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Dedicated to
Billy Drago
and
The Stephen F. Austin High School
Red Dragon Players
You inspired me!

Cast of Characters

RUDY PAZINSKI, 12 years old.

ELLEN PAZINSKI, early 40s.

CHET PAZINSKI, mid-40s.

EDDIE PAZINSKI, 15 years old.

ANNIE PAZINSKI, 16 years old.

GEORGIE PAZINSKI, 13 years old, severely retarded, his mental age being that of a 3-year-old. Consistently good natured, he communicates with gestures, grunts and an occasional real word.

SISTER CLARISSA, late 60s, a Nun. Walks with a cane.

DINTY SHANAHAN, 60-ish. A regular customer at Chet's tavern. Unemployed, little education.

MARY CAROL, 12 years old. Rudy's schoolmate. A little snot.

STUDENTS, 12-ish. Eight of them, 4 boys, 4 girls.

A LITTLE OLD LADY

GOD, male, 50-ish.

The Setting

The main action takes place in the Pazinski apartment above "Chet's Bar & Grill" in Buffalo, New York. Other locations are the barroom downstairs from the apartment, the neighborhood Catholic school (Saint Casimir's) and the adjoining church.

Author Notes

It has always seemed to me that my play *Over the Tavern* would make a good television situation comedy. All the elements are there: offbeat characters set in an interesting time and place (1959, over the family gin mill) with a compelling main character (12-year-old Rudy who only wants to have fun, and can't understand why his family isn't having any). I can hear it now—"Stay tuned for America's favorite repressed Catholic family, the Pazinskis of Buffalo, New York." And who knows, the series may materialize someday.

But I can't wait for someday. I want to see it now. I want to watch each week as Rudy goes head-to-head with that Champion of Catholicism, Sister Clarissa. I want to watch him grapple with a moral dilemma or attempt to put some fun into his dysfunctional family.

To that end I have fashioned the one-act plays herein as TV sitcoms; two episodes of a TV show called “Over the Tavern,” written for the tube, *but designed for the stage*. It is my intention with these scripts that you will present your audience with a 90-minute television experience—back-to-back episodes of “Over the Tavern,” live on stage, complete with commercials of your own design and execution. Just as if it were all being filmed “live before a studio audience”—but with no bulky cameras cluttering the stage and ruining the sight lines.

Traditionalists, fear not. If so desired, the TV elements can be omitted and the “Over the Tavern” scripts can still be performed as traditional stage plays.

Before we get into the scripts I have some production thoughts and suggestions.

The Look and Feel:

Though the “show” takes place in 1959, it is not my intention to parody the 1950s sitcom genre in any way. What we’re going for here is an honest, realistic presentation of life in the 1950s. Costumes should be real slice-of-life. No poodle skirts and pearls for Mom. The actors should endeavor to play their scenes as true to life as possible, keeping in mind the words of actor William H. Macy—“It’s the writer’s job to be funny. It’s the actor’s job to tell the truth.”

Speaking of look and feel, I would not recommend wasting time trying to replicate the Buffalo accent. It’s not *that* distinct or critical to the performance. I’ve seen “Tavern” performances where the actors were working so hard to flatten their A’s that it was actually *distracting*. No vocal histrionics are necessary. Just don’t have your on-stage Buffalonians sound like they’re from someplace as specific as New York or Missouri and you’ll be fine.

The Set:

In the magic world of the TV Sitcom, the audience can be instantly transported from one fully dressed scene to another. Unfortunately, you don’t possess that brand of magic. What you do possess are *chairs*. Your set pieces will consist of about ten lightweight chairs, one lightweight table, and a freestanding working door. A few carry-on hand props make up the rest.

Eight chairs represent two church pews. Eight chairs and a table make a classroom. Six chairs around a table become the Pazinski kitchen. A table and one chair make the barroom. Three chairs and a door make a kid’s bedroom (three chairs make the bed).

Author Notes (continued)

When a door isn't absolutely necessary to the scene, entrances and exits can be made from the wings. In the case of one specific classroom scene in "A Meeting With the Parents," three people need to hide behind that door for several minutes. In this case, some form of extra masking on either side of the door may be needed.

The most important requirement for scene changes is *speed!* Have each actor carry his own chair and *zoom* into place during the Blackout!

To get your actors into the proper mental setting, this is what a fully realized "Over the Tavern" set would look like (description taken from the original stage play):

(A second floor apartment above "Chet's Bar & Grill" in an old brick building on a noisy street of merchants, cars, and kids. It is the home of Chester Pazinski, his wife Ellen and their four children.)

(The place is cramped, with ratty furniture handed down from in-laws. An attempt has been made to give the place some cheer, but it's clear we are not entering the pretty world of "Father Knows Best" or "The Donna Reed Show.")

(The main playing areas are the kitchen and living room. A bathroom door is visible. A hallway leads to unseen bedrooms. A "back door" in the kitchen leads to an unseen staircase that goes down to the backyard. A "tavern door" leads to an unseen staircase which goes down into the tavern. It is this staircase that Chet Pazinski climbs each evening after a day of tending bar.)

Costumes:

This is where you'll need to spend your money. If you have no set then it's up to your *costumes* to give the audience a sense of place and time.

Rudy and his classmates are in parochial school, so something resembling a uniform is essential. For the boys it can be simply dark trousers, dark shoes, a white shirt and identical neckties. (A school emblem on the ties would be a nice touch.) A blazer is not necessary. The girls need to wear identical plaid skirts or jumpers, socks and blouse. Google "parochial school uniforms" and you'll find plenty of examples.

Sister Clarissa needs to be in full 1950s Catholic nun regalia—pick an order, it doesn't matter. (But I would avoid any order that wears a "bonnet." Best to stick to the customary headpiece with veil.)

Rudy would dress as a student, except when he's at home and can remove the clip-on tie and unbutton his collar.

Eddie goes to Catholic high school, so we would see him in dark trousers, white shirt, no tie, and a high school jacket.

Annie also goes to Catholic high school so she would wear the plaid skirt or jumper and white blouse, socks and saddle shoes.

Ellen would wear a comfortable house dress and apron, socks and penny loafers. For her meeting at the school she would just remove the apron and put on a pretty sweater.

Chet would wear dark trousers, a white shirt with sleeves rolled up, and a bar apron. At dinner he forgoes the white shirt and dines in his undershirt.

Georgie wears “dungarees,” a striped t-shirt and Keds.

In terms of the boys’ pants—think *baggy*. Tight pants hardly existed in 1959.

Dinty Shanahan would just wear “old clothes” as he is an unemployed loafer.

God, in “Genuflecting” would be dressed as a well-to-do golfer of the period. Smart trousers, sporty shirt, golf sweater. Maybe a cap.

Music:

You will need an “Over the Tavern” Theme Song, and several chunks of “transitional music”—those short bits of music that take the viewer from one scene into the next, or into a commercial. You can be as creative or as lazy as you’d like—from writing, performing and recording your own score, to finding appropriate pre-recorded music and using that.

Rudy’s Impressions:

Virtually any celebrity can be found on the Internet for your Rudy to study. There are clips to be found of Stan Laurel doing his famous smile and hair tussle. Jack Benny is all over the Web. Just Google “Señor Wences” and you’ll get plenty of scenes featuring the famed ventriloquist and his little puppet, Johnny. Regarding Ed Sullivan and Jack Benny, it would serve your Rudy well to study the *impersonators* as well as the men themselves. Have him seek out clips of John Byner, Will Jordan and other impressionists on the Net.

(But don’t bother trying to find Maurice Chevalier on the Internet going “Hunh-hunh-hunh!” I just could not think of another way to get across that racy little laugh that people emit when doing a French accent!)

Author Notes (continued)

Commercials:

As with the music, you have free reign with your fake commercials. The entire advertising industry is ripe for parody. Your commercial actors can be those who don't have major roles in the plays. Poll this group and you'll find that most of them will have a favorite dreadful, annoying commercial that they'd love to satirize in front of an audience. Your musicians can be involved with the commercials as well.

If you choose to do commercials, it is noted in the script where they take place. It's usually preceded with an announcer saying, "And now, here's a word from our sponsor..." At that point your lights come up and your actors go into their spiel.

If you're a high school drama director and have a hard time getting boys interested in theatre, talk to your drama kids. Chances are they know of a boy in their math class who does a dead-on impression of "the jerk in that commercial." Snag him for the lead in your Drama Club commercial and he may be hooked on theatre for life.

But another concept for the commercial breaks would be—*real commercials*. Instead of, or in addition to, selling advertising space in your program, you could interest local merchants in purchasing a commercial to be performed live before a captive audience. Members of your creative team could approach these local merchants in the weeks preceding the performance and "take a meeting." At the meeting they can determine the merchants' needs and preferences for pitching his wares. They can then get back to the merchant with a proposed commercial—just like it's done in the big time.

It would be wise not to get carried away with your commercial segments. That is, beware of letting them become lengthy and annoying, the way commercials can be in real life. Best to keep these segments brief.

Between "Over the Tavern" episodes, your commercial breaks could include a "News Brief"—a short segment by a newscaster telling the audience about the late-breaking stories that are coming up tonight at eleven. This news brief could have fun with actual local or national events.

(And remember, the commercials and news briefs may be skipped altogether if you want to simply present these episodes as traditional one-act plays.)

Performance Options:

Though “Over the Tavern” is set in 1959, my intention is that the plays be done as present-day TV shows. Therefore, the fake commercials would be for present-day 21st Century products and performed in a contemporary style.

Having said that, your evening of on-stage television could also be presented as a total trip down memory lane, where the commercials are of 1950s vintage and the show is a throw-back to a typical 50s sitcom. The advantage of the memory lane approach is that some authentic 1950s commercials are so outrageous that you wouldn’t have to change a word in order to get laughs. And your News Brief could be full of laughs and irony as you bring up actual headlines from the late 1950s.

But whether your approach is contemporary or vintage, it wouldn’t alter the TV episodes at all. Your overall message would still come across as, “This is how life was.”

