



Bill: Worse than that. It was on the radio. They just performed their last comedy show together at the Copacabana in New York. Ten years to the day since their first one!

Nonie: My, how time flies when you're listening to idiots. I haven't heard such sad news since Joe McCarthy gave a speech about Commies at the Catlow.

Bill: There were Commies at the Catlow?

Nonie: No, you idiot, the speech was at the Catlow ... (Doorbell rings.) ... oh never mind. (She answers it.)

Jeanne: (**Jeanne Fentress enters.**) Am I late?

Bill: Nobody here but us chickens, Jeanne.

Jeanne: Phooey! I'll go back to the car and wait 'til the wolves get here.

Nonie: (Very business like) The others should be arriving for the rehearsal shortly, but let's make wise use of our time. Since you two are the leads, much of the humor of the play depends on your interaction. So I want to go over the plot and your parts.

Bill: Excellent idea, Nonie. While you do that, I'll just go and make us some drinks.

Jeanne: I'll help. (They start to leave)

Nonie: Just a minute you two. We don't have time for that now.

Bill: No time for a drink? (Looks at Jeanne.) Imagine that!

Jeanne: No time? We must be timeless! Let's go check the clock in the kitchen. (They leave.)

(Doorbell. Nonie opens the door. **Tony Bateman and Jerry Corbett enter.**)

Tony: Look who I found loitering in the vicinity.

Jerry: Hello, gorgeous. How about a little smooch? (Sweeping her into his arms.)

Nonie: (Pushing him away.) Stop it, Jerry. You're not in a play! Can't you just shake hands like everybody else?

Jerry: Oh, come on, baby! Just a little pucker.

Tony: (Pushing between them) Here, here, young man. Have you no manners? Let me show you the proper way. (He debonairly takes Nonie's right hand in his right hand, with his thumb on top, and gently touches his lips to his thumb. Still holding her hand he looks at Jerry.) That's how they do it on the Continent. (pause) Then you give her a big smooch. (He sweeps her in his arms.) Come with me to the Casbah .... or maybe Meadowdale!

Nonie: (Disengaging herself) Most amusing, I'm sure, Tony. Why don't you two go into the kitchen, make yourselves a great big drink, and drag our erstwhile leads back in here?

Jerry: Your wench is my command. (Grabs Tony and exits)

(Doorbell. Nonie opens the door. **Harold Smith enters.**)

Harold: My dear, it is a pleasure to see you. (In a mock Shakespearean style) I cannot wait to trod the boards. Which of the great Bard's pearls will we be casting before the swine?

Nonie: "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter"? ... written by George Axelrod? ... he also wrote "The Seven Year Itch"? ... Harold Smith, don't you ever read your mail?

Harold: Never! Anything of any consequence answers itself in three days anyway.

Nonie: Didn't William Randolph Hearst say that?

Harold: I believe that I just said it, unless my ears are deceiving me. (Listens) Hark, I hear a bottle opening. I shall return in a nonce. (He exits.)

Nonie: (Walking to the kitchen door and speaking to those offstage) Ralph isn't here yet but we'll have to get started without him. (Turns back, starts to cross, turns back towards kitchen) And we're still waiting for Joe Estes ... (As she says this, Tony Bateman and Jerry Corbett re-enter.)

Tony: Did I hear you utter the sacred name of Estes, the creative genius of the kilns? The pope of pottery? He's the only one that ever listens to Nonie's directions. We can't start without him.

Nonie: We can, and we will. (Walking back to the kitchen door and shouting) All right, if you have filled your glasses – for the second or third time, no doubt – please come out here so we can start. (Bill, Jeanne, and Harold sulkily file back in.)

Harold: (childlike) Oh, mommy, do we have to?

Nonie: Jeanne, get up on the massage table. You'll be talking on a telephone while Jerry who's your masseur is giving you a rubdown. For the show, you will be wrapped in a big Turkish towel – you are supposedly naked underneath, but you can just wear a bathing suit ...

Jeanne: (Very dramatically) Oh no, no, no. I want to be naked ... I must be naked. I have studied Method Acting, you know ... you have to be authentic ... you have to feel the part ....

Jerry: (Mock sincerity combined with a leer) Jeanne, I couldn't agree with you more. I want to feel your part too.

Bill: Should I feel my part too?

Harold: That would be egocentric. You may, however, feel my part.

Nonie: All of you are disgusting. Now listen. Here's the plot. Bill plays George who is a naïve young magazine reporter, that has been assigned to interview Rita Marlowe, the current movie sex goddess. Jeanne will play Rita ... who was played by Jayne Mansfield on Broadway.

Harold: No one will believe that casting.

Jeanne: I'm insulted. I can play a sex goddess as well as you can.

Harold: I meant Horne. Who would ever think he was naïve.

Jerry: Or young.

Nonie: Let's keep moving, shall we? The plot involves high-powered Hollywood agent Irving LaSalle ... he's played by Harold. It turns out that Irving is really the devil in a grey flannel suit. He offers to grant George's every wish ... in return for ten percent of George's soul ... ten percent per wish. So it's basically a modern version of Dr. Faustus.

Tony: Dr. Faustus? Doesn't he practice with Dr. Kildare?

Bill: (Pondering) I always wanted to be a doctor.

Jeanne: Well, if it's the Faust legend, I must be Helen of Troy.

Jerry: And Harold must be a helluva guy. (Harold, Tony, Jerry, and Bill look at each other and break into the song from South Pacific:

I'm in love, I'm in love, I'm in love, I'm in love,

I'm in love with a helluva guy!

Nonie: This is great. Half an hour into the rehearsal, and we haven't read a single line!

