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Cast of Characters

In the Village:

GRANDMA
SMILEY
REGINA
MARTHA
LUCY
CARL
FRED
JANE
ALICE
HARRY
ED
NARRATOR 1
NARRATOR 2
SLACKER 1
SLACKER 2
LITTLE BOY

7 Supermans:

MAD DOG
COBURN
SYLVIA
ARNOLD
CHICKY
YOYO
KATHERINE (Originally in the village)

7 Bandits:

BADDY BANDITO
BANDIT 1
BANDIT 2
BANDIT 3
BANDIT 4
BANDIT 5
BANDIT 6

And:

WOMAN WITH BRIEFCASE (Non-speaking)
WOMAN WITH BABY CARRIAGE
POLICEMAN (Non-speaking)
CLARK KENT
MEAN SUPERMAN
SANDWICH BOARD WOMAN (Non-speaking)
ON-LOOKER 1
ON-LOOKER 2
RESCUED CHILD (Non-speaking)
THIEF
NO WAY SUPERMAN
BULLY
VERY FASHIONABLE WOMAN 1
VERY FASHIONABLE WOMAN 2
HOT DOG VENDOR (Non-speaking)
SHOE SHINE RECIPIENT (Non-speaking)

(All these parts can be double-cast as Farmers and Bandits.)

Time

The late 23rd century.

Place

In and around a fictional Peterborough, New Hampshire.

Author's Note

This play was first performed in the summer of 2002 at Andy's Summer Playhouse located outside of Peterborough. Future productions should feel free to change the name of the city and/or the state to a more appropriate location if desired. Similarly, specific cultural references can be updated (e.g. J-Lo could be switched to a more current celebrity).

Production Notes

These Battle Groups indicate how the farmers are teamed up with their respective leading Supermans in the showdown with the Bandits.

Mad Dog, Smiley, and Little Boy

YoYo, Lucy, Alice, Harry, and (optional) Narrator 2

Chicky, Jane, Slacker 1, Fred, and (optional) Narrator 1

Coburn, Martha, Carl, Ed, Slacker 2, and (optional) Regina

Arnold, Narrator 1, Narrator 2, and Regina

Acknowledgments

Seven Supermans was first performed on July 5th, 2002 at Andy's Summer Playhouse in Wilton, New Hampshire. The cast comprised young actors (age 7 to 17) from the Andy's Summer Playhouse company. The staff was as follows:

Director Alice Reagan

Stage manager Gayle MacDonald

Production manager/set designer Andrew Stuart

Lighting designer Celine Perron

Costume designer Kathleen Golden

Props Rachel Garceau

SEVEN SUPERMANS

by Rinne Groff

ACT I

Scene 1

(Japanese Drumming.)

(Two NARRATORS enter wearing traditional Japanese costumes.)

(They sit on a low bench, draped in beautiful silks.)

(Above them, a banner reads: SEVEN SAMURAI.)

NARRATOR 1. In the early 16th century, the nation of Japan was in the throes of a great civil war and the Farmers throughout the land were being crushed under the iron heels of cruel Bandits.

NARRATOR 2. But that's not important right now.

NARRATOR 1. But it's interesting, historically speaking.

NARRATOR 2. And the costumes are cool.

NARRATOR 1. Way cool.

NARRATOR 2. But we should get to our point.

(The drumming stops.)

(The banner is ripped down to reveal a similar banner which reads: SEVEN SUPERMANS.)

NARRATOR 1. In the late 23rd century, the nation of New Hampshire was in the throes of a great civil war and the Farmers throughout the land were being crushed under the iron heels of cruel Bandits.

NARRATOR 2. The Bandits looted.

NARRATOR 1. And, of course, plundered.

NARRATOR 2. Again and again.

NARRATOR 1. The Farmers knew that if they took one more hit from these Bandits...

NARRATOR 2. They'd lose the Farm.

NARRATOR 1. Literally.

NARRATOR 2. And metaphorically, too.

NARRATOR 1. Not a seed for the next season.

NARRATOR 2. Not a hope in their hearts.

NARRATOR 1 and NARRATOR 2. Dead and buried.

NARRATOR 2. Boy, were these Bandits cruel.

NARRATOR 2. They were cruel.

NARRATOR 1. They were smelly.

NARRATOR 2. They were fierce.

NARRATOR 1. They were...

NARRATOR 2. Coming this way!

(The NARRATORS flee the stage as seven BANDITS, including the leader, BADDY BANDITO ride up on horses. BADDY and BANDIT 1 have guns.)

(Lights come up on a small model of a village hanging high in the air.)

(The BANDITS look up at it.)

BANDIT 1. Okay. Everybody psyched to finish this village off?

BANDIT 2. Yeah, let's loot it.

BANDIT 3. And, of course, plunder it, too.

(The gang of BANDITS cheers.)

BADDY. Would you idiots shut up? The Farmers won't harvest for two weeks. We've gotta let them grow their grain before we can steal it.

BANDIT 1. Oh.

BANDIT 3. Dummy.

BANDIT 4. You're the one said "plunder."

BADDY. Two weeks. As soon as the barley has ripened.

BANDIT 5. Then we'll take 'em for everything they've got.

BANDIT 2. We'll clean 'em out.

BANDIT 1. Burn their houses down.

BANDIT 3. Leave 'em with nothing.

BANDIT 5. Not a scrap of scraps.

BANDIT 4. Not even a grain of grain.

BANDIT 6. Does anyone ever think about the fact that Farmers grow food, and we eat food, and if we destroy the last of their supplies and ravage their land, there won't be any food left: not for them, not for us, not for anybody?

(Pause.)

BANDIT 2. No, we never think about that.

BANDIT 4. So let's destroy us some Farm Land!

BANDIT 1. In two weeks.

BANDIT 4. Right.

BADDY. Let it be so or my name's not Baddy Bandito!

BANDIT 1. But your name is Baddy Bandito.

BANDIT 3. That's his point.

BANDIT 1. Oh.

(The BANDITS ride off.)

(SMILEY pops up from under the silk-covered bench. He has been hiding there since the play began.)

(SMILEY has a perpetual frown.)

(He looks after the departing thieves and then runs off in the opposite direction, taking the silks which covered the bench with him.)

Scene 2

(In the Village. The FARMERS have gathered for a meeting. Most are adults, except for KATHERINE and CARL who are teenagers.)

SMILEY. “Not even a grain of grain!” And then they rode off.

(LUCY begins to cry.)

LUCY. The Fates must want us Farmers to die.

JANE. We’d be better off dead.

(ED starts to cry, too.)

MARTHA. Quit your crying.

FRED. Quit your bossing.

ALICE. Let’s go to the Police Commissioner in the Capitol.

JANE. What’s the use? He’d only get here after the Bandits have already come and gone.

ED. *(Through tears:)* Let’s give everything to the Bandits right now! Rip the barley from the earth before it’s ready! And then hang ourselves!

KATHERINE. Why not make bamboo spears?

CARL. What?

KATHERINE. The Bandits won’t be coming back in two weeks if we kill them all.

SMILEY. I don’t like this idea.

MARTHA. You’re young. When you get older...

KATHERINE. I would hope that I got wiser.

HARRY. Don’t get cheeky, Katherine.

CARL. Besides, it’s not possible.

KATHERINE. What are you afraid of?

CARL. I’m not afraid.

(A tussle ensues between CARL and KATHERINE. FRED breaks it up.)

FRED. Stop it! We've got enough trouble on our hands without the two of you going at it.

LUCY. We don't have a chance against Bandits like these.

ALICE. We couldn't even scare them no less kill them.

KATHERINE. It would be better than acting like this: helpless.

JANE. One day you'll grow up and you'll understand: Farmers are born to suffer. That's our lot.

KATHERINE. When you grow up...when you grow up... I'm sick of hearing it.

(KATHERINE moves off from the group.)

ALICE. Maybe we can offer them half our crop. Eighty percent. Just beg them to leave something so we won't starve. Beg them on our knees.