Another note to school drama directors: If you’re looking to get other departments to participate in your show, the commercials and news briefs can be ideal vehicles for getting your English and History Departments involved. These segments, after all, need to be *written*.

TV or Not TV:

Finally, as mentioned earlier, you have the option of ignoring the TV elements altogether and simply presenting these plays for what they are—one act *plays*. You would need to omit the opening and closing segments where the cast gathers to welcome and then wave good-bye to the viewers. You would also cut the Announcer’s line, “And now, here’s a word from our sponsor.” But you would still need the minimal sets and quick scene changes. Performed this way, the plays would work nicely on their own, back to back—OR—in an evening of *three* one-act plays, wherein you would choose a third play to sandwich in the middle of your OTT’s.

* * *

However you choose to present these plays I hope you enjoy the performing as much as I did the writing. Keep your characters real and believable and you can’t go wrong. And when the going gets rough during tech week and Final Dress, and it looks like you’ll never get it right, just remember Rudy’s axiom, “God put us here to have fun!”

Break a leg!
Tom Dudzick

OVER THE TAVERN: THE TV SHOW

by Tom Dudzick

EPISODE 1: A MEETING WITH THE PARENTS

Scene 1: The Teaser

(Setting: Saint Casimir's Classroom. Buffalo, NY, 1959.)

(A little bit of music and the lights come up. There is no teacher in the room, but eight boys and girls are sitting at their desks being entertained by 12-year-old RUDY PAZINSKI as he does impressions up in front of the classroom.)

RUDY. *(Wearing black-framed glasses, doing Jack Benny:)* So Mary said to me, "Jack, why do you have to be so cheap? Even in church you're cheap!"... Well!

(He does a Jack Benny dead pan across his audience. The kids laugh.)

In church I'm cheap? She said, "Yes! When the collection plate comes, you're supposed to put in cash, not supermarket coupons!"

(The kids howl with laughter. Now they call out a request.)

KIDS. *(Ad libbing:)* Ed Sullivan! Do Ed Sullivan!

(RUDY whips off his glasses and launches into an Ed Sullivan impression.)

RUDY. Well, y'know, next week we're going to have a r-r-really big shew. We'll have the entire London Philharmonic Orchestra, the United States Marine Corps Marching Band, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir...and Luigi's Trained Clams.

(The kids laugh. He continues as Ed Sullivan.)

That's for you youngsters. Now, out in our audience tonight, wonderful screen actor, Charlton Heston! Where are you, where are you, Charlton?

(He moves to shy boy in front row.)

Ah, there you are. Stand up and take a bow. Come on, Chuck, stand up there.

(The boy bashfully rises. The other kids laugh.)

Y'know, my wife Sylvia and I were talking about the wonderful job you did in "The Ten Commandments." But you left one out, Chuck. Thou Shalt Not Overact.

(RUDY gently shoves the kid back into his seat.)

And now, direct from the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas, my Spanish ventriloquist pal, Señor Wences! Come on out here!

(RUDY brings up his hand, which already has two eyes drawn on it, and slaps a lump of yarn on it for a wig. Spanish accent.)

Hello, Johnny.

PUPPET. Hallo.

RUDY. Have you been a good boy today?

PUPPET. Very good.

RUDY. That's fine. Are you a Catholic boy, Johnny?

PUPPET. Sí.

RUDY. Catholic?

PUPPET. Sí.

RUDY. I am Catholic, too. Do you like being Catholic?

PUPPET. No.

RUDY. No?

PUPPET. No.

RUDY. What don't you like?

PUPPET. Holy water.

RUDY. You don't like holy water? Why not?

PUPPET. Gets my face all wet.

RUDY. Oh, I see.

(The kids laugh. As RUDY has his back to the door, he doesn't see SISTER CLARISSA enter. She approaches slowly and silently.)

(Upon seeing SISTER, the kids immediately snap into "good behavior mode," their noses in their books.)

RUDY. *(Unaware, he continues to the puppet:)* Tell me something, Johnny. Today is Friday. What are you having for dinner tonight?

PUPPET. Fish.

RUDY. Very nice. Sister Clarissa says we must eat fish on Friday. You like to make Sister happy, yes?

PUPPET. No.

RUDY. No?

PUPPET. No.

RUDY. Then why do you eat fish?

PUPPET. I like fish.

RUDY. I see. So, tell me, if you—

(He finally realizes that the jig is up and that SISTER must be standing right behind him, which she is.)

PUPPET. Uh-oh...!

RUDY. *(Becomes Ed Sullivan:)* Well, we're running a little late tonight, folks, so goodnight!

(RUDY starts to escape but SISTER grabs hold of his collar and holds firm. Gotcha!)

(Blackout and quickly up with theme music.)

Scene 2: Opening Titles

ANNOUNCER VOICE. "Over the Tavern!"

(Lights up on bare stage. As the theme music continues in the background, the ANNOUNCER calls out each actor's name. [Replace with your actors' real names.]

ANNOUNCER VOICE. Starring Jayne Landers!

(The actress playing ELLEN briskly steps out from the wings, untying her apron. Taking Center Stage she folds her apron and faces front with a genial smile.)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. William Jeffries!

(The actor playing CHET moseys out from the opposite wing, engrossed in his newspaper. When he reaches Center, ELLEN nicely takes his newspaper away and gestures, "We have company!" A little startled, he faces front and smiles as he removes his bar apron.)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. Kevin Matthews! Shirley Dugan!

(The actors playing EDDIE and ANNIE enter together from the same wing, silently bickering about something or other. When they reach Center and realize where they are, they quickly take their places in front of their parents, primp a little, and smile nicely out front.)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. Mickey Taylor!

(The family looks to the Stage Right wing in anticipation of Georgie's entrance. But they are fooled as GEORGIE enters from the opposite wing. He takes his place in between and in front of EDDIE and ANNIE. The family is happily surprised to see him, and they tussle his hair and what-have-you.)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. Sheila McConnell!

(Out of the wings steps the imperious and imposing form of SISTER CLARISSA. She does not join the family but remains off to the side, acknowledging the audience with the slightest of nods—but no smile!)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. And Larry Foster...

(He sounds as if he's going to say more, like, "...as Rudy!" The family looks to one of the wings to watch the entrance. But there's no Rudy.)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. And Larry Foster...

(Still no Rudy. Now SISTER CLARISSA loudly sounds her clicker, which has the desired result: RUDY runs onto the stage and takes his place at the very front of the group. At first he looks a little guilty for being late, but then he's all smiles.)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. ...as Rudy!

(Blackout. Music ends.)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. And now, a word from our sponsor...

(Commercial break.)

Scene 3

(The Classroom. Same day.)

(Some music leads us into the scene and as lights come up we find that the school day is over. The kids have gone home, except for RUDY. He sits forlornly at his desk while SISTER paces back and forth, leaning on her cane.)

SISTER. I can't understand you at all, Rudolph. Your flagrant disobedience mystifies me. When I think of the trouble and expense your parents have gone to, to provide you with a sound, religious education. And this is how you repay them. With shenanigans. With jokes. Look.

(Gestures to an unseen object hanging high on the "4th wall.")

Look at the model of perfect behavior that has been given to you, to inspire you. And how do you respond? I ask you...

(Produces a paper bag of objects and dumps them on her desk.)

How would Jesus look upon your arsenal, these weapons of destructive behavior that I have collected throughout the year? Would Jesus approve?

(Holds up novelty store items, suiting action to words.)

Did Jesus regale his apostles with chattering teeth? Did he bring peanut brittle to the Last Supper? As an appetizer?

(Opens a can. A springy snake pops out, which doesn't phase her a bit.)

At the Wedding Feast of Cana did he bring a dribble glass? When Pontius Pilate washed his hands at the trial, did Jesus offer him black soap? And this!

(Holds up a Whoopee Cushion.)

Whatever it is, could you imagine Jesus with it?

RUDY. *(Doubled up in pain:)* Please, stop!

SISTER. Finally! Some pangs of guilt!

RUDY. No, I'm trying not to laugh!

SISTER. Rudolph, today was the last straw. I offered you penance, an opportunity for growth. A simple assignment: Class Monitor. Keep order in the class for five minutes while I stepped away. And I return to find bedlam.

RUDY. But it was an unfair temptation. Putting me up in front of a crowd? That's like waving a bottle of 12-year-old *Chivas Regal* in front of a drunk!

SISTER. *(Shocked!)* Where do you learn such things?!

RUDY. Well, when your father runs a gin mill...

SISTER. Be that as it may...

(Produces a pre-written note.)

Your flagrant disobedience will no longer be tolerated. You leave me no recourse. Please present this to your parents.

RUDY. *(Takes note and reads it. He is horrified!)* A meeting?!

SISTER. Tonight. Six o'clock. The three of you. We will get to the root of your "addiction" to bad behavior. Dismissed.

RUDY. But—

SISTER. Dismissed!

RUDY. (*Stands.*) In my own defense I would like to—

(He is cut off by the sound of Sister's "clicker," which she always keeps handy.)

RUDY. (*Exiting:*) ..Yes, S'ter.

(Blackout. Music.)

Scene 4

(Setting: Saint Casimir's Church, minutes later.)

(The music leads us into the scene and as the lights come up RUDY enters all in a sweat. He dives into the empty pew and kneels, about to speak, when he remembers that he forgot the ritual. He hurries back out and stands beside the pew.)

RUDY. Sorry.

(He genuflects. With business taken care of, he plows back into the pew, kneels, makes a quick sign of the cross and holds Sister's note up for Jesus to see. He keeps his voice low since it is, after all, church.)

Jesus, did you see this?! Wait, what am I talking about, you probably inspired it. A meeting with my parents?! Pleeeeez, please, please, please don't let that happen, Jesus. Give us a flood instead. An earthquake. Just a little one. Do it at five o'clock, right after Three Stooges.

(Looks at note.)

