, off Freeman, Nebraska's village square. That's a block north of the square, between the Finer Diner and the town hall, facing the Delmar Hotel.

I work alone so I'm in better physical shape than most. I work alone because no one in this town of four hundred wants to work for me. That's okay - I still love them. I'm responsible for the up-turn in church attendance. Before I came back from a walking tour of Hungary - where my family was from - the Freeman Community Church was about to close. Low attendance. Before I returned to town the citizens wanted to sleep in on Sundays, and spend the day doing things that families do on a day off. My return changed their plans. Some sold out and moved to Omaha, forty-four miles southwest of here, off the interstate. Far enough away to avoid me. The ones who stayed here avoided me like, well, you know. What my neighbors don't know is what happened to me in Hungary. You know, don't you? All they know is the sweet-natured hardware store owner had changed. A few weeks after I came home, cattle started disappearing. The homeless guys who are everywhere these days were blamed. Then they began disappearing. One wild eyed, slobbering Monarch of the Macadam told the authorities:

MAN

We was passing the bottle when Ortha seen this wild dog, sniffing outside camp. I had to take a nature call and went behind a tree a few feet from the fire, when this hell hound howled, charged right in. Eight feet tall on its hind legs and weighin' a good five hundred pounds and mebbe a hundred of them pounds was hair. Brown as a fried hot

dog. Hollerin' loud as Satan's yelp at the end-uh the world. My buds was stoned on dream juice. They staggered, stumbled. The beast was faster than a Nebraska tornado in full blow. I stayed where I was. He sensed where I was. While he gorged, his eyes never left mine. Red they was. Large. The eyes of a ghetto rat. When my three buds was bone piles, he grunted, gave me a last look, took off toward town. I tell ya, officer, I couldn't move. Lordy, he moved so fast he blew the sweat off'n my forehead; the stink up into my nose.

NORMAN

(audience)

Three is my limit. Ya know, folks, cows are simple. Milk 'em regularly and they're satisfied. They have no knowledge of their mortality. Some homeless men don't care. When I'm hungry anything on two or four legs will do the job. You know what's a banquet? Crooked politicians.

SNIVEL

Aw-right now, the monthly meeting of the village and county of Freeman, Nebraska is now in session. Mayor James Snivel presiding. Today's date, for the record, is June 11, 2011. Tonight's scheduled speakers are: Mr. William Wisden, CEO of Wisden Manufacturing of Omaha, and Mr. Warren Greggs, Freeman County Assessor.

NORMAN

The two big sneezes.

SNIVEL

Now, Norman, show our guests some respect.

NORMAN

When they show us some.

(crowd mutterings)

SNIVEL

People, may I have your attention?

NORMAN

Take it. You're gonna take everything else.

SNIVEL

I heard that, Mr. Swift.

NORMAN

Mr. Mayor, I need to say how I feel. Everybody here seems too scared to speak.

SNIVEL

Everyone will have a chance. Folks, you know Warren Greggs.

(crowd)

SNIVEL

Mr. Greggs will address your concerns after Mr. Wisden has his "say".

NORMAN

Mr. Mayor, you don't know what's happening here.

SNIVEL

I know people cross the square when they see you coming. They buy their hardware supplies in Omaha. I've heard rumors and I don't care. To me you're Just another tax payer. Please sit, Norman. Let our speakers speak.

NORMAN

Lie, you mean.

(crowd)

SNIVEL

People, please. Settle down. Or this meeting will adjourn.

WISDEN

Thank you, Mayor Snivel. Folks, I'm Bill Wisden, President and CEO of Wisden Manufacturing of Omaha.

NORMAN

Go back there!

(crowd)

WISDEN

Folks, let me make this short and sweet. My company needs to grow. Needs to expand.

NORMAN

They run you out of Omaha? Or did you buy the whole town?

WISDEN

Sir, I know what's worrying you. I promise you we have no intention of displacing anyone.

NORMAN

Let us live our lives in the homes we grew up in, raised our kids in.

(crowd)

NORMAN

Go back to the sewer you crawled out of.

(crowd)

SNIVEL

People, please. Have some respect

NORMAN

Where's his respect, Mr. Mayor?

WISDEN

Let me finish. Please!

(crowd)

WISDEN

I brought a list of properties we want to purchase, and what we are willing to pay. If you reject my offers I will ask your county assessor to initiate eminent domain.

(crowd)

SNIVEL

Folks, please!

WISDEN

My offers are more than fair. More than you will receive if the Freeman County Board of Equalization declares eminent domain.

NORMAN

Mayor Snivel? Are you still board chairman?

SNIVEL

Well, what if I am?