JANE. You think they'll listen?

CARL. Mom.

MARTHA. Carl, be quiet.

FRED. Alice is right. We should at least try negotiating with them.

CARL. Mom.

MARTHA. Hush, I said.

HARRY. Are you crazy: you can't negotiate with wolves. If you give your legs, next they ask for your arms.

FRED. Regina, what do you think?

REGINA. Oh, I don't know. What I think doesn't matter.

CARL. Mom.

MARTHA. *(Exasperated:)* What is it?

CARL. Grandma Lady's here.

(CARL points to a crazy-looking old lady who has wandered into the square.)

FRED. Grandma Lady, you shouldn't be out of doors. It's cold tonight.

ALICE. Come on; I'll walk you home.

GRANDMA. We should fight.

(Silence.)

MARTHA. Carl, take Grandma Lady home.

GRANDMA. We should fight.

KATHERINE. That's what I said.

CARL. You said, "kill them;" that's different.

SMILEY. We can't fight, Grandma Lady. We're Farmers.

REGINA. We don't know how to fight. I don't.

GRANDMA. We'll hire Supermans.

FRED. Supermans?

JANE. *(Sarcastic:)* That's a great idea. Why didn't I think of that? We'll hire Supermans.

GRANDMA. Young lady, one day when *you* grow up, when you have lived as long as I have, then you can take that tone with me. Until then, simmer down.

REGINA. Grandma Lady.

GRANDMA. Back in the 20s when this land was a dustbowl, how do you think we found our way out of that?

ALICE. Supermans?

GRANDMA. Supermans.

LUCY. I don't believe it.

KATHERINE. I do.

HARRY. You're young, Katherine; you'll believe anything.

ED. This is ridiculous. We have no money. How are we going to hire Supermans?

KATHERINE. Where can we find some Supermans, Grandma Lady?

GRANDMA. Here and there. They're around.

JANE. Not anymore. Excuse me, I don't mean any disrespect to your age, Grandma Lady. But everyone knows that all the Supermans have died out.

GRANDMA. Not all.

LUCY. But most. I've never even seen one.

ALICE. Frankie's cousin Rick used to have one in the family.

NARRATOR 2. I thought Rick was Jeremy's cousin.

NARRATOR 1. No Shelley is Jeremy's cousin.

ALICE. Whatever. I met him. He had a cape and everything. He said he was working in California.

ED. But that's California. Do you really think there's any Supermans wandering around New Hampshire?

KATHERINE. It's possible.

FRED. I suppose it's not impossible.

MARTHA. But will Supermans fight for us without a big reward?

LUCY. Will they fight for us just for food?

NARRATOR 1. Food's all we bring to the table.

NARRATOR 2. Literally.

NARRATOR 1. And metaphorically, too.

FRED. Yeah, Supermans are awfully proud.

GRANDMA. Find hungry Supermans.

(After a dramatic pause, GRANDMA leads the FARMERS off-stage. MARTHA and CARL are the last to leave.)

CARL. Mom, shouldn't it be "Supermen"?

MARTHA. Carl, go do your homework.

(They, too, exit.)

Scene 3

(KATHERINE, SMILEY, REGINA, and HARRY alone on stage. They are in the Big City of Peterborough. [Which somehow in the 23rd century looks a lot like downtown Wall Street: sleek glass and concrete.]

(The four FARMERS carry a couple of suitcases. They are scouting for Supermans.)

(A WOMAN walks by carrying a briefcase.)

(KATHERINE, SMILEY, REGINA and HARRY watch her pass.)

SMILEY. Do you think...?

HARRY. No way.

(A POLICEMAN walks by.)

(KATHERINE, SMILEY, REGINA and HARRY watch him pass.)

SMILEY. Do you think...?

HARRY. No way.

(A WOMAN walks by pushing a baby carriage, talking on a cell phone.)

(KATHERINE, SMILEY, REGINA and HARRY watch her pass.)

SMILEY. Do you think...?

HARRY. No way.

REGINA. Forgive me for saying so, but that's because you've never been a mother.

KATHERINE. So go on then.

(REGINA approaches the WOMAN with the baby carriage.)

REGINA. Hello.

WOMAN WITH BABY CARRIAGE. *(Into the phone:)* Hold on a second, Jerry. *(Looking up:)* Yeah?

REGINA. How are you?

WOMAN WITH BABY CARRIAGE. How am I?

REGINA. Lovely child.

WOMAN WITH BABY CARRIAGE. He's a handful.

REGINA. Yeah, I know what that's like.

(Awkward pause.)

WOMAN WITH BABY CARRIAGE. Is there something you want to ask me? I'm very busy.

REGINA. Ummm...

(REGINA turns back to the FARMERS; they encourage her to press on.)

REGINA. Are you "super?"

WOMAN WITH BABY CARRIAGE. Are you a freak?

(The WOMAN with the baby carriage rushes off.)

WOMAN WITH BABY CARRIAGE. *(Into phone:)* Jerry, you're never going to believe what just happened. Some weirdo farmer chick...

(Sad pause.)

KATHERINE. I think we'll know it when we see it.

SMILEY. How?

HARRY. We'll just know.

(A MAN walks by, wearing glasses and carrying a brief case. He looks like Clark Kent.)

(HARRY approaches him.)

HARRY. Excuse me.

CLARK. Yes?

HARRY. Uh, we're new in town. We're Farmers.

CLARK. Oh, I'm sorry.

HARRY. My name's Harry. What's yours?

CLARK. Clark.

HARRY. Clark what, if I may ask?

CLARK. Kent. Clark Kent.

(HARRY turns back to the other FARMERS and gives the double thumbs up. KATHERINE, REGINA, and SMILEY are encouraged.)

HARRY. What if I told you that my village had been looted by Bandits?

CLARK. Really?

HARRY. And they're coming back in two weeks.

(SMILEY runs up.)

SMILEY. A week and a half.

CLARK. Really?

SMILEY. This time they're going to burn all our houses to the ground.

CLARK. Really?

HARRY. Then leave us with a flat empty lot, nothing more.

CLARK. Perhaps I can help you gentlemen.

HARRY. I knew it.

(REGINA comes up.)

REGINA. Excuse me, but we have to warn you. We don't have a lot of money to pay you.

SMILEY. In fact, we don't have any money at all.

(HARRY gives SMILEY a "shut up" look.)

REGINA. Is that a problem?

CLARK. That's quite all right. Perhaps I wouldn't require any payment at all. The Bandits are going to level all the houses, you say?

HARRY. And destroy the farmland.

CLARK. No, I wouldn't need any money at all. In fact I'd be willing to pay you.

REGINA. Pay us?

CLARK. Yeah, I've got a good nest egg built up just for situations like this.

(KATHERINE is still standing at a distance, observing.)

HARRY. You're going to help us?

REGINA. And share money with us?

CLARK. Let's just say that I think we can work out a solution to your problems.

(KATHERINE approaches.)

KATHERINE. Then it's really true?

CLARK. What's true?

KATHERINE. You are a Superman?

CLARK. No, I'm a real estate developer. Here's my card.

(He hands a card to KATHERINE.)

CLARK. I've been looking for some undeveloped flatland. How long do you think it'll take you to pack up your things and get off the property? I could have a contractor laying concrete by next Tuesday. Do you think the Bandits will have burned everything by then?

(Despondent, HARRY, SMILEY, REGINA and KATHERINE begin to walk off-stage.)

CLARK. Hey, don't be like that. I can wait 'til Friday with the concrete. And I can pay a modicum of relocation costs if that's what

you're looking for. Hey, this is a sweet deal for you. I'm sure we can work out the terms...

(CLARK gives up and exits.)

Scene 4

(HARRY, SMILEY, REGINA and KATHERINE return. They look very tired and disheveled.)

(Two glamorous VERY FASHIONABLE WOMEN enter from opposite sides of the stage. They greet, giving each other air kisses.)

FASHIONABLE 1. Brigitte! Have you gone mad?!!!

FASHIONABLE 2. Giovana, what do you mean?