A meeting! Why? Now my parents are gonna find out what I'm really like. "Class Clown." Mom already suspects. But Daddy thinks I'm a quiet kid.

Please, cancel this meeting and I'll never make a joke in class again. ...Who am I kidding? I can't quit. I'm a joke junkie.

(Stands to leave.)

Jesus, Billy O'Hara's always talking about the luck o' the Irish. Could you send a little Polish luck my way? Could you give me an illness? A one-night disease? No, give *Sister* the disease.

(Quickly.)

That was a joke, just kidding! ...I'll leave it up to you and your wisdom, Jesus. Whatever you think would be fair to a kid who was

only trying to bring a little joy and laughter into the lives of his hum-drum friends.

(Turns to leave, then remembers the ritual. He comes back and genuflects. Now he exits.)

(Blackout. Music.)

Scene 5

(The Pazinski Apartment, upstairs from the tavern. Later that day.)

(Music brings us into the scene and the lights come up as ELLEN enters with a heavy bag of groceries. She sets it down on the table.)

ELLEN. Come on, Georgie, set it here.

(No response.)

Georgie?

(She goes to the doorway and calls.)

The rest of the groceries, honey! Come on!

(Now GEORGIE lazily walks in carrying a small paper bag which probably holds one tomato.)

(ELLEN watches with amusement as GEORGIE moves to the table and places his parcel there.)

ELLEN. *(Lovingly sarcastic:)* Thanks. Wanna sit down and rest a while?

GEORGIE. Ha-ha!

(He didn't really get it. He just senses when Ellen is probably being funny.)

ELLEN. Honey, there's more groceries in the car.

GEORGIE. *(Sits at table and wipes his brow.)* Phew!

ELLEN. Awww, you're just all pooped out, aren't you?

(GEORGIE tips forward and collapses in "exhaustion" on the table. She goes to him and rubs his shoulders.)

ELLEN. Ye-e-es, poor little thing, after mean old Mommy made you climb all those stairs with that big heavy tomato.

GEORGIE. *(Fakes a snore.)* Z-z-z-z-z-z-!

ELLEN. Oh-h-h, Georgie's in dreamland now. Dreaming about just how far being *cute* will take him! ...Well, I'd say it will take him—

(She playfully pulls his chair away from the table and across the floor.)

ELLEN. –just about this far! Here we go, sleeping beauty!

(She shakes the chair.)

Clang-clang-clang-time for work!

(He gets to his feet, laughing.)

Atta boy, here we go, work to be done.

(She takes groceries out of bag.)

Work-work-work-work, that's it, sweetie, put everything away, you know where things go. To the pantry with you.

(GEORGIE lazily takes some things away to an off-stage pantry.)

(The phone rings.)

ELLEN. *(Answers phone.)* Hello? No, Annie's not home yet. No, I don't know where she is. Okay, I will. 'Bye.

(Hangs up. Calls to off-stage Georgie.)

Sweetie, not there. Up top, come on, you know where that goes.

(The phone rings.)

ELLEN. *(Answers phone.)* Hello? No, Eddie's not home yet. No, I don't know where he is. Okay, I will. 'Bye.

(Hangs up. To GEORGIE who has now returned to table.)

Take the soup, Georgie. Which one's the soup? Come on, you know. Which one's the soup?

(He stares at the cans. The phone rings.)

Georgie, get the phone.

GEORGIE. *(Now he's really confused.)* Nnn...

ELLEN. Get the phone, Georgie. C'mon.

GEORGIE. Nnn...

ELLEN. It's time you started answering the phone around here. You can do it, c'mon, right here. C'mon, Georgie.

(He hesitantly makes his way to the phone. This is all new to him. He picks it up and speaks into it.)

GEORGIE. 'Lo.

(ELLEN watches, amused and delighted. This is progress!)

GEORGIE. Yuh... Yuh...

(A big greeting.)

Hiya!

(ELLEN laughs behind her hand.)

Nnn... Nnn...

(He shrugs a silent "I don't know" to the caller. Now he puts his palm to his mouth and makes a magnificent fart noise!)

ELLEN. *(Quickly snatches phone from him.)* Okay, I'll take it from here, sweetie.

(Into phone.)

Hello? ...Oh, Sister Clarissa!

(Looks daggers at GEORGIE. He blithely goes back to his groceries.)

Hello, hi, I'm sorry. Yes, that was Georgie. Needs a little more training, I agree. Well, what can I do for you, Sister? ...Rudy? What's he done? ...Oh, dear. ...*(Sigh.)* I see. ...A meeting? No, he hasn't told me anything about a meeting; he's not home yet. ...Six o'clock? Um, sure I guess so. I mean, of course, yes, we'll be there. Okay, thanks for calling, Sister. Goodbye.

(She hangs up. She thinks for a moment, then moves to the groceries.)

Let me help you there, Georgie. Then we'll go down and get the rest of the stuff out of the trunk. Hey, Chicken a la King for supper tonight, honey. Sound good?

GEORGIE. Oh, boy!

(We hear whistling from offstage.)

GEORGIE. Ruggy!

ELLEN. Yes, that's Rudy's whistle. Let's finish up here, hon'.

(ELLEN adapts a casual air and gathers her groceries as RUDY enters, whistling merrily, carrying his books.)

RUDY. Hey, Mom, what did your mother say when you told her you were converting from Presbyterian to Catholic?

ELLEN. She said, "I hope you make a better Catholic than you did a Presbyterian."

RUDY. Ha! That's a good one. Hi, Georgie.

GEORGIE. Ruggy!

ELLEN. How was school today?

RUDY. Oh, you know, the usual excitement over the Feast of Saint Clementino. So, wha'd you do today, Georgie?

GEORGIE. Nnn...

(Takes last of groceries off stage.)

ELLEN. Saint who?

RUDY. St. Clementino. You know. Patron Saint of Solitude.

ELLEN. Never heard of him.

RUDY. One of the lesser knowns. But we still celebrate him.

ELLEN. Why, what did St. Clementino do that he gets a whole feast day to himself?

RUDY. Oh, the guy was great. He spent his whole life praying in a tower, all alone. No windows. Never talked to anyone. They slid his meals under the door.

ELLEN. And you become a saint for that?

RUDY. Could you do it?

ELLEN. And today's his day, huh?

RUDY. Uh-huh. And naturally the kids are all excited about tonight.

(GEORGIE returns.)

I'll help you prepare the house right after I do homework. Georgie, wanna help us?

GEORGIE. Oh, boy!

ELLEN. What do you mean, prepare the house?

RUDY. You don't know about the ritual?

ELLEN. No, I'm not as religious as you.

RUDY. Well, for one evening we recreate St. Clementino's life of solitude. We stay inside, pull down all the blinds, don't answer the phone, and don't talk to each other.

ELLEN. Do I slide your Chicken a la King under the door?

RUDY. No, we can eat at the table. But quietly. I'd better go get those groceries I saw in the trunk, 'cause we start at five o'clock, y'know. Come help me, Georgie.

GEORGIE. Nnn...

ELLEN. Wait-wait-wait... We stay in all night?

RUDY. Uh-huh.

ELLEN. Don't talk to anyone? Don't answer the phone?

RUDY. Right.

ELLEN. Starting at five?

RUDY. Actually, you should probably stop taking calls around now. Yeah, I would stop now. Just to be safe.

ELLEN. Is there sin involved?

RUDY. 'Scuse me?

ELLEN. Is it a sin if you don't do these things?

RUDY. (*Thinks.*) Mmm...yeah.

ELLEN. Mortal sin?

RUDY. Oh, no, no, no! Venial. But *big* venial. Okay, be right back. Don't take any calls.

ELLEN. (*When he's almost out the door.*) Rudy, what about messages?

RUDY. (*Stops.*) Whatsat?

ELLEN. Can we pass written messages back and forth? You know, like notes?

RUDY. Mmm...sorry, not allowed. Hey, it's not me, it's the Church. You know how they are.

ELLEN. Gosh. You mean, you wouldn't even be allowed to deliver a note to me from, say, Sister Clarissa, asking us to attend a meeting tonight at the school at six o'clock to discuss your behavior?

(*Caught! He slumps with his face in his hands.*)

RUDY. *Ughhhh—!*

ELLEN. Rudy—

RUDY. Mom—!

ELLEN. You were going to have us miss this meeting for a made-up saint?

RUDY. (*Sounding positively ill:*) *Ughhhhh—!*

ELLEN. Don't you know that would have made things ten times worse, Rudy?

RUDY. It would have bought me time.

ELLEN. To do what?

RUDY. I don't know. Convert to Presbyterian.

ELLEN. Let me see the note.

(He opens a book and takes out the note that was folded in a secret compartment.)

(Curious, she takes the book and opens it, revealing that "someone" took a knife and hollowed out a square section in the pages. She looks right through the opening at him.)

RUDY. It came like that.

ELLEN. *(Letting this one slide, she reads the note silently. Now she hands it back to him.)* Take it downstairs to your father.

RUDY. Mom—!

ELLEN. Do it.

RUDY. He'll kill me!

ELLEN. He's your father, he's not allowed to kill you. Get going.

RUDY. He'll make me explain myself!

ELLEN. So?

RUDY. I don't know how! I feel sick!

ELLEN. Never mind.

RUDY. I do!

ELLEN. Good. Shows you've got a conscience.

RUDY. Can I go to the bathroom first?

ELLEN. Get down to that tavern.

RUDY. Me throwing up on the bar isn't going to help things.

ELLEN. Give that note to your father or no Milton Berle tonight!

RUDY. *(Clutches his heart in shock. His jaw drops.)* You wouldn't!

(ELLEN points to the exit, meaning business. In total surrender, he slowly turns to go.)

RUDY. *(Passing GEORGIE:)* Georgie, take this note to Daddy.

ELLEN. *Rudy!*

RUDY. *Alright!*

(RUDY runs out with the note. Blackout. Music.)

Scene 6

(The barroom of Chet's Bar & Grill. Minutes later.)