WISDEN

Do any of you understand how eminent domain works?

(silence)

WISDEN

First, your properties, where you grew up and raised your kids, will be condemned.

Then speculators will rush in like flood waters after a spring thaw. These land grabbers will do just that; buy your whole town for bushel of apples. Then my offers won't seem so unreasonable. By then it will be too late. The land grabbers will have registered their bids, giving the county no choice but to accept them. By then the Wisden Company will have found other properties. Any questions?

NORMAN

Why aren't you wearing a mask? Carrying a gun? Then we'd know for sure who we were dealing with.

(crowd)

SNIVEL

Sit down!

NORMAN

Got to state my opinion. For the record.

SNIVEL

Well. . . . don't insult anyone.

NORMAN

Insult? We'd have to be dead not to be insulted. Tell ya what, Mr. Omaha-Big-Sneeze.

Kill us. Then we'd have guaranteed shelter.

(crowd)

SNIVEL

Regardless of what Mr. Swift thinks, you have rights here.

NORMAN

Last rites.

GREGGS

Those rights will be forfeited unless you compromise.

NORMAN

I tried to get you to ease the bite of my last evaluation, Greggs. You weren't in a compromising mood then.

GREGGS

I explained it, then. I will explain it again. Taxes on your house and business address hadn't been raised in eight years. Same with your immediate neighbors.

We used a computer. . . .

NORMAN

Let the computer pay the taxes.

GREGGS

Using a computer program that reflected inflation and the value of similar properties in surrounding communities, we established Freeman's fair market value. We backed up the valuations with photographs.

NORMAN

Freeman's on its last gasp and grunt.

GREGGS

Wait a minute there. You had your chance to protest.

NORMAN

We were swindled by your hundred dollar an hour referees who only knew one word.

GREGGS

They had extensive backgrounds in real estate, and were current about fair market values.

NORMAN

We were washed away by the current of sludge that swept through here. Drowned us, you did. You're allowing this "sneeze" from Omaha throw the last bucket of slime over our graves.

(crowd)

GREGGS

I agree on one point. Property values out here have increased. The economy, regardless of what Mr. Swift thinks, is solid. Mr. Wisden's request, if he and the town can't reach an accommodation, will encourage eminent domain.

NORMAN

His offer, or else?

GREGGS

Honestly? I don't care what you do. I've tried to be fair. Mr. Wisden has tried. Your mayor has tried. I don't understand what you people want.

SNIVEL

Folks, before anyone has a stroke, hear me out. Mr. Wisden will be happy to hear individual concerns. I will post his eight hundred number. The hour's late. We are all exhausted. I truly feel that, realize it or not, we have made progress toward a consensus.

NORMAN

Consensus means consent. I didn't hear anybody giving permission for this land rape.

SNIVEL

Thank you all for coming. As is our custom, coffee and cookies will be served. A special treat I brought back from Hawaii last winter. A recipe for fudge nut taffy squares.

NORMAN

(softly)

I'm glad you didn't stay there.

(Music to:)

WISDEN

(softly)

Jim, Greggs and I are having a small get-together in room five twelve.

GREGGS

The Delmar.

SNIVEL

Freeman's finest.

WISDEN

Freeman's only.

SNIVEL

Can't have everything.

WISDEN

When we're done, they won't have anything.

SNIVEL

Cookies anyone?

(laughter)

NORMAN

(to audience)

The fearsome threesome. Enjoying their last night. (beat) I controlled my need to feed.
Until the town's tucked in.

(music to:)

(DOOR closing)

SNIVEL

Well, gents, where do I set my cookies?

GREGGS

Sit anywhere.

SNIVEL

I didn't mean *those*, I meant *these*.

WISDEN

Put the damn tray over there by the window. I need
a drink.

GREGGS

Bottle's where we left it.

WISDEN

Pour me a double. In a clean glass. That trouble maker, Mr. Tonsils, gave me the shakes. We know how to handle his kind in Omaha.

SNIVEL

Tax him to death?

(laughter)

GREGGS

Too slow.

WISDEN

Drive-by's happen everywhere.

SNIVEL

Faster. Not necessary.

GREGGS

That glorious E-D. Eminent Domain.

WISDEN

Say it again.

SNIVEL

More cookies?

GREGGS

One's my limit.

WISDEN

Where's my drink?

SNIVEL

In the bottle.

WISDEN

It won't pour itself.

(Sound: whiskey being poured.)

WISDEN

A beautiful sight. Like a first glimpse of Heaven.

GREGGS & SNIVEL

Wouldn't know.

WISDEN

(after a sip)

Ah! Heaven has to be an unending happy hour.