FASHIONABLE 1. You are wearing white shoes. It's almost Fall!!

FASHIONABLE 2. I thought I had one more week before summer is truly finito.

FASHIONABLE 1. I suppose. One week.

(They kiss again and exit.)

(The FARMERS watch them go.)

(Horrible pause.)

SMILEY. One week.

REGINA. One week, and it's fall.

HARRY. Our time is running out.

KATHERINE. Maybe we're just not trying hard enough.

(Two local SLACKERS walk by.)

SLACKER 1. Hey, Farmers.

SLACKER 2. Found any Supermans, cheap, strong and willing?

(The SLACKERS laugh.)

(Just then a SUPERMAN walks across the stage. He wears a tight blue shirt with a gold "S" across the chest, blue tights, and a red cape. Exactly what you picture when you think of Superman.)

(The FARMERS and the SLACKERS stop stone still and watch the SUPERMAN pass.)

SMILEY. Do you think...?

HARRY. Follow him.

(SMILEY digs into the suitcase. He takes out an apple, a Coke, and a ham sandwich and runs off-stage after the SUPERMAN.)

KATHERINE. Did you see his outfit? Wasn't it beautiful?

HARRY. But will he help us?

REGINA. He's just got to. He's Superman, right?

(Suddenly, the coke can is tossed across the stage.)

HARRY. Uh oh.

(Next comes the ham sandwich.)

REGINA. Uh oh.

(Next comes the apple. KATHERINE catches it.)

(Then SMILEY comes hurtling back on stage as if thrown by a powerful force.)

SMILEY. Owwww.

(KATHERINE, REGINA, and HARRY gather the food and rush to SMILEY on the ground.)

(The MEAN SUPERMAN enters.)

MEAN SUPERMAN. What insolence.

(The FARMERS cower at MEAN SUPERMAN'S feet.)

SMILEY. But please, Superman, we only want...

MEAN SUPERMAN. I may not be a rich investment banker or dot.com millionaire, but I have my pride. I don't work for free, and I don't work for food.

(He spits at them and walks off-stage.)

(The SLACKERS laugh. The FARMERS are sad.)

SMILEY. I wanna go home.

SLACKER 1. Aww, he's crying.

SLACKER 2. He misses his stinky village.

SLACKER 1. It's pathetic.

SLACKER 2. I'd rather be anything in this world than a Farmer.

(A WOMAN carrying a SANDWICH BOARD strolls by. Her sign says:)

("NEW HARVEST MENU STARTING SOON.")

REGINA. Maybe Smiley is right.

HARRY. It's time to give up.

SMILEY. Our lives are over. Not even Superman will help us.

(Suddenly a BIG CROWD of people cross the stage. They are following a Superman named SYLVIA, also in blue tights, red cape, etc.)

KATHERINE. What's going on?

ON-LOOKER 1. *(Pointing off-stage:)* A thief is in that pan-Asian, new-cuisine bistro.

HARRY. In that what?

ON-LOOKER 2. In that restaurant.

REGINA. How many thieves?

ON-LOOKER 2. Just one.

HARRY. One? What's holding you back?

ON-LOOKER 1. He's kidnapped a child. Says he'll kill him if we attack. Listen: hear that?

(They hear the sound of a child crying.)

ON-LOOKER 2. They've been in there since last night. Poor kid.

ON-LOOKER 1. His voice has gotten hoarse. He's seven.

REGINA. His poor parents. But what's that Superman doing?

ON-LOOKER 2. No one knows exactly. She's promised to save the boy. And she's asked for two hot dogs.

ON-LOOKER 1. Then she said, "Bring me a baseball cap and a jeans jacket." We don't understand, but at least it's a plan.

(A HOT DOG VENDOR enters with two hot dogs. He gives SYLVIA his jacket and baseball cap.)

(SYLVIA covers her Superman outfit with the "costume.")

(SMILEY notices another Superman—his blue tights are ripped and his cape is tattered—standing in the crowd. It is MAD DOG.)

SMILEY. Look. Another one.

HARRY. Oh, what's the use? We don't know anything at all about Supermans. As much as we know about seeds.

SMILEY. But we know a lot about seeds. We're Farmers.

ON-LOOKER 2. *(Overhearing:)* Oh, I'm sorry.

(SYLVIA walks to the edge of the stage with the hot dogs. The crowd scatters behind her to the corners of the stage. From off-stage the THIEF calls out.)

THIEF. Stay back.

SYLVIA. Hey, there. Hiya. How ya' doing'?

THIEF. Stay back. Or I'll kill the boy, I swear.

SYLVIA. I'm not after you. Don't worry. I'm just thinking about the boy.

(Taking a step closer:)

The boy must be hungry. He can't eat any of that weird food they got in there.

THIEF. Don't come any closer.

SYLVIA. I brought food. Real food. For you, too. Take it.

THIEF. No!

SYLVIA. What's the matter? Don't tell me pan-Asian cuisine's your thing?

THIEF. Not really.

SYLVIA. You must be famished.

THIEF. Yeah, I am kinda.

SYLVIA. C'mon. Have a hot dog.

(She takes another step closer.)

THIEF. No!

SYLVIA. What then?

THIEF. Throw it in.

(SYLVIA tosses the hot dogs off-stage towards the THIEF, one at a time. She waits one moment and then rushes off-stage.)

(There is silence. The crowd peers out from the corners of the stage. They draw closer to see what has happened. It is very very quiet. Confusingly quiet.)

(Suddenly the RESCUED BOY comes running out. He jumps into the arms of the WOMAN WITH A BABY CARRIAGE.)

(SYLVIA enters holding the THIEF by the scruff of his neck.)

(MAD DOG lets out a hoot.)

MAD DOG. Whoohoo. Way to go.

(He does a little victory dance before grabbing the THIEF from SYLVIA.)

MAD DOG. *(To the THIEF:)* You creep. You low-down, dirty thief.

(SYLVIA returns her vendor costume to the HOT DOG VENDOR.)

KATHERINE. No complaints about that Superman?

HARRY. Hurry. Before she leaves.

(The FARMERS follow SYLVIA as the crowd disperses.)

KATHERINE. Excuse me. Excuse me, Superman.

(SYLVIA stops and turns; but before KATHERINE can continue, MAD DOG has run up.)

MAD DOG. Hey. Hey, you.

(He looks at SYLVIA. SYLVIA looks back.)

SYLVIA. What is it?

(MAD DOG walks around, scratching his head, apparently unsure of what to say.)

(KATHERINE steps in front of him. She bows at SYLVIA's feet.)

KATHERINE. My name is Katherine. Make me your disciple.

SYLVIA. My name is Sylvia. And I have no disciples.

KATHERINE. *(Standing up:)* You are the most amazing, most fantastic, most Super...

SYLVIA. You're overestimating me.

KATHERINE. No. I need you. We need you.

SYLVIA. Slow down.

(MAD DOG approaches.)

SYLVIA. What do you want?

(MAD DOG walks in a circle around them.)

KATHERINE. What do you want?

MAD DOG. Mind your own beezewax, kid.

SYLVIA. Are you a Superman?

MAD DOG. *(Gesturing to his cape:)* Sure.

SYLVIA. I wonder.

(MAD DOG walks off, pouting and kicking the ground.)

(REGINA, HARRY, and SMILEY run up to SYLVIA and KATHERINE.)

REGINA. *(To KATHERINE:)* Have you asked her?

SMILEY. *(To SYLVIA:)* Did she ask you? What did you say?

HARRY. *(To KATHERINE:)* What did she say?

SYLVIA. What did I say to what?

(SMILEY makes a gesture as if he is about to talk, but the action on stage freezes for a few moments.)

(After the freeze...)

SMILEY. “Not even a grain of grain!” And then they rode off.

SYLVIA. Hmmmm.

(She paces away from the FARMERS. They watch her attentively.)

(She paces back.)

SYLVIA. This wouldn't be a game.

KATHERINE. We know.

SYLVIA. A band of thirty Bandits.