(The music brings us into the scene. As the lights come up, we find CHET PAZINSKI standing behind the bar washing glasses. A customer, DINTY SHANAHAN, sits on a bar stool nursing his beer.)

DINTY. Hey, Chet. Izzat you in that picture?

CHET. *(Turns to look at a baseball picture behind the bar.)* Dinty...how long you been comin' in here?

DINTY. 'Bout ten years, I guess.

CHET. And just *today* you figured out that that's me?

DINTY. My eyes ain't that good since the war. Lemme see it.

CHET. *(Before giving it.)* Hands.

(DINTY puts out his hands. CHET tosses him a bar rag.)

Wipe 'em.

(DINTY wipes his hands. CHET passes him the picture.)

DINTY. Let's take a gander here. Sa-a-ay, wouldja look at you! Lookin' like Whitey Ford here.

CHET. Think so?

DINTY. Look at the form on this guy.

CHET. My first no-hitter. We played Republic Steel. Shut 'em out twelve to nothin'.

DINTY. How 'bout that! ...Hey, Chet, didja ever make it to the pros?

CHET. If I made it to the pros would I be standin' here watchin' you nurse the same beer for an hour n' a half? ...I'd be over on the *North* side. In a nice house. With a lawn. And a bar downstairs in the basement. A bar in the basement, that's the life. Yessir, walk downstairs and there you are.

DINTY. You can walk downstairs here. And here you are.

CHET. ...Shut up.

(RUDY tentatively enters. He stands there, awkwardly, not knowing how to start.)

DINTY. Well, hi there, Rudy! Howza boy?

RUDY. *(Quietly.)* 'lo, Dinty.

(RUDY stands silently.)

CHET. Well? What'sa matter with *you*?

RUDY. Um...here. From Sister Clarissa.

(RUDY puts the note on the bar. CHET takes it and reads silently.)

DINTY. Uh-oh. A note from Sister. You a Saint Casimir kid?

(RUDY nods.)

Nuns.

(Shivers at the thought.)

My advice? Do what she tells ya. And if she ever picks up a ruler, boy, head for the hills. I had a nun one time—

CHET. (Trying to read:) SHH!

(DINTY pantomimes for RUDY, holding out his palm and getting struck with a ruler. Owch! It stings!)

CHET. (Finished reading.) Whatta you been doin' at that school?

RUDY. (Shrugs.) Nothin'.

CHET. "Misbehaving" it says.

DINTY. Uh-oh.

CHET. You? Since when? You're a quiet kid.

RUDY. I know! That's the weird part!

CHET. Well, is it true?

RUDY. (Shrugs.) Guess so.

CHET. You guess so? Is that why I send you to school? So you can monkey around? Waste my money?

(Refers to note.)

"Six o'clock." Doesn't she know people eat? Now what do I gotta do, call Walter? So he can miss his dinner? Start his shift an hour early? Why, so I can go off to some "meeting?" 'Cause you wanna fool around in class? Never thought about that, didja? Making everyone miss their dinner.

(RUDY tries to shrink to nothing.)

CHET. (Refers to note.) "Total lack of self-control." That's just dandy. Poor old woman tryin' to teach you, and you can't control yourself. Now we gotta go bother her for an hour 'cause you can't control yourself. Why can'tcha? Huh? Why can'tcha?

(RUDY can't answer.)

CHET. Come on, y'got no problem mouthin' off in school, let's have some answers! Huh? Why can't you behave yourself?

(Slams the bar top.)

Answer me!

(About to burst into tears, RUDY runs from the room and exits up the stairs.)

(The room is silent for a moment.)

DINTY. Boy...this Sister Clarissa dame. She must be one scary teacher.

CHET. Scariest teacher I ever had.

(Fade to black as music takes us to finish.)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. And now, a word from our sponsor...

(Commercial break.)

Scene 7

(The Pazinski Apartment. Later that day.)

(Music plays as lights come up on RUDY sitting at the kitchen table, waiting to be taken to the big meeting.)

(CHET and ELLEN enter. She's fiddling in her purse, he's attempting to tie his necktie.)

ELLEN. You don't need that tie, it's just a get-together.

CHET. Oh, really, are we gonna play parlor games? Are we having punch and cookies? It's a meeting, not a get-together. Of course I need a tie.

ELLEN. I spoke to her on the phone, she said informal.

CHET. What do you know about meetings, you grew up on a farm.

ELLEN. You never heard of Grange Meetings? What are you so nervous about?

CHET. I'm not nervous.

(To RUDY.)

Why aren't you ready?

RUDY. I am ready.

CHET. Go comb your hair.

(RUDY gets up and exits. Through this next CHET struggles with his tie.)

ELLEN. Don't bark at him. He's got enough on his mind tonight.

CHET. There you go, coddling him. That's why we're in this mess.

ELLEN. Excuse me?

CHET. He's spoiled.

ELLEN. Like milk?

CHET. You spoil him rotten.

ELLEN. What are you talking about?

CHET. Anything he wants, he gets. Just go to Mommy and say the word. He says he wants a bicycle, he gets a bicycle. Like you're the bicycle fairy. You know what I had to do to get a bicycle? And I never got a bicycle.

ELLEN. That bike of his had three owners and cost me fifty cents. Why shouldn't he have a bike?

CHET. He gets away with murder. Do you know what I woulda got if I came home with a note like that?

(Makes a fist.)

Hoo-boy!

ELLEN. Alright, let's do it your way. Call him out here and we'll beat him up.

CHET. *(Whips the tie off his neck.)* Stupid tie!

(EDDIE and ANNIE enter.)

EDDIE. *(Teasing ANNIE:)* Chicken-chicken-chicken-buk-buk-buk-buk-buk—!

ANNIE. Shut up!

ELLEN. Hey, you two are on your own for supper tonight.

EDDIE. *(Giggling:)* You shoulda seen. We were walkin' down Seymour Street and we pass Father Wilford.

ANNIE. Would you shut up about it?

EDDIE. I say, "Hi, Father." And she just goes—

(A little wave.)

I said, "Why didn't you say hi?" She says, "'Cause he might recognize my voice from confession!" Ha-ha-ha-ha—! Buk-buk-buk-buk—!

ANNIE. You're funny but your face beat you to it.

ELLEN. Did you hear what I said? Make your own supper. Tomato and lettuce sandwiches, whatever you can find. And don't forget Georgie.

(Calls:)

Georgie, supper! ...Annie, no dessert, remember your diet.

ANNIE. (*Tsk!*) I know.

EDDIE. Why, where are you guys goin'?

ELLEN. Going to school.

CHET. (*Yells off:*) Hey, you, come on, I don't wanna be late.

ANNIE. *Rudy's* school?

EDDIE. *Rudy's* in trouble! Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha—!

ANNIE. Boy, nice guy. Do you treat your *friends* this badly?

EDDIE. 'Course not, 'cause they're normal.

ELLEN. *Rudy* is not in trouble, we're just discussing a few things.

(Calls:)

Georgie—!

(*RUDY comes out of the bathroom.*)

EDDIE. Hey, whadja do, put a tack on Sister's chair?

RUDY. No, I showed her one of your High School report cards. It put her in the hospital.

ELLEN. Where is that kid? *Georgie!*

(*We hear "SHHHHHHHH—!" and now GEORGIE runs in with a bath towel tied at his neck and a crude paper triangle scotch-taped to his shirt, with a large crayon S on it. He's making a Superman flying noise.*)

GEORGIE. SHHHHHHHHH—!

(*He comes in for a landing, strikes a heroic pose with fists on his hips.*)

EDDIE. It's Georgie-Man!

ANNIE. My hero! Hey, that's my good towel!

CHET. C'mon, we goin' or ain't we?

ELLEN. Oh, yes, use "ain't" in front of Sister Clarissa. It'll set the perfect tone.

RUDY. Let's get this over with.

(*CHET, ELLEN, and RUDY move to the door.*)

ELLEN. (*To EDDIE and ANNIE:*) Get some food into him and don't let him fly out any windows. You, no dessert.

ANNIE. *I know.*

ELLEN. Eddie, algebra.

EDDIE. I know.

CHET. *(Stops.)* Annie...when you're in the confessional, change your voice.

ANNIE. Huh?

CHET. Lower your voice a little. You know—

(A deeper voice:)

"Bless me, father, for I have sinned."

ELLEN. That's fine. He'll wonder what Tallulah Bankhead's doing in his confession box. ...Come on.

(CHET, ELLEN, and RUDY exit.)

(Lights fade to black and music plays denoting the passage of time.)

(Lights are restored, music fades out and GEORGIE and EDDIE are sitting in different positions at the table. Eddie's jacket hangs over the back of the chair. Annie is nowhere to be seen.)

EDDIE. *(Intently watching GEORGIE:)* Come on, Georgie.

(GEORGIE is silent.)

Georgie, come on. Please?

(No response.)

Just one more time. Huh? C'mon. I'll give you a Superman comic book.

(No response.)

Georgie-Man, one more time.

(ANNIE enters.)

ANNIE. You better cut it out.

EDDIE. Oh-h-h, I see, Georgie-Man *can't* do it! That's it! He's lost his super powers, he can't do it anymore!

ANNIE. Eddie—!

EDDIE. Shh!

GEORGIE. *(Puts his palm to his mouth and comes out with that fabulous fart noise!)* PPPPPPPPPPPPP—!

EDDIE. Ha-ha-ha-ha—! Good one, Georgie-Man! Wow! Gas from the Planet Krypton!

(GEORGIE laughs, delighted with the attention.)

ANNIE. If Mommy catches you guys!

EDDIE. Oh, dry up. Don't you know good clean fun when you see it?

ANNIE. It's bad enough *one* Pazinski's in trouble tonight.

EDDIE. Yeah, I bet he's catching holy heck over there. Hope so, anyway.

ANNIE. A meeting with your parents. That's the worst.

(On second thought:)

I'd love to see it.

EDDIE. Me, too. Love to see him get wacked with the ruler. Ha-ha!

ANNIE. She'd never do that in front of Mommy and Daddy.