Jerry: Don't worry. I was in a play last year that we never did rehearse. It won Best Play!

Nonie: Why doesn't that cheer me up? All right, Jeanne, up on the table. (Jeanne lies down on her back with her arms open wide.) No, lie on your stomach. You'll be on the phone when the lights come up. Jerry you are massaging her ... um ... ankles. Bill, you get ready to enter from stage left. Okay, go.

Harold: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. I have a question.

Nonie: (With exasperation) Okay. What is it?

Harold: I want to know who watched the Ed Sullivan Show last Sunday. Did Ed Sullivan really show Elvis Presley singing and shaking his pelvis?

Jeanne: Yes and no. Elvis Presley sang but you couldn't see his pelvis.

Bill: We missed what surely must have been a milestone in American culture.

Nonie: (Desperately trying to get the rehearsal moving) Can we just read a few lines from the play now?

Jeanne: Hmmph. (To Nonie) Well, if you're done distracting us, I'll begin to read.

RITA

(Lying on her stomach on the massage table. Into phone)  
Hello! Yes! Just divoon, thank you! Right now? I'm having a massage. You see, I'm getting just a little heavy around the old hipsville and the man at the health club thought that ... By the way ... who's calling please? Oh, yes. They told me. Won't you come right up! (She hangs up and addresses herself to the MASSEUR)  
It's some man from one of the movie magazines. He wants to interview me. It won't bother you, will it?

MASSEUR

Not at all, Miss Marlowe. We're almost finished.

Nonie: (whispering) Okay, Bill, you enter.

GEORGE

How do you do? I'm Mr. MacCauley. George MacCauley. From *Movie World*. (Realizing that she's half naked) Gosh, maybe you'd like me to wait 'til you're done.

RITA

No, you just sit right down there (pointing at a chair). What are you going to tell your readers about *me*? You all start out saying you want to write about the *real* me, but then you always end up by writing the same old thing .. about how I don't wear underpants ... about what I said to the producer ...

GEORGE

What did you say to the producer?

RITA

Well, I had an appointment with this producer -- he's supposed to be a very famous wolf. And somebody said: "Rita, you must be careful. You get in there alone with that guy and he'll tear the dress right off your back!" So I said: "Okay. So I'll wear an old dress!" (She is delighted with this bit of snappy repartee. MR. MACCAULEY, however, is a serious and literal young man.)

GEORGE

I think that's very sensible. I can just imagine what you have to pay for your clothes.

(Suddenly **Ralph Bard enters**. Everybody stops and stares at him.)

Ralph: (Without noticing anyone else in the room and in a pretend whiney sort of voice) Hi, Honey. It's your dear husband. I'm home!

Nonie: (Looking at him somewhat coolly) Well, well. Dagwood Bumstead, at last.

Ralph: Oh, Blondie ... (Suddenly realizing that there's a crowd in the room and changing to a more natural tone) Hail, hail the gang's all here. What's everybody doing here?

Nonie: Ralph Bard, did you forget that we had a play reading group rehearsal tonight?

Ralph: (Cautiously) Maybe. (Looking at the others) After a hard day of managing dozens of dollars, it's sometimes hard to keep everything at the front of my mind. (Sheepishly to Nonie) Sorry I'm late. (Even more sheepishly to her) Um, there's one other little thing ...

Nonie: (Snapping at him) What's that?

Ralph: We're hosting a meeting of the Countryside Association here (pause) ... tonight.

Nonie: I hope you are joking.

Ralph: Well ... no. I'm not. Four or five ... maybe six people are stopping by. (Trying to make nice.) Is there anything I can do to help?

Nonie: (Icily) Yes. You can drop dead! (She plops down into a chair in a pout.)

Harold: I didn't know there was going to be a meeting of the Association.

Ralph: Well, it's not a formal meeting of the Association. It's just that some of the guys at the Country Club ... well ... they had been talking about the future of the Countryside and wanted to continue the conversation ... (to Nonie) ... so I just asked them to stop over for a bite to eat.

Nonie: Eat? (Standing and almost shouting) You asked them to come for dinner? Oh, Ralph, how could you be so ... so ... idiotic?

Tony: (Going over to Nonie to calm her) Now, now. Don't be too upset with the boy. It sounds like Ralph was merely trying to exhibit some community spirit. Isn't that right, Ralph?

Ralph: (Catching onto the idea) Absolutely, Tony. Nonie, you've been telling me that I need to get more involved in our community. I mean. Look at Newt Noble; he's not only president of the Countryside Association, but he helped form the School District and was its first board president ... plus he's the Mayor of Middlebury.

Harold: (Mock informatively, to all) Did you know that the Village of Middlebury consists only of Newt's house and front yard?

Jerry: (Taking him literally) Actually, Harold, I live in Middlebury, and I can tell you that it includes over two square miles from Bateman Road west into Kane County ...

Nonie: (Cutting him off) Fine. (To Ralph) And Tony has been president of the Fox River Valley Hunt since 1946 ... and Jerry was President of the Country Club

... and Harold ... well, ... Harold founded a Polo Club 20 years ago. (She looks at Harold, and he nods proudly.) But none of them forgot about the rehearsal.

Bill: (Raising his hand, sounding like a school boy confessing) I did, teacher. I forgot, but (pointing) Harold reminded me.

Jeanne: You're a tattletale.

Nonie: Enough, enough. Ralph, who did you invite and when are they coming?

Ralph: Well, let's see. (Counting on his fingers) There's Andrew Dallstream ... and Newt Noble ... and Orville Caesar ... and old man Cardwell – no, wait, I think his daughter is coming instead.

Tony: Gina Reinhardt is coming? Here? Uh oh, we're in for it now.