GREGGS & SNIVEL

Wouldn't know.

SNIVEL

I can wait to find out.

GREGGS

I doubt my itinerary includes a final stop up there, or wherever it is. Heaven's what I'm talking about.

WISDEN & SNIVEL

We know!

(pause)

WISDEN

Swift's pretty fast with the chin music.

GREGGS

He protested at the last equalization board meeting.

WISDEN

Who won?

(laughter)

SNIVEL

We doubled the valuations on his house and store front.

GREGGS

Raised the mill levy at the same time.

WISDEN

Got him from both sides. My kind of people.

GREGGS

The only thing that'll stop us?

WISDEN

What stops us all. Am I right?

(mumbled agreement)

SNIVEL

When I was a kid I knew I'd live long and die rich. I did every sort of stoop labor; shoveled snow, de-tasseled corn, ran errands for Mayor Hawkins. Chump change, fellas. I did it, hoping to do better. Got older; did better. Some I'm proud of; most I'm not. Now I have more money than time. Hope I have the smarts to spend wisely.

GREGGS

Wanna see a waste of time? Come over here. Look down there. Must be six or eight stragglers jiving about the meeting, or the price of corn or corn whiskey.

SNIVEL

Standing around, talking. Country tradition. Not very profitable. That's how I got elected.

GREGGS

Don't they have cell phones?

SNIVEL

See any towers?

WISDEN

Nearest ones are in Omaha.

GREGGS

Land of dreams and schemes.

WISDEN

I hold the deeds on all the dirt between Omaha and Freeman.

SNIVEL

Anybody for coffee? The Finer Diner closes in a half hour.

GREGGS

Cheap whiskey beats diner coffee.

WISDEN

Poison du jour.

SNIVEL

Had their coffee?

WISDEN

I smelled it coming into town. Strong enough to scald my ulcers.

SNIVEL

Bill, you don't have ulcers.

GREGGS

Or a conscience.

WISDEN

Conscience? What's that?

SNIVEL

Fellas, did I tell you my latest scheme?

GREGGS

For peddling cookies?

WISDEN

Hosting a baking seminar?

SNIVEL

Don't see you turning them down.

WISDEN

Those who cannot lead, bake.

(laughter)

SNIVEL

Let's not get nasty.

GREGGS

At this hour, what else can we do?

WISDEN

No green spaces. Every village needs a green space. With benches. And a fountain.

SNIVEL

We had a duck pond right over there. Behind the diner. Got too noisy. All those ducks. So we sold 'em. The diner had duck as the blue plate special for months. All we have now are profit potentials ripe for harvesting. Like Main Street. Looks empty, doesn't it?

GREGGS

Macadam chunks. Pot holes.

WISDEN

What's the plan, man?

SNIVEL

What this grease spot on the road doesn't need. (beat) A street car line. I know. Main and First are four blocks long and wide. Boys, a street car system in town's the pork and the squeal. I call it my Three-M Plan: Make Money for the Mayor. The stimulus request's written. The contractor's jackhammer's ready. What do you think?

WISDEN

What about eminent domain?

SNIVEL

If that's contested, my plan gets its chance. Cuts you boys out. There's always an opportunity for participation in a project down the road. That long, lucrative road to my door.

WISDEN

All this talking's made me thirsty. Only we brought one jug and it looks damn near empty.

GREGGS

Mr. Mayor, got anything stronger than diner coffee?

SNIVEL

The roadhouse on the Gretna Interchange stopped serving decent drinks an hour ago. I have an indecent bottle of bar whiskey in my crib. That two-story frame at the end of Main, up the hill. See it?

GREGGS

Nice wide porch. Anyone can see you on it, enjoying a cool drink on a hot night.

WISDEN

I'd put up a privacy fence. Let 'em stare at that.

SNIVEL

That wouldn't be neighborly.

GREGGS

I'd have bulletproof protection.

WISDEN

I have a stone wall. Topped with spikes.

GREGGS

Mine's topped with barbed wire. Let 'em rip their butts climbing over.

WISDEN

Repair main street, Jim. At a thousand dollars an inch.

SNIVEL

Not enough take-home in street repair.

WISDEN

I can't see the slogan on your campaign sign down there. It's being used by a dog.

SNIVEL

Allow me. (clears throat) "Jim Snivel's an honest man. Doing what's best for Freeman is my plan."

GREGGS

Those dummies will believe anything.

SNIVEL

If you tell it with a straight face.

WISDEN

And a sincere tone.

SNIVEL

The biggest lie and the easiest to tell? I'm from the mayor's office and I'm here to help you.