SMILEY. Thirty-three.

(HARRY gives SMILEY a look.)

SYLVIA. Two or three Supermans could accomplish nothing.

HARRY. Grandma Lady said we should get four.

SYLVIA. Even four. I'm sorry. But defense is harder than offense. And I don't see how it's possible.

(SYLVIA looks at the sad FARMERS.)

SYLVIA. Tell me again. Mountains in back of the village?

REGINA. Yes.

SYLVIA. Can horses get over them?

HARRY. Yes.

(SYLVIA draws a picture in chalk on the ground.)

SYLVIA. Fields in front. The village is wide open to horsemen until the fields are flooded.

(Making notations on the ground.)

One guard for each direction takes four. Two more for reserves. You'll need at least seven Supermans, including me.

SMILEY. Can we afford seven?

HARRY. She said "four."

SYLVIA. Wait, I haven't said yes. I'm just saying that with seven... No. Forget it. I'm tired of fighting. I'm too old.

REGINA. Excuse me, but I saw you save that boy. You didn't seem tired to me.

SYLVIA. That was a boy.

REGINA. We have boys. We have girls. We have boys and girls who live now without hope.

SYLVIA. This is ridiculous. You think it's easy to find seven reliable Supermans these days.

REGINA. We didn't say easy.

SYLVIA. Especially when the total reward adds up to three meager meals a day, and that's if I understood you correctly.

(She looks at SMILEY's frown.)

SYLVIA. Don't look at me like that.

SMILEY. Like what?

SYLVIA. Boys, did you say?

REGINA. Boys and girls.

(KATHERINE, SMILEY, and REGINA look at SYLVIA hopefully. HARRY backs away.)

Scene 5

(The village.)

MARTHA. Look! Someone's coming!

(Many FARMERS come running.)

CARL. Is it Katherine?

JANE. No.

LUCY. It's...it's...

ED. It's...

(HARRY enters.)

HARRY. It's Harry.

(The whole village gathers around HARRY.)

FRED. Where are Regina and Smiley?

CARL. And Katherine? You didn't leave Katherine?

HARRY. Still looking for Supermans.

ALICE. Does it seem like...?

ED. They're not coming, are they?

(He bursts into tears. LUCY joins him.)

LUCY. We're doomed.

HARRY. Yes, they're coming. Seven.

JANE. Seven?

HARRY. Seven Supermans.

(GRANDMA enters on the fringes.)

ALICE. But Grandma Lady said "four." Can we afford seven?

GRANDMA. I thought we'd probably have to hire ten. But if I told you that, you'd bring fifteen. Get it?

LUCY. Grandma Lady, we're worried.

GRANDMA. Heh?

LUCY. Our young people are crazy about Supermans.

HARRY. You should see Katherine. She wants to be one.

GRANDMA. So?

MARTHA. So they'll want to fight. Carl's too young to fight.

CARL. I'm not.

ED. And then they'll want to run off to the big city forever. We'll lose our children to the Supermans.

GRANDMA. Fools! Have you forgotten the Bandits? What's the use of worrying about your beards, when your heads are about to be taken?

FRED. Grandma Lady is right. Do they have the Seven?

HARRY. Not exactly. Not yet.

Scene 6

(The Big City.)

(REGINA approaches another SUPERMAN.)

NO WAY SUPERMAN. You need my help?

REGINA. Yes.

NO WAY SUPERMAN. To fight whom?

REGINA. Please, Superman. Come with me. Superman Sylvia will explain.

(REGINA guides NO WAY SUPERMAN towards SYLVIA who sits with KATHERINE and SMILEY. SYLVIA sees Regina and the SUPERMAN coming.)

SYLVIA. Katherine!

(KATHERINE approaches her. SYLVIA yanks a parking meter out of the ground and easily bends it in half. She hands it to KATHERINE.)

SYLVIA. Hold your weapon tightly. And hit him as he comes.

(KATHERINE takes the bent metal.)

SYLVIA. As hard as you can!

(KATHERINE hides in ambush.)

(As NO WAY SUPERMAN gets closer, KATHERINE goes for him. NO WAY SUPERMAN responds immediately and shoves KATHERINE to the floor.)

SYLVIA. That was great!

NO WAY SUPERMAN. Who do you think you are?

SYLVIA. My name is Sylvia. Please forgive me. Forgive her. Forgive us. You see a war is about to start with a band of Bandits.

NO WAY SUPERMAN. A war. Cool. Which Powerful and Noble Institution are you fighting for?

SYLVIA. Our employer, as a matter of fact, is a village of Farmers. It's a job which promises no pay or reward, except the three square meals which they've guaranteed while we're on the job.

NO WAY SUPERMAN. You're kidding me.

SMILEY. No kid. Three squares a day.

NO WAY SUPERMAN. Shut up.

(SMILEY'S frown deepens.)

NO WAY SUPERMAN. *(To SYLVIA:)* My ambition is a bit bigger.

SYLVIA. Is that final?

NO WAY SUPERMAN. Is the ocean wet?

(NO WAY SUPERMAN exits.)

KATHERINE. What a bummer. That dude could really fight. He threw me to the ground like brushing off a leaf.

SYLVIA. You must grow stronger than a leaf. And we must keep looking.

(SYLVIA and KATHERINE cross away.)

(REGINA and SMILEY remain.)

REGINA. What's wrong?

SMILEY. Nothing.

REGINA. Come on. What's the frown about?

SMILEY. It's just my face.

REGINA. I can tell when you're upset, Smiley.

SMILEY. Sylvia's all right. She's great. But I'm worried about the other six.

REGINA. Wait 'til we find them. Then I'll worry with you.

(Another SUPERMAN [ARNOLD] crosses the stage. As he exits...)

SYLVIA. Try him. Regina!

(REGINA runs after the SUPERMAN.)

SYLVIA. Katherine. Again. Get ready.

(KATHERINE picks up the bent parking meter and hides near SYLVIA.)

(REGINA returns with ARNOLD.)

REGINA. Right this way, sir.

KATHERINE. *(Whispering:)* Like the last time?

SYLVIA. *(Whispering back:)* Yes. For your training.

(ARNOLD approaches, but senses there is something wrong. He stops. He looks at SYLVIA.)

ARNOLD. What's up?

SYLVIA. Please, come closer.

ARNOLD. Please, no jokes.

(ARNOLD keeps his distance.)

(After a beat, SYLVIA smiles.)

SYLVIA. Hi. I'm Sylvia.

(SYLVIA approaches and shakes ARNOLD'S hand.)

SYLVIA. Come out, Katherine. We have a real Superman before us.

ARNOLD. What is it? What do you want?

(SMILEY steps forward and makes as if he is about to speak. The action on stage freezes.)

(When it unfreezes...)

SMILEY. "Not even a grain of grain!" And then they rode off.

ARNOLD. It's bad, huh? The Farmers have it bad.

HARRY. We do.

REGINA. We need help.

SYLVIA. Your help. And I think you will help them. What's your name?

ARNOLD. Arnold. I know it doesn't sound tough. But think of Schwarzenegger.

(A SUPERMAN [CHICKY] enters. He carries a bunch of towels.)

CHICKY. Extra! Extra! Get your News here!

SYLVIA. I know that voice.

CHICKY. Stock prices! Celebrity Profiles! Get your News here!

(SYLVIA turns to the voice.)

SYLVIA. Chicky?

CHICKY. Sylvia.

(CHICKY runs to SYLVIA. They embrace.)

SYLVIA. Oh, Chicky, it's so good to find you alive. I'd given you up for lost. How did you get away?

CHICKY. I laid low in the sewer ditch, under the garbage.

SYLVIA. But the building burned down.

CHICKY. Don't I know it! Pieces of brick fell on my head. Believe you me, I thought it was my end.

SYLVIA. You must have been terrified.

CHICKY. Not particularly.

SYLVIA. Are you fed up with fighting?

CHICKY. What are you asking me, Sylvia?

SYLVIA. You have a steady job now.