Harold: You're right. Gina will expect us to know our proper terminology ... Hounds are counted in "couples." A male hound is known as a "dog hound."

Bill: And a female hound, no matter how exemplary, is known as a "bitch."

Tony: A hound has a "stern" instead of a tail. When he moves same, he "feathers his stern."

Jerry: And a hound never barks, he "opens," "gives tongue," or "speaks." (Bill, Tony, Harold and Jerry all bay up at the sky.)

Ralph: Oh, and I'm not sure, but I think Denny Hull is coming with her...

Tony: Well, we can expect the conversation to take a turn to the serious when Denny gets here.

Jerry: Denny takes fox hunting very seriously.

Harold: (Like Elmer Fudd) If we're ve-wy, ve-wy kwiet, Denny just might tell us the story of how the Fox Hunt got its hounds.

Bill: (Pretending to be Denny) Shortly after the beginning of World War Two, I was corresponding with Lord Plushbottom who advised me that all the English packs were being sharply reduced due to the necessity of economizing on feed for the hounds. Further retrenchment threatened to impair the preservation of the breed. And so ... to make a long story short ...

Jeanne: A ve-wy long story ...



Bill: Lord Plushbottom commandeered a Royal Navy destroyer and shipped us 20 hounds ...

Tony: (Correcting him) A-a-ah ... ten couple ...

Bill: (Very British) Quite so ... ten couple hounds to Denny in Barrington

Harold: Was it hard for the destroyer to get up the Fox River?

Bill: Don't be flippant. In fact, the hounds were shipped by Greyhound bus from the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Jerry: Yeah, Orville Caesar arranged for that. He is after all the founder and chairman of that fine company ... as he will be the first to tell you.

Nonie: Ralph, have you now told me everybody who is coming tonight?

Ralph: I think so ... no, wait ... maybe Tom White and George Van Hagen too. How many is that?

Jerry: (Counting like a stunt horse with his foreleg) 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 .

Harold: (Going over to him and stroking the back of his head) Good boy. (Holding his hand out, palm up) You earned a nice cube of sugar.

Jerry: I'd rather have a martooni.

Ralph: (Still thinking about the list) And maybe Tom Hayward and Al Borah ...

Nonie: This is nuts. What am I going to feed them?

Harold: My dear, I would be delighted to display my barbecue skills and prepare a tray of my famous, patented Ranchero Gaucho steaks for these hardworking guardians of our beloved Countryside.

Nonie: Oh? Do you happen to have a haunch of beef up your sleeve? The simple fact is that I don't have anything to cook for them.

Harold: Not to worry. I'll call Polly and ask her to come winging to our rescue with some steaks from the Smith family larder.

Tony: (Doubtfully) I'm not so sure she'll be willing to minister to your bovine needs.

Harold: Tut tut, my good man. (Picking up the receiver.) Tut tut, I say. (To the operator on the phone) Operator? This is Harold Smith, who's this? Oh, hi,

Essie. Ring my wife, would you. (Still to the operator) She's not home? Where is she? (Looking at Tony) Oh, she's visiting her sister, is she? Okay, ring her there. (Covering the phone. To Tony) She's with your wife, Tony. (Pause) Puline, my dear, do an old man a favor, will you, and drive over here with (looking around and mentally counting) 15 or 20 sirloin steaks. (Pause) No, I'm not drunk. (To the crowd, in a stage whisper) Not yet. (Into the phone) What's that? (More cajoling) Now, sugar plum, you love of my life, listen. Ralphie Bard has made a little error and invited a hoard of the great men of our time over for dinner but, unbeknownst to him, the larder is empty. (Pause) Would you? Oh, you're a peach! Wonderful. Thanks. (Hanging up. Looking at Tony, he snaps his fingers in the air.)

Tony: No comment. But since they're sisters, why don't you call back and see if you can talk my wife into doing something nice for me.

Harold: Like what?

Tony: Oh, I don't know. Maybe, bring my horse over here so I can ride naked in the moonlight.

Jerry: Uh, Tony, you don't have a horse.

Tony: Nonsense. Of course, I must have a horse. How else could I ride in the Fox Hunt every week?

Jerry: As my wife – whom you may recall is your sister – has repeatedly pointed out, you are undoubtedly the only man in history to have been president of a fox hunt for 16 years and never owned a horse.

Tony: I am therefore a man of great distinction, am I not?

Bill: You are the epitome of a country gentleman, Tony. (Raising his glass to him)

Nonie: I am reminded – for some reason – of Oscar Wilde's remark that "a country gentleman galloping after a fox is the unspeakable in pursuit of the inedible."

Harold: Wilde was quite wrong. Foxes are not at all inedible. They are no less tasty than a badger, and with their sly ways and raw cunning, as fat free as your regular stoat.

Jeanne: Well, there you go, Harold. Call Polly and tell her to forget the steaks. Just bring over a passle of badgers and stoats.

Ralph: (Rejoining the group after getting a drink) To the stoats of Barrington!  
(Raising his glass)

All: To the stoats. (They all drink.)

Ralph: (Fake musing) I think one of the Stoats was at Princeton when I was there.

Tony: There must be more to life than quaffing and guffawing.

Bill: I think not.

Harold: I find that alcohol, taken in sufficient quantities, produces all the effects of intoxication.

Jerry: Ah, where did it all go right?

(Doorbell rings. Ralph answers it. **Andrew Dallstream enters.**)

Andrew: Good evening, Ralph. Hello, all.

Harold: (To Dallstream) Salutations to you, Andrew Dallstream ... O Man of the Law. In the immortal words of my Sixth Grade Latin teacher: "*De minimis non curat lex.*"

Andrew: Do you know what that phrase means?