(A pause.)

Would she?

EDDIE. *(Gleam in his eye.)* Wanna find out?

ANNIE. Sneak into the meeting?

EDDIE. *(All excited.)* Let's do it!

ANNIE. No...they'd kill us.

EDDIE. *(Quietly:)* Buuuuk-buk-buk-buk-buk—!

(After a moment of decision she rises to the bait. They run to the door, then stop, remembering they are in charge of GEORGIE. They slowly turn and look at him still sitting at the table.)

ANNIE. Nuts! We can't leave him!

(A tense moment.)

EDDIE. *(Suddenly:)* Come on, Georgie!

GEORGIE. Hey!

(GEORGIE-MAN jumps up and "flies" after them, arms out-stretched.)

GEORGIE. SHHHHHHHHH—!

(They all exit. Blackout. Music.)

Scene 8

(St. Casimir's Classroom. Later.)

(Music takes us into the scene, lights come up to find RUDY, CHET, and ELLEN entering tentatively. RUDY takes a seat at his desk.)

CHET. (*Looking around in reverential awe:*) Wow—!

ELLEN. Memories?

CHET. This classroom is *exactly the same!*

(*Sniffs the air.*)

Even smells the same in here. What is that smell? Chalk? Books?

(*Sniffs.*)

ELLEN. (*Sees something on desk. Picks up a wooden ruler and dangles it playfully.*) Rooo-deee—!

RUDY. (*Covers his face.*) Please...!

CHET. (*Sotto:*) Don't touch anything!

(*ELLEN makes a private face to RUDY: "What's with Dad?"*)

CHET. (*Sees a wastebasket.*) He-e-ey, the wastebasket! And I think it's the same one! It is!

ELLEN. What?

CHET. This! If you were really bad, she made you stand in it.

ELLEN. Stand in it?

CHET. For about a half hour.

(*To RUDY.*)

Does she still do that?

RUDY. It's my second home.

ELLEN. But what is the— Why does she do that?

CHET. I don't know.

RUDY. To make you feel like garbage.

(*ELLEN pulls a face, meaning, "This is really strange!"*)

CHET. (*Still baffled:*) What is that smell?

ELLEN. Fear.

(*SISTER CLARISSA enters.*)

SISTER. I appreciate your being so prompt.

(*Shuts door behind her.*)

I have a good many things to attend to this evening and I am sure your time is valuable as well. So I will get right to the heart of the matter. Rudolph is a bright boy. He scores higher than average in most subjects. But some of his ideas, frankly, baffle me completely.

(At this point, she is standing before CHET. Now she looks at him closely.)

CHET. *(Awkwardly:)* Hi. ...'Member me?

SISTER. I do. You broke the convent window with a foul ball.

CHET. No, now see, that's the thing, I was *pitching* at the time. Paulie Murko was at bat, and he took this wild swing that—

SISTER. If you have a grievance write a letter to the Diocesan Director. With proper documentation you may have your ball returned. Where was I...

ELLEN. Rudy's ideas?

SISTER. His ideas, his outlook on life, his philosophy. Has he ever discussed theology with you?

ELLEN. Theology?

CHET. I didn't even know he knew what it meant! Ha-ha...

SISTER. What does it mean?

CHET. Hmm? Well, y'know...things about...God...and things...

(ELLEN gives CHET a nudge and a sarcastic nod, as if to say, "Good one!")

SISTER. Well, a point has come up recently about "God and things" upon which Rudolph has been positively scintillating. That question which has vexed mankind since the beginning of time. "Why are we here?"

CHET. "We are here to show forth God's goodness and to share with Him everlasting happiness in heaven."

SISTER. *(Impressed:)* Well, now!

CHET. Baltimore Catechism question number 3.

SISTER. Well, that answer didn't satisfy Rudolph. Tell them your answer, Rudolph.

RUDY. I'd just as soon forget the whole thing, if it's alright.

SISTER. *(Thumps her cane.)* Rudolph!

(At this, the three of them stiffen to attention.)

RUDY. Well...it occurred to me...

SISTER. Stand.

RUDY. *(Slowly rises.)* I just thought...after careful consideration...I mean, it just seems to me...

(SISTER *thumps impatiently!*)

It seems to me that God put us here to have fun!

(CHET and ELLEN *stare at him with mouths agape. He finishes quickly.*)

By Rudolph Pazinski, thank you very much.

(*Sits.*)

CHET. Fun?

ELLEN. Fun?

SISTER. "Fun!"

(*All three look at RUDY for an explanation.*)

(*At a loss for words, RUDY puts on a simpleton smile and tussles his hair a la Stan Laurel.*)

SISTER. (To CHET and ELLEN:) Be seated, please.

(CHET and ELLEN *sit at the school desks. To RUDY:*)

You—

(*Gestures "Stand up!" He does.*)

Rudolph, will you explain, please, how God's purpose for us is to have "fun?"

(RUDY, *feeling horribly awkward, doesn't answer.*)

SISTER. Please, we are interested. Since humankind up until now has not been having much fun, we would like to know where God's plan went wrong.

(RUDY *nervously shuffles his feet and bites his lip.*)

SISTER. Tell me, are you having fun now?

RUDY. (*Quietly:*) No, S'ter.

SISTER. So do you see how that proves my point? Or, rather, disproves yours? If it were Almighty God's intention for Rudolph Pazinski to have fun every moment, then you would be having fun right now.

RUDY. Well...something could still happen.

SISTER. What's that? Something could happen? Like what?

RUDY. (*A slow shrug.*) Somethin'.

SISTER. Something like...a miracle, perhaps?

(RUDY *is feeling worse and worse. He can hardly speak.*)

RUDY. ...I dunno.

**THIS PLAY IS
NOT OVER!**

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EPISODE 2: GENUFLECTING

Scene 1: The Teaser

(Setting: Saint Casimir's Church.)

(Lights come up. Soft organ music plays.)

(Eight chairs are lined up representing two church pews. One pew Stage Left, one pew Stage Right. The space between the pews represents the aisle running up the middle of the church.)

(Eight students enter in single file. Their behavior is saintly. Slowly they march into the church and split up, boys to one pew, girls to the other. With hands folded straight up to heaven, they systematically enter the pews.)

(As each student approaches the pew, he/she genuflects while looking up at the altar, past the 4th wall, acknowledging God's presence. After the genuflection he/she enters the pew, sits, makes the sign of the cross and prays silently with folded hands. Now we see RUDY, last on line.)

(We watch as all the other students enter their pews. There is now one empty space left for Rudy to sit in. He is standing alone.)

(It's Rudy's turn to genuflect. He hesitates. And now—what's this? Has he taken leave of his senses? Instead of genuflecting, he gives a private little wave and a smile to the altar and enters the pew! He sits and prays with the other boys.)

(Suddenly we hear Sister's clicker!)

(SISTER CLARISSA storms into the scene, marches right up to RUDY and, without a word, grabs his arm and pulls him out of the pew. Startled, his feet fail him; he is all dangling limbs. Like a marionette with tangled strings, she yanks him up to his feet. He stands now, waiting for her command.)

(SISTER snaps her fingers sharply and points to the floor. RUDY obediently genuflects and returns to the pew. He sits and prays, casting a wary glance at SISTER, who stands over him, glaring!)

(Blackout. Theme music begins.)

Scene 2: Opening Titles

ANNOUNCER VOICE. "Over the Tavern!"

(Lights up on bare stage. As the theme music continues in the background, the ANNOUNCER calls out each actor's name. [Replace with your actors' real names.])

ANNOUNCER VOICE. Starring Jayne Landers!

(The actress playing ELLEN briskly steps out from the wings, untying her apron. Taking Center Stage she folds her apron and faces front with a genial smile.)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. William Jeffries!

(The actor playing CHET moseys out from the opposite wing, engrossed in his newspaper. When he reaches Center, ELLEN nicely takes his newspaper away and gestures, "We have company!" A little startled, he faces front and smiles as he removes his bar apron.)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. Kevin Matthews! Shirley Dugan!

(The actors playing EDDIE and ANNIE enter together from the same wing, silently bickering about something or other. When they reach Center and realize where they are, they quickly take their places in front of their parents and smile nicely out front.)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. Mickey Taylor!

(The family looks to the Stage Right wing in anticipation of Georgie's entrance. But GEORGIE fools them by entering from the opposite wing. He takes his place in between and in front of EDDIE and ANNIE. The family is happily surprised to see him, and they tussle his hair and what-have-you.)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. Sheila McConnell!

(Out of the wings steps the imperious and imposing form of SISTER CLARISSA. She does not join the family but remains off to the side, acknowledging the audience with the slightest of nods—but no smile!)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. And Larry Foster...

(He sounds as if he's going to say more, like, "...as Rudy!" The family looks to one of the wings to watch the entrance. But there's no Rudy.)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. And Larry Foster...

(Still no Rudy. Now SISTER CLARISSA loudly sounds her clicker, which has the desired result: RUDY runs onto the stage and takes

his place at the very front of the group. At first he looks a little guilty for being late, but then he's all smiles.)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. ...as Rudy!

(Blackout. Music ends.)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. And now, a word from our sponsor...

(Commercial break.)

Scene 3

(St. Casimir's Classroom. A little later.)

(Some music leads us into the scene and as lights come up we find that RUDY is standing, being reprimanded by SISTER CLARISSA. The rest of the students are seated, listening intently.)

SISTER. A wave? A wave to God as you enter his house?

RUDY. And a smile.

SISTER. Silence! ...I thought I had seen everything but this has topped them all. ...Mary Carol Masterson, why do we genuflect in church?

MARY CAROL. *(Hops to her feet.)* Genuflection before the—

SISTER. Tell *him!*

MARY CAROL. *(To RUDY, with a haughty tone:)* Genuflection before the altar is a form of worship, a symbol of our respect and adoration for God.

SISTER. Correct. Come get a holy card.

(MARY CAROL proudly goes to SISTER and takes a small card from her.)