WISDEN

I love a good cheat-'em-all.

SNIVEL

Who doesn't?

GREGGS

Everyone wins. Except the ones paying the bills.

WISDEN

They don't like it? Let 'em move. I can buy them out below cost.

SNIVEL

Ah, the double dealers. What music they make.

GREGGS

Don't get theatrical, Jim.

WISDEN

Where'd you hide that bottle, James?

SNIVEL

Right this way, gents.

(music to:)

(Sound: steady wind)

GREGGS

Turned chilly.

WISDEN

And me in a summer weight suit.

(yawns)

GREGGS

Mind if I rain check that drink?

WISDEN

I have a breakfast date in a few hours.

SNIVEL

Well, fellers, a good night, then.

WISDEN

Need a ride, Jim?

SNIVEL

Thanks, Bill. I need the walk.

GREGGS

Been a pleasure, men.

WISDEN & SNIVEL

That's what she said.

(laughter to:)

(Music to:)

SNIVEL

(to himself)

Whew! What is that stink? Plugged sewer line? Whew! Bladder's cramping. Diner's closed. Street's empty. Lights out in the shacks. Sentry lights at both ends of the street dim enough to hide Satan. I'm too old to be modest. Alley's deserted. Dark as my soul in there. (beat) Ah, one of life's pleasures. Doesn't cost a cent.

(Sound: Wolf howling)

SNIVEL

What's. . . . that?

NORMAN

Your future.

SNIVEL

I can't see. . . . where what are you?

NORMAN

The most expensive bathroom break you ever took.

(SNIVEL screams)

NORMAN

Wanna retire to Hawaii, Jim? How about Hell?

(Sound: Wolf howling.)

(SNIVEL screams.)

(Music to:)

(Sound: car on asphalt)

GREGGS

(to himself)

All quiet on I-80. Moonlight. The moon full and shining like a lottery winner's eyes. The occasional breeze rattling the dark storefronts along the highway, pushing Styrofoam across the interstate, into the potholes and out and into the darkness where the ditches are. What's that noise? A cat, attacked by a rabid dog or wolf. Poor cat. Foolish cat. Looking for a companion and finding a way out of this reality. (beat) Seven years tomorrow since Arlenie died. Cut doctors. Chemo. Too late. Cancer of the jaw. Well, she was never a talker.

(Sound: car, up.)

GREGGS

Wind's picked up. Feed lot smells. The smell of money. Freeway exhaust. A die-ing village's death-stink. (beat) Long day, dealing from the bottom of the deck. If I can beat the suckers at the game, I'll never get old.

(Sound: car, UP)

GREGGS

Can't see much beyond the headlights. Scrub grass like an eleven-year-old boy's chin fuzz. Barbed wire fences bearing their teeth at the wind. Blood beating my temples? Or the weakening beat of Freeman's heart?

(Sound: A heavy weight strikes the car's roof.)

GREGGS

What the hell!

(Rough, high pitched laugh segues into wolf's howling.)

GREGGS

EEEE!

(Sound: car skids, strikes a fence post.)

GREGGS

Help! I'm trapped!

(Sound: car door ripped from it's hinges.)

NORMAN

Allow me.

GREGGS

No! Don't! Please! Help!

NORMAN

I begged for your help.

GREGGS

I want to live!

NORMAN

Say hello, Greggs, to whatever's waiting.

(GREGGS screams)

(Music to:)

(SOUND: car on asphalt.)

WISDEN

(to himself)

Greggs. Snivel. Fools. They will be paid in pennies. Greggs, cursed by a loveless woman more greedy than the three of us combined. Snivel? Thinks his cookies are edible. Thinks he's the king of raise-your-taxes town. I allowed him to wear the crown, wield the scepter. Enjoy, fool, while you can. (beat) Before her surgery Arlene was passable in the "looks" department. She was worth every penny.

(Car stops. Train signal.)

(HE coughs, yawns.)

WISDEN

More wasted time.

NORMAN

So little of it left.

WISDEN

EE-yip! Scared me. Come around to the headlights. Let me see you.

NORMAN

You won't like what you see.

WISDEN

EEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

NORMAN

I told you.

(Screams, abruptly stilled.)

NORMAN

Meat lover's sushi. Yum.

(music to:)

NORMAN

(to audience)

I dumped their bones and personal items in a homeless camp. Let the domiciliary-challenged explain it to the law. I drove the cars onto Slick Sammy's Used Cars on the Highway. I left the keys in the ignition. For right now my town was safe.

(Music to:)

NORMAN

My next targets? Plumbing contractors.

(Music to:)

(Theme.)

END