Harold: Not the slightest. Is it something naughty? (To Bill) I do hope it's something naughty.

Andrew: (Giving him a kindly look, the way you would look at the village idiot) Harold, I believe that you were about six years old when I graduated from law school, and I am pleased to see that you still haven't grown any older.

Jeanne: Harold, that's a "deep thought." Do not try to figure out what it means.

Andrew: (To Nonie) Good evening, Nonah. It is so kind of you to host our Association meeting ... and on such short notice. (Looking around) And I am delighted to see so many who do not usually grace our political séances.

Jeanne: Don't be too optimistic about the potential for political activity of this group, Andrew. Some scheduling wires got crossed. We're here for a play reading group rehearsal.

Andrew: (Looking around again – speaking seriously.) Each of you could command an important political audience if you put your minds to it.

Nonie: That would require them to have a mind, Andrew. (Looking at Ralph) I have my doubts about some of those present.

(Doorbell rings. **Orville Caesar, Newt Noble and Jane Noble enter.**)

Ralph: (To Caesar) Orville, so good of you to come.

Orville: (A no-nonsense business type – slightly full of himself) When I heard there was going to be some serious talk here about doing something to stop those developers from destroying the countryside, I wanted to be here. (Self importantly) Ever since I founded the Greyhound Bus Company, I have felt it my duty to lend my support to important causes.

Ralph: (Seriously) And we are indeed grateful for your support here. Jane, it's always a pleasure to see you.

Nonie: (To Newt Noble, who has been standing in Orville's shadow, so to speak.) Newt, nice to see you and Jane. Would you like a highball?

Jane: I thought you'd never ask!

Newt: Not for me, thank you, my dear. (Matter of factly) The steward on our private railcar made me one of his special cocktails during the train ride home, so I am quite content for now. Perhaps I'll have something later. Will we begin the meeting shortly?

Ralph: Well, Newt, it seems there was a bit of confusion ... (Nonie gives him a look which he sees) ... I mean to say that I was a bit confused and forgot that we were having a Play Reading Group rehearsal at the house tonight. So I'm not quite sure ...

Harold: Say, Orville, I understand that you have been buying up all the stately houses in England and bringing them back to Barrington Countryside to reassemble.

Orville: They're not mansions, Harold. But you're right that I am interested in preserving our architectural legacies. I have already saved several small 18<sup>th</sup> century dwellings from New England and have incorporated them into our home on Brinker Road.

Tony: What about English homes?

Orville: Well, I do have the opportunity to purchase an entire manor house in Shropshire and bring it back here to Barrington.

Tony: What's your motivation?

Harold: (To Tony) Don't you know? He's suffering from an Edifice Complex.

Orville: Smith, I suppose that's the sort of joke they used to tell at Princeton.

Bill: (Changing the topic) Orville, how do you get all the pieces of these houses back here? (Innocently) Send them by bus?

(Doorbell rings. Nonie answers it. **Tom White and George Van Hagen enter.**)

Tom: Hello, everybody.

Bill: Hiya, Tom. How's that actress sister of yours? She still playing the dummy to Edgar Bergen?

Tom: You mean Loretta? Oh, she hasn't done anything with him for 20 years. She's on Broadway now.

Nonie: Hi, George. How are you?

George: Fine, Nonie. Is this a meeting of the Fox Hunt?

Harold: Why, George, anytime you and Tom are together, it's a meeting of the Fox Hunt.

Tom: Do you remember when Edgie Throckmorton first tried to hunt foxes out here? He had these three American dogs, you couldn't really call them hounds. They couldn't pick up the scent of ground beef. One time, a fox ran right past them, and they didn't say a thing. Edgie jumps down off of his horse, gets down on his knees, and tries to show them how they're supposed to give tongue.

George: I think Rusty McLaughlin was with us that day, wasn't he? There was a guy who could sit a horse. Edgie ... not so much.

Jerry: Yeah, but Edgie was a great guy, and a good member of the Play Reading Group too. Shame he's gone to the big hunt in the sky. Say, George, ... for old time's sakes why don't you give us a verse or two of "Aunt Clara".

Tony: That's a great idea. It's a hunt club tradition! Sing it for us.

George: Well, I'm not as good a singer as Dick Bates, but in memory of Edgie, if you really want me to, I'll do "Aunt Clara.". (To Jane) Would you play the piano for me?

Jane: You're in luck, George. That's the only song I know. (She sits and showily warms up to play.)

George: Okay, now everybody join in the chorus after I sing the verse.

VERSE (George)

She used to sing hymns in the old village choir;  
She taught at the Sunday-school class.  
At playing the organ she never would tire,  
Those good days are over, alas.

In church at the organ she'd practice and play;  
The preacher would pump up and down.  
His wife caught him pumping her organ one day  
And that's why Aunt Clara left town.

CHORUS (All)

We never mention Aunt Clara;  
Her picture is turned to the wall.  
Though she lives on the French Riviera  
Mother says she is dead to us all.

VERSE (George)

The preacher was tempted, and lured her to sin,  
Her innocent virtue to smirch,  
But her honor was strong and she never gave in  
Till he gave her the deed to the church.

They said no one's care if she'd ever come back  
When she left us her fortune to seek,  
But the boys in the firehouse draped it in black  
And the ball team wore mourning that week.

CHORUS

We never mention Aunt Clara;  
Her picture is turned to the wall.  
Though she lives on the French Riviera  
Mother says she is dead to us all.

VERSE (George)

They said that no man would make her his bride;  
They prophesied children of shame,  
But she's married three earls and a baron besides,  
And she hasn't a child to her name.