MARY CAROL. Thank you, Sister.

(Turns to go, but stops.)

I also know the three conditions which must be present in order for a sin to be considered mortal.

SISTER. Some other time.

(MARY CAROL returns to her desk. RUDY privately makes a face at her.)

SISTER. Worship, respect and adoration. That's what genuflection symbolizes, Mr. Pazinski, and that is what you will do from now

on, without variation, each time you enter a pew in God's house. Is that clear?

RUDY. Yes, S'ter.

SISTER. Sit down.

RUDY. *(To himself as he sits:)* Not much fun...

SISTER. What? What did you say?

RUDY. *(Stands back up.)* Um...not much, um...

MARY CAROL. Fun, not much fun, he said it wasn't much fun!

RUDY. *(Aside to MARY CAROL:)* Bang-zoom!

(This very specific "Bang-zoom" can be found in the Honeymooners episode entitled "Alice and the Blonde.")

SISTER. And what exactly does that mean, "not much fun?"

RUDY. Um...permission to speak freely?

(SISTER brings herself up to her full height...and waits.)

RUDY. *(Ahem.)* Well...I was just wondering why God wants things so serious in his house. Y'know, all solemn and bowing and whispering and...all stiff and...stuff.

(SISTER stares. The students gape with open mouths, shocked at RUDY's boldness.)

RUDY. I mean, 'cause if I had people come over to *my* house, I'd, y'know, want it a little more lively. Make 'em feel more at home sorta. Frankly, a lotta times I wonder if God really *wants* all that worshipping and bowing and genuflecting. Do you think He actually likes it?

SISTER. Are you through?

RUDY. Well...for now.

SISTER. Mr. Pazinski, not only does God like it, but as Creator of the Universe He expects it and demands it. I don't know where you get these ideas, young man, but there is no place for them at Saint Casimir's. Now, tomorrow morning I want a five hundred word paper on my desk explaining the importance of worshipping God in the manner prescribed by the Church.

RUDY. ...Five hundred, huh?

SISTER. I'll be counting.

RUDY. ...Yes, S'ter.

(RUDY sits. He shoots MARY CAROL an angry look. She smugly sticks out her tongue.)

(Blackout. Music.)

Scene 4

(Saint Casimir's Church. Later.)

(Music brings us into the scene. As the lights come up we see RUDY tentatively poke his head in for a look-see. Seeing the coast is clear, he enters and walks up the aisle.)

(Standing in the aisle, he looks around again to make sure he's alone. Satisfied, he looks to the altar, gives a knowing smile and a little wave.)

(Suddenly, as a joke for God's and his own amusement, he throws up protective arms as if he were receiving instant punishment for his sin, being struck by a bolt of lightning.)

RUDY. A-a-a-ahh!!!

(He staggers. Now, the joke over, he relaxes and speaks to the altar beyond the 4th Wall.)

RUDY. Just kidding. So...five hundred words. There goes my evening. And "Ozzie & Harriett's" on, too. Five hundred. And she doesn't count *a's* and *the's*, either.

(Shakes head in puzzlement.)

Is Sister right, Jesus? About genuflecting? I know she's the expert on religion, but is it really what you want? I dunno, if it were me up there I'd feel kinda silly. I think I'd be saying, "You down there, would you look at yourself? Get up off your knees, cut out the nonsense!" What if that's what you *are* saying and we can't hear you? What if we've been annoying you all these years by genuflecting?

(Shakes his head again.)

I could see maybe in the *old* days you mighta liked it. 'Cause *everybody* acted that way.

(He steps out into the middle of the aisle.)

'Tis I, m'Lord! Rudolf of Loxley!

(Bows with a medieval flourish.)

But, y'know, this is 1959. People are hep! Hep, man!

(Snaps fingers, bops around like a 50s Hep Cat.)

Hi, man! Hi, God, man! Everything cool, Big Daddy-o?

(He stops and looks around the room.)

Y'know, it's a nice house you've got here, but, if you don't mind my saying...it's a little stiff. Everybody's afraid to move in here, afraid to let go and be themselves, y'know? You never see anybody doin' this...

(He executes a wacky dance step he picked up from cartoons.)

Or this...

(Another step, something from Groucho Marx, making his legs twist like corkscrews.)

Oh, didya see Jackie Gleason do this last night?

(He does some of Gleason's classic dance moves.)

Oh, and there's this new guy, Dick Van Dyke!

(Now, all over the aisle, he's dancing like an eccentric Vaudeville comic.)

(As he gets really into it, sort of showing off for God, a LITTLE OLD LADY enters from the back. Seeing RUDY dancing she approaches him, completely puzzled.)

(In mid-step RUDY finds himself face to face with the woman. He stops. They stare at each other for a tense moment.)

RUDY. *(Finally to the woman:)* I'm cured! I'm cured! I can dance again!

(To the altar.)

Thank you, Jesus! Thank you!

(Turns and dances up the aisle.)

I'm dancin'! Look, Ma, I'm dancin'!

(He exits, leaving the LITTLE OLD LADY totally baffled.)

(Blackout. Music.)

Scene 5

(The Pazinski Apartment. Eddie's Bedroom. Later.)

(Music brings us into the scene. As the lights come up EDDIE sits at his desk doing homework. Books and notebooks are spread everywhere. He is bent over a book, studying hard.)

(Now we hear RUDY approaching.)

RUDY. *(Off. Singing:)* Oh, we're the men of Texaco
We work from Maine to Mexico
There's nothing like this Texaco of ours...

(In a flash, EDDIE whips away the book he was reading, crams it into the desk drawer and shuts it! Apparently he wasn't doing homework after all. Now he pretends to be studying as RUDY appears.)

RUDY. Hi.

EDDIE. *(Not bothering to look up.)* Gedadda here.

RUDY. Make me.

EDDIE. You're already made and what a mess.

RUDY. *(A pause.)* Whatcha doin'?

EDDIE. What's it look like?

RUDY. *(Steps into room.)* Is high school hard?

EDDIE. *(Still not looking up:)* Whatta you care, you'll never get in.

RUDY. Will, too!

(Another pause. He starts to sit.)

I gotta write a—

EDDIE. *Get off the bed!*

RUDY. *(Stands back up.)* I gotta write a five hundred word paper.

EDDIE. So?

RUDY. I'm just tellin' ya'.

EDDIE. For who?

RUDY. Sister Clarissa.

EDDIE. Careful with her. She doesn't count the *a*'s and *the*'s.

RUDY. I know.

EDDIE. *(A pause.)* You can go now.

RUDY. Don't you want to know what the paper's about?

EDDIE. No.

RUDY. What do you think about genuflecting?

EDDIE. Not much.

RUDY. *(A pause.)* I enjoy these talks.

(RUDY exits. Alone again, EDDIE opens the desk drawer and pulls out "that book." Just as he opens it, RUDY reappears.)

RUDY. Genuflecting is—

EDDIE. (*Explodes:*) GEDDADA HERE!!

(*RUDY runs out.*)

(*Blackout. Music.*)

Scene 6

(*Annie's Bedroom. Moments later.*)

(*Music brings us into the scene. Lights come up to find ANNIE sitting on her bed painting her toenails, wads of cotton between her toes.*)

(*RUDY enters casually, the encounter with Eddie completely forgotten.*)

RUDY. Hi.

ANNIE. (*Intent in her nail painting:*) Sh-h-h-h—

RUDY. (*Steps into room.*) Is that mercurochrome? Are those cuts?

ANNIE. *Tsk!* Haven't you ever seen anyone paint their toenails?

RUDY. Only on TV. Olive Oyl. She used a roller. ...Why are you doing it?

ANNIE. 'Cause I feel like it.

RUDY. But you wear socks. Nobody can see it.

ANNIE. I'll know it's there. And it'll make me feel special.

RUDY. But then...the lint from the inside of your socks will stick to it and your toes will be all fuzzy and when Mom does the wash she'll think your feet were bleeding and—

ANNIE. Oh, shut up! What do you want? I don't have any money.

RUDY. I don't want money. Well, I do want money. Do you have any money?

ANNIE. No!

(*RUDY sits on the bed.*)

ANNIE. Don't jiggle!

(*RUDY throws his arms out as if to steady the whole room.*)

ANNIE. You're funny but your face beat you to it. Get off my bed.

RUDY. Make me.

ANNIE. You're already made and what a mess.

RUDY. This family needs new material.

ANNIE. Don't you have something to do?

RUDY. I'm doing it.

ANNIE. What?

RUDY. Procrastinating. ...I gotta write a five hundred word paper for Sister Clarissa.

ANNIE. Watch out, she doesn't count the tiny words.

RUDY. *A and the*, I know.

ANNIE. Better get started. You don't wanna miss "Ozzie & Harriett" tonight.

RUDY. I'm kinda stuck. If I write the paper I'll be lying. And that's a sin.

ANNIE. How will you be lying?

RUDY. I'm supposed to write about how important it is to worship God. And I'm not sure God wants to be worshipped.

ANNIE. (*Suddenly:*) Shut my door, shut my door!!

(*RUDY jumps up and shuts the door.*)

RUDY. What—What?!

ANNIE. No wonder you're in trouble all the time, saying those things!

RUDY. What? That God doesn't want to be worshipped?

ANNIE. (*Covers her ears.*) *Aa-aa-aah!!!*

RUDY. What's wrong?

ANNIE. How can you say that out loud?! Or even *think* it?!

RUDY. I dunno, it just came to me.

ANNIE. That God doesn't want to be *worshipped*?!

(*Quickly covers her mouth, then makes an urgent sign of the cross!*)

Oh, please, dear Jesus, please help my stupid brother!

RUDY. Well, maybe he doesn't wanna be.

ANNIE. We *have* to worship God, you dope! He's *God!* The Supreme Being! The Heavenly Father! Ruler of Heaven and Earth! Prince of Peace! Lord of Lords, King of Kings! Almighty Creator of the Universe!

RUDY. Wow, what a title!

(Mimes straining with a heavy, 4-foot board.)