CHICKY. You mean these?

(He looks at the newspapers. He turns back up to SYLVIA.)

CHICKY. What are you asking me, Sylvia?

SYLVIA. Well, maybe, I do have a job offer. It won't bring us money, and it won't bring us fame. And maybe we'll die this time. Want to join?

CHICKY. Yeah, I want to join.

(CHICKY drops the newspapers.)

(SMILEY picks them up.)

SMILEY. You never know when things will come in handy.

(SLACKER 1 runs in.)

SLACKER 1. I found one!

(SLACKER 2 follows him.)

SLACKER 2. We found one!

SYLVIA. One what?

SLACKER 1 and SLACKER 2. Superman!

SLACKER 1. She was working in the yard.

SLACKER 2. She was hungry, she said, and she told this man that she would shine his shoes if he'd give her a meal. The man said that he liked her frankness.

(A light comes up on a female SUPERMAN [YOYO] shining someone's shoes.)

SLACKER 1 and SLACKER 2. A Superman shining shoes!

(YOYO looks up, out at the audience.)

YOYO. What's the matter, you've never seen shoe polish before?

SLACKER 1. ...she said. We said...

SLACKER 2. You seem to enjoy it.

YOYO. Oh, that's my nature.

SLACKER 2. ...she said. We complemented her.

(YOYO goes back to shoe-shining.)

SLACKER 1. You're good.

YOYO. I'm better at killing enemies.

SLACKER 2. Killed many?

SLACKER 1. ...we asked.

YOYO. Well, it's impossible to kill 'em all. So I usually run away.

ARNOLD. A splendid principle.

YOYO. Thank you.

SLACKER 1. She didn't say that. We said...

SLACKER 2. Incidentally...interested in killing about thirty Bandits?

(YOYO drops her polish.)

SMILEY. Thirty-three.

YOYO. Tell me where.

SLACKER 1. So she followed us.

(YOYO turns and enters the scene with the others.)

YOYO. And here I am. They call me YoYo. A first-class Superman of the Shoe Shine School.

SYLVIA. Welcome.

SMILEY. *(To the SLACKERS:)* But why did you do this for us?

SLACKER 2. It's hard to be a Farmer.

SLACKER 1. We felt sorry for you.

SLACKER 2. Yeah, that's all: we feel sorry for you poor pathetic Farmers.

(Suddenly a very graceful SUPERMAN [COBURN] comes walking across the stage. She is followed by a massive, strong-armed BULLY.)

BULLY. Come on, what are you afraid of?

(COBURN continues walking away from the BULLY. But he rushes around and gets in front of her.)

BULLY. A little test of skill. That's all I'm asking.

(He goes to shove COBURN, but she steps aside.)

COBURN. You have no skill. There will be no test.

(The BULLY goes to shove her again. Again she steps aside.)

BULLY. You think you're so high and mighty?

COBURN. I am mighty. It's not a question of what I think.

BULLY. Give me one go.

(Pause. COBURN looks at the BULLY.)

COBURN. You may give the Go.

BULLY. Go.

(The BULLY and COBURN strike each other with karate chops that land on their respective collar bones.)

BULLY. A tie.

COBURN. Incorrect. I won.

BULLY. What?

COBURN. If we had fought seriously, your collar bone would be smashed and you'd be dead.

BULLY. Bullfrogs!

(BULLY pulls a knife out of his pocket.)

BULLY. We'll see about dead.

COBURN. The end of the action you pursue is your death.

BULLY. Talk talk talk. Fight me.

SYLVIA. *(Observing:)* What a waste. It's so obvious.

BULLY. Do you have a knife?

COBURN. I have your knife.

BULLY. What?

(The BULLY looks at his knife.)

BULLY. I have my knife.

COBURN. You hold it. But it's mine.

(The BULLY circles around COBURN. BULLY makes several war cries. COBURN is silent.)

(BULLY finally goes to cut COBURN. With a deft simple movement, COBURN finds herself standing on top of the BULLY, holding his knife in the air.)

COBURN. I'll keep your knife to keep you out of trouble. I will leave now.

BULLY. Not if I leave first.

(The BULLY runs off-stage.)

COBURN. I will leave now.

(COBURN puts the knife away and continues walking.)

KATHERINE. What a Superman!

(KATHERINE, REGINA, and SMILEY follow COBURN off-stage.)

Scene 7

(KATHERINE, REGINA, and SMILEY return. They approach SYLVIA, ARNOLD, CHICKY, and YOYO.)

(KATHERINE shakes her head.)

CHICKY. Don't worry about it. A lost fish always looks big.

KATHERINE. But you saw her prowess with your own eyes.

ARNOLD. It's true. I felt her presence immediately.

SYLVIA. A Superman interested only in perfecting her skill.

YOYO. So you can understand why her answer was No.

SYLVIA. You told her where to find us if she changes her mind?

(The FARMERS nod.)

(The SANDWICH BOARD WOMAN enters. Her sign now reads:)

(“NEW HARVEST MENU STARTS TOMORROW.”)

SYLVIA. Still three more to find.

ARNOLD. Three? Two.

(ARNOLD grabs KATHERINE and shoves her forward.)

SYLVIA. We can't use the kid.

KATHERINE. Please, Sylvia, I...

SYLVIA. I know. I know your line. I was a young woman like you...once. I wanted to taste everything. I was fearless. I thought I would change the world. Spare me. Time flies, and before your dreams materialize, you get grey hair. By that time, your parents and friends are dead and gone...

(Silence.)

(COBURN has entered and is standing in the room listening.)

SYLVIA. Katherine, you've received a lot of training and experience in the last few days. Leave it at that. You don't want to be a Superman; it's a big, horrible responsibility.

(REGINA approaches.)

REGINA. I know she's a child. But she's a good child. I think with your guidance...

SMILEY. She's smart. She's strong. Look at how she handled that parking meter.

SYLVIA. What will her father say?

REGINA. Her father will know that she pursues her destiny, and that she is reaching an age where he must let her fly.

SYLVIA. You are very eloquent.

REGINA. No.

SYLVIA. Yes. Arnold, what do you think?

ARNOLD. I believe in the girl. In her power. It's because of her that these people traveled all the way here.

SYLVIA. But can she stay the course? Will she want to?

YOYO. Kids are often more willing than grown-ups. Provided that we treat them like grown-ups.

ARNOLD. So let's treat her like one.

SYLVIA. Are you sure you want this? I warn you that once you accept the cape, your life changes. And the decision to take it off again...well, that's not an easy one.

KATHERINE. I want the cape.

SYLVIA. It's more than a cape that you're signing on for now.

KATHERINE. I want it all.

ARNOLD. You're gonna love it. You'll get your own comic book line and everything.

HARRY. Her own comic book!

REGINA. Little kids will read your story.

KATHERINE. Wow.

CHICKY. We'll make the arrangements.

(The SUPERMANS and FARMERS gather around KATHERINE to congratulate her.)

YOYO. So that's two more.

SYLVIA. I suppose it is. Wait, what do you mean, two? Only one.

(ARNOLD looks over at COBURN.)

(SYLVIA sees her for the first time. COBURN steps closer.)

SYLVIA. You've come!

(COBURN bows.)

SYLVIA. Thank you.

COBURN. And?

(SYLVIA looks around.)

SYLVIA. We leave tomorrow.

CHICKY. Tomorrow?

SYLVIA. Let's forget the seventh Superman. We can't afford to waste anymore time.

(SLACKER 1 rushes in.)

SLACKER 1. I found another one!

SLACKER 2. We found another one! A real tough one!

SLACKER 1. Fee-ro-shus! Like a wild dog.

(Looking off-stage:)

Here he comes!

KATHERINE. Shall I?

(SYLVIA nods. KATHERINE gets the parking meter rod and resumes her attack position.)

SLACKER 1. What are you doing?

KATHERINE. Testing.

SLACKER 1. That's not fair.

SYLVIA. A good Superman will dodge it.

SLACKER 1. But he just woke up.