They say that she's sunken, they say that she fell  
From the narrow and virtuous path,  
But her French formal gardens are sunken as well  
And so is her pink marble bath.

CHORUS

We never mention Aunt Clara;  
Her picture is turned to the wall.  
Though she lives on the French Riviera  
Mother says she is dead to us all.

REPRISE CHORUS (GEORGE, SOLO)

Yes, we never mention Aunt Clara,  
But when I grow up, big and tall,  
I shall live on the French Riviera  
And let Mother turn me to the wall.

(All laugh and applaud).

(The doorbell rings. **Enter Denny Hull and Gina Reinhardt.** The others suddenly act more somber.)

Ralph: (Coming over) Hello, Gina. Good evening, Denny

Denny: Thank you for inviting us, Ralph. (to Nonie) Good evening. (To Tony) Good evening, Tony. (Nodding to each of the others.) Harold. Jerry. Bill. George. And Tom, my good friend. Tom, on whom I so much rely.

Tom: (Shyly) Dennison, that's so kind of you to say.

Denny: Kindness has nothing to do with it. (To the others) I apologize that I can only stay briefly, for I still must stop at the kennels tonight, before it gets too late. It is the cubbing season, you know.

Harold: (Aside, to the others) Uh oh, we'd better get our ratcatchers on ... it's the correct attire for cubbing, you know.

Denny: (Glancing at, but ignoring Harold) Gentlemen ... (nodding to Nonie, Jane and Jeanne) and ladies, I have something of importance to say to those attending your meeting. (To the crowd, with great solemnity) If I may have your attention for a moment ... (The crowd quiets down.) As you know, I have been Master of the Fox River Valley Hunt since its inception some 16 years ago. (Pause, then rushing forward) But now I am compelled to tender my resignation as Master of the Hunt.

(All are surprised and quite shocked, even sobered. General protestation.)

Tony: Denny, you can't do this. You're the soul of the Hunt.

Denny: Tony, you have been president of the Hunt as long as I have been Master. You -- more than anyone -- know how much it means to me. But in my view, the Countryside has deteriorated until now we no longer have enough country for full time foxhunting. This change has come rather suddenly, and until last year it still seemed possible to reverse the trend. But the continued process of paving roads, subdividing land, and building houses, culminating in the Meadowdale development, has accelerated the change until it is obvious that no amount of effort can reverse it.

Harold: Denny, I don't think it's really as bad as you make it sound. There is still plenty of country for hunting ...

Denny: No, Harold. The real estate subdivisions have come so close that every hunt last season was a drag hunt. We were simply forced to it. After sixteen years of live foxhunting, I just don't care about running a drag hunt.

Tom: He's right, Harold. When we started hunting, there were beautiful, hilly oak forests that went all the way to the Fox River. We could ride for miles. But then Besinger bulldozed them and leveled the hills.

Tony: Look, Denny ...

Denny: (Holding up his hand to them to stop) Anyway, it's a big question how long it will be before the Forest Preserve buys more farms and whether or not they will even permit the hunt to continue.

(Several voices rise in protest.)

Denny: (Waving them off.) As it looks right now, the hunt will be able to maintain its national recognition for at least a few more years. Tom White (nodding gratefully at Tom) has agreed to take over as Master of the Fox Hunt, and I have left you fifteen couple which are all excellent in their work and well mannered. Their heritage is impeccable. They are all descended from the pack that came to us ... that were delivered to us for our safekeeping from England at the beginning of the War. (The others are waiting for the story about the hounds, but Denny hastily adds) And it is to their welfare that I must see tonight. Farewell, my friends. (He turns and strides out.)

Jeanne: Well that was one heck of an exit!

Bill: Do you suppose he means it?

Tony: Oh yes. I've seen it coming for some time ... since 1953 ... when the hunt lost so much country in the southwest part of the territory.



Newt: I think I understand what you mean. 1953 was quite a year. Leonard Besinger bought that huge parcel of land on Elgin Road, which everybody now calls Route 25. He proposed a development to be called Meadowdale. Prefabricated homes, the first of their kind in Illinois, were to be built on 60 foot lots.

Gina: What a despicable man ... and an evil blight on the land!

Newt: (Calmly) Well, the appeal of his plan was obvious ... and I think Leonard's motivation was honorable ... In his mind, these homes would offer low-income housing to veterans and to Chicagoans who desired an escape from deteriorating city neighborhoods.

Orville: Newt, you didn't let Besinger's honorable motivation deter you and your neighbors from taking action, though, did you?

Newt: No. No, we didn't, Orville. As a community, those of us directly in the path of that expansion joined together and resisted the trend. (Nodding to Jerry and Tony) Jerry and the Bateman family were among those strongly backing our approach.

Jerry: (Seriously) I think I speak for my father in law, Floyd Bateman, as well as myself when I say that we were not opposed to development, but we nevertheless wanted to make sure that the next phase of development would be in the best interests of those who already lived in the community.

Newt: (Musing) It was an interesting problem. The area between Meadowdale and Bateman Road is in two counties. There was a conflict because the zoning laws of the two counties. Kane County had virtually no controls, while Cook County had zoned our area 5-acre. If we created our own village, we could write laws giving us a tighter grip on zoning.

Gina: My father hated that development. When it was going up, he would drive over to the construction site every Saturday morning. He used to take our daughter, Vicki, with him. They would count the number of new houses and the number of felled trees since the preceding week.

Tony: Gina, wasn't your father born on a farm?

Gina: Oh, yes. In rural Missouri ... in 1873. ... That makes him, gosh, 84 years old now. ... I never met his father, Grandpa Cardwell, but he lived in Missouri all his life. It was truly incredible to daddy how many years have gone into the growth of the beautiful trees in the Barrington Countryside, and (bitterly) just how fast those trees could be cut down and prefab homes put up in their place.