Here, have one of my... *(Mph!)* business cards!

ANNIE. Get out of my room! I don't want it struck by lightning, Daddy just wallpapered!

RUDY. All I'm saying is, maybe we've got God all wrong. Maybe He doesn't want all the scraping and bowing.

ANNIE. Oh, I see, Sister Clarissa's got God wrong!

RUDY. Well...

ANNIE. This woman who's devoted her entire life to studying these things, now she's wrong!

(A pause as RUDY ponders.)

ANNIE. Rudy, please stop making things so difficult for yourself. Just do what she says.

RUDY. But—

ANNIE. You think about these things too much. You don't have to, that's what we have Sister for. She knows what's best for us.

RUDY. "Sister Knows Best." *There's* a TV show I can miss.

(Now comes a call from downstairs.)

CHET. *(Off:)* Rudy! Get yourself down here!

RUDY. Great. *Now* what did I do?

(Turns to go.)

ANNIE. Are you going to take my advice?

RUDY. What is it? I forgot already.

ANNIE. "Stop thinking."

RUDY. Oh, yeah. Good advice, I'll start now.

(Walks clumsily into the wall.)

Oh, I stopped thinking about the wall.

(Walks into the door.)

Oh, I stopped thinking about the door.

(Stares at the door.)

I don't know how to get out, I'm no longer thinking!

CHET. *(Off:)* RUDY!

(Game over, RUDY yanks open the door and dashes out. ANNIE sighs and shakes her head.)

(Blackout. Music.)

Scene 7

(The Tavern. Continuous.)

(Lights up. The music leads us into the scene where CHET is standing behind the bar. CHET is bored to tears, listening to a story that DINTY SHANAHAN tells while nursing his beer.)

DINTY. So I took two eggs from the same carton—y’with me, Chet? Y’folla me?

CHET. Two eggs.

DINTY. ‘Cause I hadda find out; it was drivin’ me nuts.

CHET. Sounds like a short trip.

DINTY. Huh?

CHET. Two eggs.

DINTY. So, I took the two eggs, not from different *ends* of the carton, no-no, but two right next to each other. Prob’ly from the same chicken. And I put ‘em in the boiling water at the same time. And I timed ten minutes exactly and I took ‘em out. And whattaya think?

CHET. It made no difference.

DINTY. It made absolutely *no difference!* One was very hard to peel and the other one the shell practically fell right off. From the same carton, Chet!

CHET. (*Whistles.*) Boy!

DINTY. Now why is that? How could it be?

CHET. This is for greater minds than ours, Dinty.

DINTY. You’re prob’ly right.

(Now RUDY enters.)

CHET. What took ya’?

RUDY. Oh, you know me. Just starin’ off into space.

CHET. Go out and sweep the alley.

RUDY. But it’s Eddie’s turn.

CHET. Is Eddie *here*?

RUDY. I can go get him. He's in his room pretending to study.

CHET. Grab a broom. It'll take ya' five minutes. Every dog in the neighborhood's paid a visit to our alley this week.

RUDY. Well, with that beautiful new blacktop you put down, can you blame them? I'm tempted myself sometimes.

DINTY. Hey, Rudy, you ever make a hard boiled egg?

RUDY. (*Doing Walter Brennan:*) "Hey, Harry, was you ever bit by a dead bee?"

DINTY. When you make a hard boiled egg, why is it some eggs are hard to peel and others ain't? The eggs could be identical. But one of 'em's hard to peel, and the other one's easy.

CHET. Leave the kid alone, he's got work to do.

RUDY. Wait, I think he's on to something! ...Dinty, it's like the poultry version of snowflakes. No two eggs are alike.

DINTY. Exactly.

RUDY. (*Mock serious:*) No, eggs-actly.

DINTY. Ri-i-ight.

RUDY. Dad, here's one for you. Do you like Ike?

CHET. Huh?

RUDY. Our president. Do you like him?

CHET. Sure, I like him fine.

DINTY. Won the war, didn't he?

RUDY. What if he asked you to worship him?

CHET. What?!

RUDY. What do you think about those kings in the olden days? Louie the 14th and all those guys. They wanted to be worshipped, right? People even called them "your worship."

CHET. So?

RUDY. So, I'm wondering what kind of a person would want to be worshipped.

CHET. A nut.

RUDY. A nut you say.

CHET. Is this for school?

RUDY. Uh-huh.

CHET. Sure, all them kings and pharoahs were a bunch o' goofballs. On their big thrones, decreein' this, decreein' that. Y'look at 'em cross-eyed and off comes your head. Wantin' to be worshipped.

(To DINTY:)

Imagine if Eisenhower pulled that? Says, "Startin' Monday I wantcha to worship me!" Ha ha!

DINTY. He'd be out on his can in two seconds.

(The two men laugh at the whole idea.)

RUDY. So, the kind of person who wants to be worshipped is...

(Gestures for their answer.)

CHET. A goofball.

DINTY. A nut.

RUDY. *(To himself:)* A goofball! A nut! ...Holy cow!

(At this startling new revelation, RUDY runs from the room! CHET and DINTY look at each other, puzzled.)

(Fade to black as music takes us to finish.)

ANNOUNCER VOICE. And now, a word from our sponsor...

(Commercial break.)

Scene 8

(Pazinski Apartment. Continuous.)

(Music. Lights come up as we find GEORGIE squirming in a kitchen chair while EDDIE and ANNIE hold him down.)

(ELLEN is attempting to remove earwax from GEORGIE's ear with a bulb syringe—and he is putting up quite a struggle.)

ELLEN. Georgie, please! Hold still!

GEORGIE. Ehhhhh—!!

ELLEN. Georgie, I can't do anything if you're wiggling!

GEORGIE. Ehhhhhhhhh—!!

ANNIE. Keep still, honey. This is for your own good.

EDDIE. It's earwax, Georgie, it's gotta come out.

GEORGIE. Nnnn—!

ELLEN. Georgie...!

ANNIE. Why don't we have a doctor do this?

ELLEN. *You want to pay for a doctor? My mother did this all the time; it'll work if you hold him steady. ...That's better, Georgie. Very good, sweetie, hold still...*

GEORGIE. Nnn...

(RUDY runs into the room.)

RUDY. Mom! Mom, wait'll you hear this!

ELLEN. Shhh—!

RUDY. What are you guys doing?

EDDIE. Making a meat loaf, what's it look like?

ELLEN. Okay, just hold on, Georgie. Two more seconds, annnnnnd—

(She pulls something from GEORGIE's ear. [It's not necessary that we see it.]

ELLEN. ...Gotcha!

(She puts the hunk of wax in a tissue.)

ELLEN. Pretty impressive, Georgie, I must say.

(Shows it to EDDIE and ANNIE.)

Here.

ANNIE. Ew! Don't show us! Ewwww—!!

EDDIE. Oh, gag!

ELLEN. Let that be a lesson to you. Keep your ears clean.

(Kisses GEORGIE's head.)

Okay, sweetie, the operation was a success. No more nasty ear aches for you.

RUDY. *(Looks at wax in tissue.)* Ew, wow, Georgie. You could put a wick in this...take it to church as a candle.

(An idea.)

He-e-e-ey—!

EDDIE. *(Takes tissue.)* And you'd do it, too. Gimme that.

RUDY. Hey!

EDDIE. You would. If it'll make your friends laugh, you'll do it, no matter how stupid it is.

ANNIE. We're just keeping you from temptation. You're in enough trouble.

ELLEN. Trouble? What trouble are you in?

RUDY. Nothing.

ANNIE. Ha!

ELLEN. What trouble?

GEORGIE. (*Feeling his ear, smiling:*) He-e-e-ey—!

RUDY. Yeah, Georgie, isn't Mom great? No more ear aches. Mom, you really should've been a doctor. You've got a real—

ELLEN. Never mind that, what trouble are you in?

EDDIE. He has to write a five hundred word paper tonight for Sister Clarissa.

RUDY. *I'll* tell it! Willya let *me* tell it? I have some rights around here!

(*To ELLEN:*)

I have to write a five hundred word paper tonight for Sister Clarissa.

ELLEN. Why?

RUDY. Because Sister and I don't see eye to eye.

ELLEN. Gee, what a news flash. What's it about this time?

RUDY. Except this time I know I'm right 'cause Daddy and Dinty Shanahan just confirmed it!

ANNIE. He did not. Daddy would never get involved in this.

ELLEN. Will someone tell me what's going on?

ANNIE. Don't look at me. I can't even say it out loud. I'm probably going to Purgatory just for being his sister.

ELLEN. (*Losing patience:*) Rudy?

RUDY. I didn't genuflect in church this morning.

(*This hangs in the air for a while.*)

ELLEN. Why in hell not? I mean, why not?

RUDY. 'Cause it didn't feel right.

ELLEN. Something wrong with your knees?

RUDY. No, not physically. Mentally.

ANNIE. (*A groan!*) *Oh-h-h-h—!*

EDDIE. Ha ha ha ha ha ha—!

ELLEN. Mentally? Rudy, it's genuflecting. You learned it before you learned how to walk, what's the big deal?

RUDY. I just don't think God wants us to do it, that's all. And Daddy and Dinty Shanahan agree with me.

EDDIE. Ha ha ha—this is the best one yet. Mom, sorry, but I'm not going to do my chores this week. I don't think God wants me to. Ha ha ha—

ANNIE. I wish I could joke about this but I can't. Rudy, can't you just be normal?

RUDY. I am normal! You're the circus freak who paints her feet!

ANNIE. Shut up!

ELLEN. Rudy—!

RUDY. (*Mocking ANNIE:*) "It'll make me feel special!"

ANNIE. (*Goes to hit him.*) You little—!

ELLEN. Alright, enough!

EDDIE. (*Loves when they fight.*) Ha ha ha ha—!