SLACKER 2. We didn't mention that part.

CHICKY. It's already sunset. Real Supermans don't sleep all day.

ARNOLD. Real Supermans are always alert.

(MAD DOG stumbles in, rubbing his eyes. KATHERINE whacks him on the head.)

(The SLACKERS go to help MAD DOG up.)

SLACKER 1. We tried.

SLACKER 2. Honest we did.

(MAD DOG pushes them away.)

MAD DOG. Who hit me? Was it you?!

SLACKER 2. No, it wasn't us.

MAD DOG. Oh. Who are you?

(Seeing KATHERINE:)

MAD DOG. Oh, it was you.

(MAD DOG makes like he's going to hit KATHERINE. He barks at her. But then he sees SYLVIA.)

MAD DOG. I remember you. I remember your eyes! I even see them in my dreams! You had the nerve to ask me if I was a Superman.

(MAD DOG struggles to his feet.)

MAD DOG. I may be ripped and ragged, but I'm a real Superman. I've been searching for you ever since that time you insulted my legitimacy. Well, check this out.

(MAD DOG searches and finally finds a Comic Book, stuck in his pocket.)

MAD DOG. First edition Comic Book. I am a Superman! And this is my story.

(MAD DOG tosses the comic to SYLVIA. She catches it.)

SYLVIA. This is you? Mad Dog Comics. Copyright, May, 1999.

(SYLVIA laughs.)

MAD DOG. What's so funny?

SYLVIA. If you were the Superman mentioned here, you'd be over three hundred years old.

(They all laugh.)

SYLVIA. Where did you steal this?

MAD DOG. Steal? I didn't... To heck with you, to heck with you all, to heck with Supermans.

(He grabs for a sword. COBURN quickly takes it away. She hands it to KATHERINE. MAD DOG chases after the sword like a Monkey in the Middle as it gets passed from SUPERMAN to SUPERMAN.)

YOYO. Courage, 1999!

MAD DOG. To heck with Superman!

(MAD DOG makes one final lunge. He stumbles and falls. He puts his head down, and goes back to sleep.)

CHICKY. Is he really a Superman?

SYLVIA. He thinks he is. But let's follow his example: we all need rest.

(They all lie down to sleep.)

Scene 8

(In the village. CARL doing his homework.)

(MARTHA enters. CARL notices her.)

CARL. What's the matter, Mom? What are you staring at?

MARTHA. Carl, play with this.

(She presents him with a doll.)

CARL. What?

MARTHA. Play with this. And I want you to wear a dress.

(She pulls out a frilly little girl dress.)

CARL. Mom, have you lost your marbles?

MARTHA. I'm doing this because I love you! Supermans are coming. You don't know what they'll do to you. They'll want you to fight. Wear this dress!

(CARL runs away. MARTHA chases him.)

CARL. Mom, get away from me.

(She tackles him.)

CARL. This is so embarrassing. Mom, get off.

(But MARTHA struggles to pull the dress over his head.)

(LUCY and ED walk by.)

LUCY. Morning, Martha.

MARTHA. *(Still struggling:)* Morning, Lucy.

CARL. Ed, stop her. She's gone crazy.

ED. Can't help you, Carl. Martha intimidates me, too.

(CARL gets away from MARTHA. She chases him off-stage holding the dress.)

(They rush past FRED and ALICE.)

ALICE. Everyone who has teenagers is worried. And it's only going to get worse.

FRED. These are strange and trying times.

Scene 9

(The morning. The SUPERMANS are heading out. Before they leave...)

YOYO. Mad Dog!

(The sleeping MAD DOG wakes with a start.)

MAD DOG. Huh? What?

YOYO. Here's your pedigree, puppy.

(YOYO drop the comic book on MAD DOG's head.)

MAD DOG. Hey, that's very valuable.

(The two SLACKERS enter.)

ARNOLD. Look who's here.

CHICKY. You have another sample Superman for us?

SYLVIA. We told you, we've given up on Seven. Six will do. It's time to go.

SLACKER 2. We know we've been mean.

SLACKER 1. And incompetent.

SLACKER 2. And we know we aren't Supermans.

SLACKER 1. But maybe one day we could be Farmers.

REGINA. I thought you hated Farmers.

SMILEY. You said it's the worst fate that could happen to you.

ARNOLD. There's one that's worse.

SLACKER 2. Being a bum in the street.

SYLVIA. Are you looking for a new life?

SLACKER 1. Maybe.

SLACKER 2. We are looking for a new life.

SYLVIA. Welcome, my friends.

KATHERINE. But they aren't Supermans. We came here to find Supermans.

SYLVIA. If I can teach you to be worthy of this cape...

(CHICKY presents KATHERINE with a real Superman cape.)

SYLVIA. Worthy of this Insignia...

(ARNOLD presents KATHERINE with a Gold "S.")

YOYO. Worthy of these tights.

(YOYO hands some blue tights to KATHERINE.)

SYLVIA. If I can teach you to be worthy of all that, then you can teach them to plow a field.

We go to fight the Bandits, for go we must.

(Exit Tableau. A FROZEN IMAGE: the FARMERS, the SUPERMANS, and the SLACKERS depart as MAD DOG watches enviously.)

(NARRATOR 1 and NARRATOR 2 enter.)

NARRATOR 1. Intermission.

NARRATOR 2. Fifteen minutes.

(Intermission.)

End of Act I

Intermezzo

(The two NARRATORS enter. NARRATOR 2 listens to music on a Walkman.)

NARRATOR 1. I'm bored.

NARRATOR 2. Huh?

(NARRATOR 2 removes his earphones.)

NARRATOR 1. Bored.

NARRATOR 2. Sorry.

(NARRATOR 2 goes back to his music.)

NARRATOR 1. I want to listen, too.

NARRATOR 2. Huh?

NARRATOR 1. Let me listen.

NARRATOR 2. Sorry, I didn't bring two Walkmans.

NARRATOR 1. Walkmen.

NARRATOR 2. It's not Walkmen.

NARRATOR 1. Why not?

NARRATOR 2. Citing Steven Pinker, one of the world's leading experts on language and the mind, and a professor at MIT to boot, in his *Words and Rules: The Ingredients of Language*, published in 2000 by Perennial Press, "Nouns can be based on other kinds of names, such as works of art, products, or teams. We might say that Michael Keaton starred in the first two *Batmans*, not the first two *Batmen* [or] that Roy Orbison's original recording is the best of all the *Pretty Womans*."

NARRATOR 1. But those are titles, not things.

NARRATOR 2. He goes on to explain that although typically the traits of a compound noun come from the traits of the right-most word inside of it, there are exceptions. A Mickey Mouse is not a kind of mouse in the same way that a workman is a kind of man, and we would never say, when addressing a group of Walt Disney employees in full costume, "Hello, Mickey Mice." Similarly, although one could argue that a Superman is a kind of man; here in our world, it is not, because it is a kind of *person* without regards to gender; and thus the regular plural ending of "S" (referred to in the German as the *Notpluralendung* or the "emergency plural ending" which nicely captures the key trait of regularity in the psychological sense) (as opposed to the irregular pluralization, i.e. "a-n" becomes "e-n") serves as the default. And we have Supermans.

NARRATOR 1. But we weren't talking about whether or not "Supermans" was grammatically correct.

NARRATOR 2. Weren't we?

NARRATOR 1. I wanted to listen to music.

NARRATOR 2. Sorry, I didn't bring two Walkmans.

NARRATOR 1. Walkmen.

NARRATOR 2. Citing Steven Pinker, one of the world's leading...

NARRATOR 1. Whatever. I want to hear music.

NARRATOR 2. Oh, why didn't you say so? DJ, play us some music.

(Music plays as the NARRATORS leave the stage and the next scene begins.)

ACT II

Scene 1

(The two FARMERS [REGINA and SMILEY], the two SLACKERS, the six SUPERMANS [SYLVIA, ARNOLD, CHICKY, YOYO, COBURN, and KATHERINE] enter.)