Bill: I've heard it said that suburbia is where the developer bulldozes out the trees, then names the streets after them.

Harold: Well, as the old Chinese proverb says: "If we do not change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed."

Jerry: Where did you see that? In a fortune cookie?

Andrew: (Ignoring them) Gina, as you may know, I have been the chairman of the Cook County Zoning Board of Appeals for a good many years, and it never ceases to amaze me what a mess we human beings manage to make of our communities. I'm sick and tired, for example, of seeing commercial circuses on every corner where there's a filling station.

Orville: I am wondering if we shouldn't take the same sort of action in our part of the Countryside that Newt and Jerry took in their part of the community.

Bill: You mean start a village of our own?

Tony: Would we have to have a commercial district?

Jerry: You mean with some of Andrew's gas stations?

Harold: Maybe a bus station?

Jeanne: Oh, horror!

Andrew: (Silencing them) No, no. Not at all. You can zone the whole village R-1 and have nothing but residences.

Bill: What about the Old Heidelberg at Brinker and 62? That little dive has the best hamburgers you can find ... at least on the corner of Brinker and 62. Can't we make an exception for it?

Gina: And taxes? What about taxes? Daddy's farm manager says that taxes would go through the roof if you incorporate. That has seriously scared my father.

Harold: Gina, Jay Cardwell shouldn't listen to that manager of his. He doesn't know what he's talking about.

Newt: I think that sort of concern is quite over-exaggerated. Why the Village of Middlebury levied no taxes whatsoever for the first two years of its operations!

Andrew: I agree that high taxes are not an inevitable result of incorporation ... but, Newt, I would not suggest to Gina or her father that there would be no taxes.

Orville: Taxes are not the issue. It's the overall change in the nature of our community. I moved here because of the rural environment. I love farms.

Harold: (Aside to others) He loved them so much, he bought six of them. And named them all after himself in the French style: D'Orvillee.

Orville: (To Harold) Actually I named them after my daughters Dorrie and Lee. (To the others) Let me tell you something that is a perfect reflection of what is happening to our way of life. Last month, the Barrington School Board voted to discontinue the agriculture department at the high school. There were simply not enough farming students enrolled in Ag classes to warrant its continuation.

Gina: The number of operating farms is shrinking, and the amount of open land capable of being hunted is shrinking right along with it.

Nonie: Well, I'm not sure that creating a new village here in the countryside is going to prevent the disappearance of family farms.

Harold: (Raising his glass) Ah, alas for the passing of our sturdy yeomanry!

Newt: (Ignoring him) No, you're quite right, Nonie. But incorporation can be a way of halting the conversion of a lovely rural area into a Levittown. Trust me, you don't want four houses to the acre.

Andrew: My friends, the greatest mass movement in the history of northern Illinois is taking place right now. Moreover, the legislature is currently considering a completely new county zoning ordinance. This new statute will almost surely involve substantial changes in zoning rules in Cook County ... and not for the better.

Nonie: What does that mean, Andrew?

Andrew: In a word, Nonah, the new ordinance might entirely eliminate five-acre R-1 zoning, and leave only Farm and one-acre R-1 zoning.

Orville: We have got to stop this threat. I moved here in 1938 because of the beauty and rural nature of the area. In 1940, I took over one of the round barns that Spencer Otis had made famous. Now it's one of the very few left in the United States. We have a glorious tradition to maintain and protect.

Bill: (Picking up the theme, but in a parody style) Where the Potawatomi and Winnebago once rode their pony ... where the migrant from New England with the sturdy German farmer at his heels turned the furrow with their faithful work horse ... the spirited field hunter now pounds the countryside sward.

Gina: Oh, Bill, that was beautiful.

Orville: (Somewhat doubting Bill's seriousness) Yes, yes it was.

Harold: (Waxing into the same theme) Our countryside settlement – if I may be permitted to call it that – is unique in that its residents do not comprise any special grouping or nationality, religion, or occupation. (Bill, Jerry, and Tony begin to softly hum “America the Beautiful” under him.) The strongest bond of our residents is a love of the beauty of the land ... and the desire to retain it as it is. (Bill, Jerry, and Tony finish by singing out “... from sea to shining sea.”)

Orville: (Realizing they are pulling his leg) You can scoff if you want, but your parents and I ... individually and collectively ... have contributed a great deal in time and money to protect the rural nature and natural beauty of the area down through the years. And I don't want to see it undone by overage college boys who always have a drink in their hands.

Jerry: My, my, my! (Looking at his glass and then at Bill, Tony and Harold) Do you think he means us?

Nonie: (Trying to take the edge off) Perhaps we would be better off focusing our attention on positive steps that could be taken, rather than debating ... umm ... abstractions. Newt, how did you and the others get Middlebury incorporated?

Newt: Nonie, I'd be happy to tell you the details as I remember them, but I really think it makes more sense to ask Andrew to talk about the current rules for creating a village under Illinois and Cook County law.

Ralph: Andrew, what about it? Can you give us some recommendations?

Andrew: My friends, I agree with Orville and others. I deem it essential that the area be incorporated without delay in order to protect the present character of our Barrington Countryside. And we may almost be too late.

Orville: Why do you say that?

Andrew: You need only look a few miles to the south of us, Orville. I have it on very good authority that two construction developers are funding the incorporation of a new village to be called Streamwood. By next Spring, they plan to have built a thousand houses on 300 acres of land near Bartlett and Schaumburg roads. Within two years they plan to build 4,000 more houses in the village ... and there is nothing to stop them from moving north and simply annexing everything up to County Line Road.