ELLEN. Look, whatever's at the bottom of this, I don't have time for it right now. I should have relieved your father ten minutes ago. So here's what I want—Eddie, while I'm tending bar downstairs, give Georgie his bath and be careful of his ear. Annie, finish those dinner dishes, wash *and* dry, and *you*—get to your room and write whatever paper Sister asked for, and make it good. And no sneaking to the living room to watch "Ozzie & Harriett" either. I can hear you right above me through the floor, yes, even when you tip-toe!

(*ELLEN exits.*)

RUDY. (*Stamps floor a couple times.*) ...Cheap construction.

(*Blackout. Music.*)

Scene 9

(*Rudy and Georgie's bedroom. Later that night.*)

(*Lights up. Music takes us into scene as we find RUDY and GEORGIE.*)

(*RUDY sits on his bed in deep concentration, writing his paper for Sister Clarissa. GEORGIE stands nearby engrossed in perfecting his Ed Sullivan impression.*)

(GEORGIE wraps his arms around himself and wiggles his hunched shoulders, telling the make-believe audience about the "big shew" he has for them.)

GEORGIE. Bi' shoo-oo-oo—! Bi' shoo-oo-oo—!

RUDY. (Trying to work:) Shh, Georgie...

(Now with hunched shoulders and stiff neck, GEORGIE points to his next act "waiting in the wings.")

GEORGIE. Shoo-oo-oo—! Bi' shoo-oo-oo—!

RUDY. Finished!

(Puts down pen and paper.)

Georgie, working on your Ed Sullivan impression?

GEORGIE. Bi'-bi'-bi' shoo-oo!

RUDY. Ha ha ha! That's pretty good!

(Stands up.)

But here, do more like this.

(Does an Ed Sullivan pose.)

GEORGIE. (Copies him:) Nnn...

RUDY. And this... See? A r-r-really big shew, ladies and gentlemen! We have a r-r-really big shew!

GEORGIE. Bi' shoo-oo—!

RUDY. That's right. Then he goes...

(GEORGIE stands back and watches RUDY perform.)

RUDY. (As Ed:) Well, y'know, y'know, y'know, ladies and gen'men, out there in our audience tonight is a swell feller..just flew in from Rome...It'ly. You all know him, you all love him. Pope John the 23rd, stand up and take a bow! ...Good to see you, your Pope-ness. As you know, His Holiness is in town for the finals of the National All-Nun Boxing Tournament over at Madison Square Garden.

GEORGIE. Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha—!

RUDY. (Sits on bed. Sigh.) Georgie, Georgie, Georgie...

GEORGIE. Nnn...

RUDY. Y'know what I got here, Georgie?

GEORGIE. Nnn...

RUDY. I got *two* papers for Sister Clarissa.

GEORGIE. Tooo—

RUDY. That's right. One is the one she *wants*. And the other one...I just *had* to write it. I couldn't help myself. It's about how I *feel* about the whole dumb business. So now...which one should I give her, Georgie? Huh? If I give her this one I stay out of trouble. But it would be like lying. To myself. ...What should I do?

(CHET enters.)

CHET. Whattaya doin' up, it's bedtime.

RUDY. I know, we were just getting ready.

CHET. Hey, why didn't you tell me you were talking about God downstairs? I thought you meant Louie the 14th or one of them clowns. Of course you gotta worship God. Whattaya, goofy?

RUDY. Daddy, how are you at decisions?

CHET. Huh?

RUDY. What's a big decision you once had to make?

CHET. Big decision? Is this for school again?

RUDY. Sorta.

CHET. I dunno. Big decision...

RUDY. Having four kids?

CHET. Nnnno, that just kinda happened. Well, let's see...buying this place, I guess. That was big.

RUDY. How did you decide?

CHET. Looked at all the sides, whattaya think? Asked myself, do I want to be a saloon keeper? Maybe. I like people, but...lotta responsibility runnin' your own business. Maybe I should work at the mill with the other guys. Just do what I'm told. But then I'd just be one in a crowd. I'm more my own man.

RUDY. Like me.

CHET. Yeah. So, did I make the right decision? Maybe. Don't have a boss tellin' me what to do, that's a plus. On the other hand, I gotta listen to Dinty talk about hard boiled eggs all day. But that's whatcha do, you look at all sides. Then make the best decision you can and forget about it. Leave it up to...I dunno, God, I guess.

RUDY. Okay...

CHET. Georgie, y'brush your teeth yet?

GEORGIE. Nnn...

RUDY. He's been busy with Ed Sullivan.

CHET. Well, come on, I'll get you started. How's the ear?

GEORGIE. Oka-a-ay!

CHET. Oka-a-ay!

(To RUDY:)

Don't read too late. School night.

RUDY. Oka-a-ay.

CHET. C'mon, Ed Sullivan.

GEORGIE. *(Exiting:)* Bi' shoo-oo—

(They exit. RUDY yawns and lies down on his bed, still holding his two papers.)

RUDY. *(Drifting off.)* Paper number one...paper number two...paper number one...paper number two...

(Lights slowly fade as dream music plays.)

Scene 10

(We're somewhere in Heaven.)

(Lights up, dream music fades out and we find GOD, a healthy looking man of about 50, practicing his golf swing.)

(RUDY enters tentatively, holding his papers.)

RUDY. Um...hi, God.

GOD. Rudy Pazinski, you ol' son of a gun! How's Buffalo?

(GOD continues to practice his swing as he converses with RUDY.)

RUDY. Pretty good. We got a new highway by the lake.

GOD. I saw that; not bad. Be with you in a second...

(Takes a swing, watches the results.)

GOD. I've got sort of a pinball machine going here. See, bouncing off the planets...?

RUDY. Yes, it's nice. Um...I wanted to—

(Suddenly confused.)

Oh, um... *(Ahem.)*...

(Hesitantly starts to genuflect.)

GOD. Now, now, none of that. You know better.

RUDY. You mean I'm right? You don't like genuflecting?

GOD. Oh, there was a certain charm to it in the old days, when we were just starting out. After that it just seemed sort of silly. People like to do it, though. Can't stop 'em.

RUDY. How about worshipping?

GOD. More nonsense. People don't have to worship me; we're all family. Just talk to me. I won't bite. Now, watch this, Rudy. I'm gonna bank a shot off Jupiter, carom off two moons of Saturn and end up with a hole-in-one on Neptune. Stand back.

(GOD swings. They stand and watch the results.)

GOD. ...Close!

RUDY. But...why didn't you get it in? You're God. You're perfect.

GOD. Uh-huh. I fixed that.

RUDY. You're not perfect anymore?

GOD. Not at golf. Better this way. It's no fun if it's easy. The fun is in the trying. Remember that.

RUDY. Yessir. Oh, um...I wrote these papers...

GOD. Yes, I know. Got yourself tied up in knots over it, too, haven't you?

RUDY. Well, 'cause...this one is what she wants to hear. But this one is about how I really feel. So, if I want to be true to myself—

GOD. Rudy...you've got potential. Yes sir, you can do a lot of great things in this world. You can spread a lot of joy and happiness, make people happy, change a lot of lives. But before you can do any of that—

(Takes a swing.)

—you've got to get out of the 7th Grade alive.

RUDY. So...

GOD. Just remember that old Bible line—"Render unto Sister the things which are Sister's."

(Takes a swing.)

Or something like that.

(Blackout. Music.)

Scene 11

(Saint Casimir's Classroom. Next day.)

(Music takes us into the scene and lights come up on RUDY, standing before the class of eight students, reading aloud from his paper. SISTER CLARISSA listens from the sidelines.)

RUDY. *(Reading:)* ...and that's why it is important to follow all the prescribed methods of paying reverence to Almighty God which have been outlined for us by the Church, which have been passed down to us for thousands of years, which have stood the test of time and if they're good enough for those olden day people then they're good enough for us, amen.

SISTER. I see. Very well. Class, any comments?

(MARY CAROL shoots her hand up.)

SISTER. Mary Carol?

MARY CAROL. *(Stands.)* Too many small words.

(Sits.)

RUDY. Exactly five hundred and seven medium to large sized words, so shut up.

SISTER. Rudolph!

RUDY. *(Instantly:)* Who said that? Did I say that? How could I say such a thing? I'm so sorry!

SISTER. Alright, alright. Come here.

RUDY. *(Moving:)* Really, it's sleep deprivation. I was up all night counting words.

SISTER. *(Holds out a holy card.)* Here.

RUDY. A holy card.

(Shoots MARY CAROL a smug look.)

Thank you, Sister.

(Reads:)

"Saint...Benno. Patron Saint of Diseased Cattle."

(A pause.)

I hardly know what to say. ..."Diseased cattle." Well, I'm touched, I'm moved. I'm *moovoooved*. Really, I...

(Reads more:)

"Uncle of Saint Winifred. When Winifred was beheaded by a jealous suitor, Saint Benno placed the severed head back on the body and Winifred lived."

(Does a slow pan across the class. He studies the card some more.)

I don't...really see the cattle connection. He seems more like the patron saint of ventriloquists, if you—

SISTER. *(Snatches back the card.)* Never mind! You'll get it back when you can be more respectful.

RUDY. The diseased cattle threw me off, I just—

SISTER. Enough. Back to the matter at hand. Rudolph, tell me. Don't you feel better for having genuflected properly in church this morning?

RUDY. To tell you the truth, Sister, I feel a little like Charles de Gaulle.

SISTER. Charles de Gaulle?

RUDY. Yes, when he said—

(French accent:)

"France may have lost the battle, but the war is not over."

(SISTER is puzzled.)

RUDY. *(Turns to MARY CAROL and gives her a little Maurice Chevalier:)*
Hunh-hunh-hunh—!

(Blackout. Music.)

Scene 12: The Tag

(The Pazinski Kitchen. That evening.)

(Lights up. Music takes us into the scene as the family eats at the dinner table. CHET is in his undershirt reading his newspaper. RUDY is reading a small book.)

RUDY. Did you know there's a patron saint of television?

ANNIE. There is not.

RUDY. It says right here.

EDDIE. Saints were in the olden days. There was no TV then.

**THIS PLAY IS
NOT OVER!**

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