SMILEY. *(Looking behind them:)* I don't see him anymore.

CHICKY. Really? You think he's gone?

YOYO. We lost him at the Subway Station.

SLACKER 2. There's no way he gave up.

SLACKER 1. He followed you guys for like a million miles.

REGINA. What did he say his name was again?

YOYO. Mad Dog, like the comic book.

CHICKY. He must have finally gone back to the city.

SLACKER 1. It just doesn't seem right.

ARNOLD. What?

SLACKER 2. To return to our village with only six Supermans.

SMILEY. *Your* village?

REGINA. Yes, their village, too.

SYLVIA. We couldn't waste anymore time waiting on a seventh. The battle would be over before we got here.

CHICKY. Isn't it strange, now that he's gone, I sort of miss him.

(YOYO barks like a MAD DOG.)

YOYO. Feel better now?

ARNOLD. I'm not convinced we've seen the end of Mad Dog.

(Lights up on the model of the village.)

SMILEY. We're home.

(They all look up at the village.)

SYLVIA. So there it is.

YOYO. That's our castle, huh?

REGINA. Isn't it lovely? There's no place like home.

(SMILEY hollers up to the village.)

SMILEY. Hello!

(Pause.)

SMILEY. Hello! Hello!

(Pause.)

SMILEY. Here we are! We brought the Supermans!

(No response from the village.)

SMILEY. Fred! Alice! Martha. Ed. Lucy? Where's Carl? Come out, Carl. It's your Uncle Smiley.

(But the village is silent.)

REGINA. Where is everybody?

SMILEY. We brought the Supermans!

(REGINA and SMILEY look at the SUPERMANS. They are embarrassed that no one is coming out to greet them.)

REGINA. Maybe they didn't hear us calling.

CHICKY. What kind of hospitality is this?

SYLVIA. It's very odd.

SMILEY. *(Calling out again:)* Hey! What's the matter? Welcome your guests!

(Finally GRANDMA LADY comes out.)

GRANDMA. Hello, Supermans. Hello.

(She kisses each SUPERMAN.)

REGINA. Where are the rest of the villagers?

GRANDMA. You know how it is. Farmers are always scared. Sacred of drought. Scared of Bandits. And right now sacred of you.

SYLVIA. They're too scared to say, "hello," and still they expect us to do something for them?

SMILEY. Come out! Come out and welcome the Supermans!

(But no one comes.)

(Suddenly, the LOUD CLANGING of an ALARM fills the air.)

KATHERINE. The Bandits!

(And FARMERS come out from everywhere, running across the stage.)

ED. The Bandits are here. Help us.

LUCY. Please.

ALICE. Yes, please, Supermans, please!

MARTHA. Carl, where are you?

CARL. I'm right here, Mom.

(CARL is dressed like a female in the little girl dress.)

MARTHA. Get over here!

HARRY. I'm too young to die!

JANE. I'm younger than you, Harry.

SLACKER 1. They're gonna kill us all!

REGINA. Have we come too late?

SLACKER 2. We're all goners!

(The ALARM continues to sound.)

FRED. Nobody panic!

(But everyone, including FRED, is panicking.)

NARRATOR 1. Bandits are coming!

NARRATOR 2. Bandits are here!

VILLAGERS. Save us, Supermans!

(SYLVIA jumps up on a chair.)

(The FARMERS are rushing about in a haphazard way.)

SYLVIA. Keep calm! Stop running! Answer me clearly. Where are they coming from?

ED. From the mountain!

ALICE. From front road!

LUCY. They've got us surrounded!

SYLVIA. You saw the Bandits?

ED. Completely surrounded!

SYLVIA. You saw them?

ED. Not exactly.

SYLVIA. Who saw them? Those who saw Bandits, step forward.

NARRATOR 2. I didn't see any.

NARRATOR 1. I don't think anyone actually saw any. But the Alarm!

LUCY. The alarm!

FRED. Alarm for danger!

ED. The dreaded alarm!

SYLVIA. Who beat the alarm?

(No response.)

SYLVIA. Who beat the alarm? Did you?

(No response.)

MAD DOG. I beat the alarm.

(MAD DOG steps forward. He holds the alarm in his hands. He stops the alarm sound.)

MAD DOG. No Bandits are coming. Suckers.

You welcomed these Supermans as you would a plague! Not one of you came from your houses. But when you heard the alarm...

(Running, screaming, imitating the FARMERS:)

“Oh, Superman! Oh Superman! Save us, save us!”

Fools!

(GRANDMA approaches MAD DOG. She looks him up and down.)

MAD DOG. Any objections, Grandma?

GRANDMA. That’s Grandma Lady to you.

(Checking out his cape:)

You are the Seventh Superman?

MAD DOG. I dunno.

GRANDMA. You look very familiar to me.

ARNOLD. Maybe he’s useful after all.

CHICKY. Are you kidding?

SYLVIA. *(Offering her hand to MAD DOG:)* So now we’re Seven, eh?

(MAD DOG shakes her hand.)

MAD DOG. Seven, it is.

(The FARMERS cheer.)

REGINA. Come, you’ll sleep at my house.

SYLVIA. But where will you live?

REGINA. I’ll live in the stable.

MAD DOG. With horses?

REGINA. No, no horses. The Bandits took them last year.

(The crowd once again grows sad.)

SYLVIA. Tonight we rest. Tomorrow...

(The SUPERMAN and the FARMERS make their way to bed.)

Scene 2

(BANDIT 6 in the Bandit Rec Room, watching TV.)

(BANDIT 1 enters.)

BANDIT 1. Whatcha doin'?

BANDIT 6. *Entertainment Tonight and Forever* is on.

BANDIT 1. Cool.

(BANDIT 1 sits. BANDITS 2 and 3 enter.)

BANDIT 2. Is that John Tesh? I thought he was dead.

BANDIT 3. He is, but they cryogenically preserved his hair and forehead.

BANDIT 1. Cool.

BANDIT 6. The fall fashions are coming out. J-Lo's great great great grand-daughter is modeling her new line.

(BANDITS 4 and 5 enter.)

BANDIT 4. Ooh, I like that top.

BANDIT 2. I'm going to get me some of those pants.

BANDIT 3. Your bottom's too big for those pants.

(BADDY BANDITO enters.)

BANDIT 2. That's the whole point of those pants: big bottoms.

BANDIT 5. I don't think your bottom is big.

BADDY. Oh my gosh.

BANDIT 6. She looks great; I know.

BADDY. The new fall fashions! You know what this means?!

BANDIT 1. You're taking us all on a shopping spree at Saks Fifth Avenue?

BADDY. Fall!

BANDIT 2. Yeah?

BADDY. Harvest!

BANDIT 3. Yeah?

BADDY. Attack!!

BANDIT 4. Oh.

BANDIT 5. It's time to loot the Farmers.

BADDY. Yes! Yes yes yes! But first let's watch J-Lo the Fourth's press conference.

Scene 3

(Morning in the village.)

(SYLVIA enters with ARNOLD. KATHERINE trails behind them.)

(They look around at the village.)

SYLVIA. How would you attack this village?

ARNOLD. I'd charge down from the mountain.

SYLVIA. Down that road there.

ARNOLD. Of course.

KATHERINE. I'd do the same.

SYLVIA. Oh, yeah?

(Pause.)

How would you defend?

KATHERINE. Ummmm.

SYLVIA. How to defend...

(YOYO walks across the stage with LUCY, ALICE, HARRY and NARRATOR 2 who take notes.)

YOYO. Remember: a war is run. We run, we run, that's all we do. Both in offense and defense. When you can no longer run, it's time to die. Lucy, why are you crying?

LUCY. I'm not sure.

(CHICKY enters, leading JANE, SLACKER 1, NARRATOR 1, and FRED. They carry logs which they begin to set up as a barrier.)

JANE. I'm getting splinters.

CHICKY. I had a building fall on my head once. I don't have much sympathy for your splinters.

(They move off, but quickly return with more logs.)