Bill: But what about the County zoning ... it's minimum five acres throughout the Countryside.

Newt: That's true, Bill ... but if a village annexes the land, they can set whatever size zoning they want ... one acre ... one half acre ... one quarter acre.

Orville: I agree with Andrew that we should go forward at once ... and incorporate the entire Countryside area.

Tony: Here, here. I'm sure everyone on Hart Road will go along.

Bill: And everyone on Otis Road will too.

Jeanne: And everybody on Spring Creek Road ... Wendell and I ... and the Benninghovens and the Hardys...

Jerry: Say, do the Hardy's still run a badminton club in their house?

Harold: (Ignoring him) The folks on Sutton and Donlea roads will go along too ... even Al Borah. I think we can get this done right away.

Andrew: I applaud your spirit, my friends, but – like many things in the law – it's not that easy.

Nonie: Why not?

Andrew: Let me try to summarize the legal situation. First, you cannot incorporate a village with more than two square miles in its original town site. Second, the proposed village must have a population of at least 100 people within that two square mile area.

Ralph: So what do we do?

Andrew: I have been studying the maps and population statistics, and have found an area that has both the required size and the required density.

Nonie: Where is it?

Andrew: It's where you and I and Orville live, Nonah. It's the properties on either side of Brinker Road from County Line to Route 62. It's not too large ...

Orville: and not too small ...

Harold, Tony,  
Bill, and Jerry: ... it's ju-u-u-st right!

Andrew: (Indulgently) Exactly.

Tom: Makes sense to start with Brinker. Andrew, as your wife Dorothy once said “if you haven’t married, divorced or had an affair with someone on Brinker Road, you haven’t arrived.”

Nonie: The question, as Ralph just said, is what precisely do we do?

Andrew: Well, if you would like, I can ask one of my associates at Dallstream Schiff Hardin & Waite to help – you may know him ... he lives out here ... his name is Caleb Canby – I’ll ask Caleb to prepare the petition, and you people to sign it. When we have done so, I will have Caleb file the papers in Cook County court and, if all goes well, the judge will approve it.

Orville: Andrew, wouldn’t it be better if you filed the papers with the court? No disrespect to young Canby, but frankly your name carries a lot more weight in Cook County than his.

Andrew: (Modestly) There is truth to that, Orville, but, for your sakes, I recommend that I not be the lawyer representing you as petitioners. If the matter were ever to come before the Cook County Zoning Board of Appeals, I would have to recuse myself if I had appeared as a lawyer in the case. That might not be the case if Caleb appears for you.

Orville: An interesting distinction, Andrew, and I for one will trust your judgment on this.

Harold: If only Brinker Road is incorporated, what happens to the rest of the Countryside? Is it left unprotected?

Andrew: Not at all. As soon as we are a Village, we can immediately file to annex other portions of the Countryside.

Orville: How long will this take, Andrew? We don’t have a lot of time, you know.

Andrew: Orville, we can’t go any faster than the law allows.

Tom: How long a wait does the law require?

Andrew: Tom, the court delay is not particularly great. But what will be more time consuming is the process of obtaining consents from a sufficient number of residents in each of the areas.

Ralph: Surely that won’t be a problem here in the Countryside. Everybody wants to preserve the unique nature of this community.

Andrew: I wouldn’t be so sure about the “everybody” part, Ralph.

Jeanne: What do you mean, Andy?

Andrew: Well, my dear, consider the area where you live. You live just off Spring Creek Road, do you not?

Jeanne: Correct.

Andrew: You mentioned the Hardys and the Benninghovens. Are you sure Helen Hardy would support annexation?

Jeanne: Well, I would think so. But I guess I don't really know.

Andrew: Okay, who else are your neighbors?

Jeanne: There's Ross ... Ross Siragusa ... he owns a huge chunk of property that runs from County Line Road north across Spring Creek, almost to Plum Tree ... and there is ...

Andrew: Let's stay with Ross for a moment. Are you sure that he would go along with being annexed into the Village?

Jeanne: I don't know why not.

Newt: Jeanne, annexation is a tough call for people with a lot of acreage. A number of landowners – generally farmers, but not always – don't want to restrict their ability to sell their land to developers.

Jerry: Maybe they want to subdivide it and sell it themselves.

Tony: For many farmers, their land is their only asset. If and when they choose to sell, they want to be able to sell it for as much money as possible to give themselves a retirement fund.

George: Or to pass along to their children who are less interested in working the land.

Newt: The general perception is that they will maximize the value of their land by being able to subdivide it into many, tiny parcels, rather than into 5-acre lots. Personally, I'm not sure that's true, but that's the belief of a large number of landowners.

Tom: I don't know what Ross Siragusa's intentions are, but I do know that he seems to be very un-predictable. A couple of the hounds got loose on his property recently, and when I went in to get them, Ross ordered me off his land. He might say "no" to us just for the sake of orneriness.

Andrew: Each landowner in the Countryside is likely to have his own perspective on being annexed into the Village. Consider Judge LaBuy ... who owns three hundred acres near Crabtree Lake. I would not bet a nickel on his agreeing to be annexed into the village.

George: Gina, I heard what you said about your father and his concern about his taxes going up if he becomes part of a village. Do you think that would be enough to persuade him not to join up?

Gina: I don't know, George. He can be very stubborn. Tom, what do you think?

Tom: Jamie owns a lot of different parcels of land around Barrington, and he loves it here ... just the way it is. But there is a lot of "Scottish" blood in him, I think. His fear about the effect on his coin purse may push him away from us.

Newt: Jay Cardwell has lived out here for decades, and he's an influential figure among both real farmers and gentlemen farmers like us. If he publicly opposes annexation, it would likely provoke a number of others to resist your efforts.

Andrew: You are perceptive about that, Newt. Perhaps we can persuade him to sign the petition, let everyone see his name, and then quietly let him out later on. I'll have to think about that.

Harold: My, my, my, Andrew, that's positively Machiavellian. I'm very proud of you.

Nonie: (Trying to keep people focused) How does the annexation process work? Can people choose not to be part of the annexed territory?

Andrew: Yes and no. Any objector must shoulder the burden of fighting the annexation in court. If they "win," their property would be excluded from the newly enlarged Village. But the property of everybody else who did not object, even if they did not sign the petition, is annexed.

Jeanne: Oh, dear, this sounds more complicated than I was thinking.

Andrew: Just to make the undertaking seem even more daunting, Jeanne ... keep in mind that what we think of as the Barrington Countryside lies in four separate counties. Eventually, we will have to collect annexation petitions and file them in four different courts: Cook County, Lake County, McHenry, and Kane.

Ralph: How long will that take?

Andrew: You mean to incorporate Brinker Road and then annex the rest?

Ralph: Yes.



Andrew: (Half jokingly) Including the time it will take to persuade Newt and Jerry and the rest of Middlebury to join us?

Newt: Now, just a minute, Andrew. You can't assume ...

Andrew: I was just asking Ralph what he was asking about, Newt. I wasn't proposing anything.

Newt: The Village of Middlebury is doing just fine, thank you. We don't want to merge into your village. Why you haven't even incorporated one square inch and already you're acting like an octopus, reaching your tentacles out in all directions.

Jane: Why, Newt, that's such a vivid image! You should go into politics. Don't you agree, Jerry?

Jerry: Actually, Jane, I think Newt is technically already in politics. He runs the Middlebury village board.

Harold: By the way, Newt, does Middlebury still make all its municipal revenues by issuing speeding tickets to the hapless drivers passing through the Scylla and Charybdis of your fair village?

Jerry: Our criminal justice system is the envy of the Western World! We specialize in emptying the pockets of every stranger on Algonquin Road, no matter how slow they go.

Newt: Jerry, you really shouldn't joke about that sort of thing. It hurts our reputation.

Bill: Actually, Newt, that is Middlebury's reputation.

Ralph: Did Andrew ever have the chance to complete his answer to my question?

Andrew: Well, Ralph, this is my view. Excluding Middlebury, I would say that it will take about two years to complete the annexations. No doubt there will be some fights in court, and a number of holes of varying sizes will appear around the fringes where people have successfully objected. But, at the end of those two years, we will have the largest village in the state.

Nonie: (Dreamily) And we will have cast a protective cloak over thousands of acres of beautiful, beautiful countryside.

Orville: I trust that it will also be the continuing desire of the Village officials to avoid as far as possible the establishment of municipal services which will require the raising of money by taxation.

Harold: Maybe we could post a ten mile per hour speed limit and make a fortune in fines?

Andrew: That won't be necessary, Harold. We will receive some State license fees, some Township funds for road maintenance, and some income from building permits. The Village should have enough income.

Harold: It sounds like you have it all figured out, Andrew.

Andrew: I have been thinking about this for some time, my friends. But it can only happen if each of you shoulder the burden of convincing your friends and neighbors to support the incorporation. Initially, those of you that live on Brinker Road will need to serve on the Board of Trustees ... (looking at Orville) You, my friend, would be perfect ... (turning to Nonie) and Nonah, it would be important to have at least one woman on the Board.

Nonie: Well ...

Andrew: (looking at the rest with the most earnest seriousness) Each of you are leaders in business and in our community ... each of you must commit to shouldering the burden of this task for the next few years, until it is completed. If you cannot make this commitment, we cannot expect others to do so. Are you so resolved?

Bill, Harold

Jerry, Tony: (Look at each, give a serious nod, and raise their hands as if they are swearing an oath of office) ... so help me God.

Jane: That's very moving. Isn't that what Congress just added to the Pledge of Allegiance?

Jeanne: No, that was "under God," but you get an E for Effort, Jane.

Nonie: Fine. Great. I'm happy for all of you. Now, since we have solved the challenge of municipal incorporation and annexation so quickly, would the rest of you mind going off somewhere else and leaving my cast and me to the work on the challenging theatrics of Jayne Mansfield and Orson Bean (indicating Jeanne and Bill) in our production of "Rock Hunter"?

(General grumbling and milling around as they get ready to leave)

(The doorbell rings. Joe Estes enters)

Joe: Hi, everybody. Sorry I'm a bit late. But I was working on a new award for our Awards Night. I made them at Haeger Potteries ... my daughter Lexy

helped. What do you think? (He pulls a shiny gold Oscar out of the box that he is carrying.)

Jeanne:           What's the idea?

Joe:               Well, I thought we could give these out instead of the Toby Mugs we've always used. I mean, if we have an Oscar Night, we ought to give out something that looks like an Oscar.

Bill:              Maybe it would be easier to change the name of the evening to Toby Night?

Harold:           Or give out Oscar Meyer wieners instead of a trophy.

Nonie:            Unbelievable! I tell you what. Since nobody's going to give any of us an Oscar for "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter," I suggest we call it a night and all go to the Old Heidelberg for greaseburgers and beer.

Harold:           (spoken) And so say all of us.

Bill, Tony

Jerry             (Singing) For she's a jolly good fellow,

All join in:     For she's a jolly good fellow (start exiting down center stairs)  
For she's a jolly good fe-heh-low  
Which nobody can deny.

Nonie:           (after all have left; shaking her head) Heaven help the future. (Exits)

(Blackout)

**FINIS**