(COBURN leads MARTHA, REGINA, ED, and SLACKER 2 on-stage.)

(She hands each of them a wooden rod.)

COBURN. Spear! And spear! Spear!

(The three FARMERS [but not MARTHA] follow COBURN's instructions as best they can.)

MARTHA. Why don't *you* spear?

SLACKER 2. She's trying to teach us something.

COBURN. And spear. Spear!

MARTHA. By bossing us around?

SLACKER 2. If that's not the pot calling the kettle black!

REGINA. Ed, why are you crying?

ED. I'm not sure.

COBURN. Come: I'm a Bandit!

(Pointing to REGINA:)

You first.

(REGINA rushes her with a spear. COBURN easily knocks her aside.)

REGINA. Oops!

COBURN. Next!

(They continue to train.)

(YOYO walks across the stage with LUCY, ALICE, HARRY and NARRATOR 2.)

YOYO. Remember, you're afraid of the enemies; but they're afraid of you, too. Lucy.

LUCY. *(Wiping her tears:)* I'm working on it.

(LUCY, ALICE, HARRY and NARRATOR 2 continue taking notes.)

(MAD DOG chases SMILEY on-stage. SMILEY holds a beautiful golden spear.)

MAD DOG. Hey! Hey, you!

(MAD DOG tackles SMILEY.)

(A LITTLE BOY trails behind them. He laughs.)

MAD DOG. If you want to watch, bring money.

(The BOY hands MAD DOG a quarter.)

MAD DOG. Thanks.

(MAD DOG stands SMILEY up.)

MAD DOG. Now what's this?

SMILEY. A spear, sir.

MAD DOG. I can see that. Where did you get it?

SMILEY. Ummmm...

MAD DOG. This is a spear that once belonged to a Superman. Did you find it at the end of a lost battle?

SMILEY. Ummmm...

MAD DOG. There must have been many losing battles around here. If you have a spear, the others must have them also. Are there other farmers here who are hoarding stolen weapons?

SMILEY. Ummmm...

(SMILEY runs off-stage with MAD DOG chasing him, and the LITTLE BOY chasing MAD DOG.)

(YOYO crosses with LUCY, ALICE, HARRY and NARRATOR 2.)

YOYO. Here's a perfect example: it looks peaceful here, but it's a real danger spot. A lot of trouble could happen in a place like this.

(CARL enters in his girl dress. He carries the doll his mother gave him.)

(All the action on-stage [each SUPERMANS with their posse of FARMERS] freezes.)

(KATHERINE steps out of her freeze. She approaches CARL who sees her and starts to run.)

KATHERINE. Wait. Are you one of the villagers?

(CARL stops.)

CARL. Huh?

KATHERINE. I haven't seen you around before.

CARL. Yeah, I, uh... I'm uh... I like your cape.

KATHERINE. I hope I can be worthy of it.

CARL. You will be. It's impressive.

KATHERINE. Are you a boy?

CARL. *(Trying to make his voice as high as possible:)* No.

KATHERINE. A girl?

(CARL nods.)

KATHERINE. Well, girls can fight, too, you know. This is no time for dollies.

(KATHERINE tries to take the doll.)

CARL. Don't.

KATHERINE. Give it.

CARL. Let go.

(They wrestle over the doll, tumbling to the floor.)

(All of a sudden KATHERINE realizes...)

KATHERINE. Carl?

CARL. This is so embarrassing.

KATHERINE. Carl.

CARL. My mom made me.

(All of a sudden their physical proximity as they hold onto each other on the floor seems a little too close for comfort. But neither of them moves.)

(The rest of the stage unfreezes.)

ARNOLD. Katherine. We're going now.

KATHERINE. Yes. I'm coming.

(She jumps up from CARL. She trips and falls on her way back to ARNOLD and SYLVIA.)

SYLVIA. *(To ARNOLD:)* Still a child.

ARNOLD. You look at her innocent face and the whole world seems innocent, and it's difficult imagine a world where the mountains are infested with murderous Bandits.

(MAD DOG enters. SMILEY and the LITTLE BOY follow him, carrying a whole bunch of spears.)

(They approach SYLVIA and ARNOLD.)

MAD DOG. Halt! Now drop it!

(SMILEY and the LITTLE BOY drop the spears at SYLVIA's feet.)

SYLVIA. What is this?

(Everyone on stage gathers around the weapons on the floor.)

MAD DOG. Taken from Supermans who were slain.

SYLVIA. But where did you find them? Here in this village?

MAD DOG. Everyone's got one or two. I just collected them from the houses.

(The FARMERS look around embarrassed.)

(The SUPERMANS look at the spears in horror.)

MAD DOG. What's the matter? Take one. You wanted these things, didn't you? Now you've got them.

CHICKY. Shame on you! They stripped these from our fallen brothers and sisters.

MAD DOG. I know.

CHICKY. How dare you!

SYLVIA. One who has never put his life on the line in the service of others wouldn't understand.

CHICKY. Sylvia, let's go. These Farmers don't deserve our help. If we die, even working for them, this is how they'll treat us.

(MAD DOG jumps in front of CHICKY.)

MAD DOG. Oh, that's great. What a great idea. Go!

Did you think that Farmers were saints? Well, surprise: they're not. They can't afford to be. They see devastation around them, and they try to make the best of it.

Farmers are stingy and scared, tired and tiring. They're human.

These Farmers are doing the best they can. They need our help. If we run away... If we punish them because of what they've had to do in this life just to survive... If we abandon them...

(Silence.)

SYLVIA. You are a Farmer's son, aren't you?

(MAD DOG runs off. The GRANDMA enters.)

GRANDMA. Has anything happened? Is Number Seven bringing you trouble?

SYLVIA. No, nothing, Grandma Lady. Everything is all right. Chicky.

(SYLVIA hands him a spear.)

SYLVIA. In honor of the brave Superman who fell with this in his hand.

(CHICKY takes the spear.)

(COBURN takes a spear as well. She walks off-stage.)

ARNOLD. Where are you going?

(COBURN stops and turns.)

COBURN. The mountain. To practice.

MARTHA. May I practice with you, Coburn?

(COBURN nods.)

(SYLVIA hands MARTHA a spear.)

SLACKER 1. Me, too?

(COBURN nods.)

ALICE. And me?

LUCY. And me?

NARRATOR 2. And us?

(COBURN sets herself upstage. Many FARMERS take spears and follow her.)

COBURN. Spear! And Spear!

(As the FARMERS practice...)

(CARL, in his dress, and KATHERINE meet up.)

KATHERINE. So your mom still won't let you fight.

CARL. She forbade it. Forbidding is her specialty.

KATHERINE. She's just scared.

CARL. Everyone's scared. Maybe the Bandits won't even come.

KATHERINE. We should be so lucky.

(COBURN notices KATHERINE and CARL talking. She leaves the practicing FARMERS and goes to spy on the two teenagers.)

(KATHERINE takes a chocolate bar and holds it out to CARL.)

KATHERINE. It's chocolate. You want it?

CARL. Only the Supermans are allowed luxuries.

KATHERINE. Do you want it or not?

(CARL hesitates.)

KATHERINE. I'm not going to eat it. You might as well go ahead.

(CARL takes the chocolate bar.)

CARL. Thanks.

KATHERINE. You're welcome.

CARL. What's it like being Superman?

KATHERINE. I'm just one of many. And I haven't done anything so far. Sylvia doesn't let me.

CARL. Sounds familiar.

KATHERINE. But it also feels good. Like I'm a part of something.

CARL. Weren't you a part of something before?

KATHERINE. You mean the village?

CARL. Yeah.

KATHERINE. I guess so. But it never felt like something to be proud of.

CARL. Why not?

KATHERINE. I don't know. Are you proud?

CARL. I don't know. Lately, I feel proud. Proud of all that's been accomplished on the farm.

KATHERINE. I better get back to Sylvia.

(KATHERINE moves to go.)

CARL. I'm not going to eat it either.

KATHERINE. What, the chocolate? I brought it for you.

CARL. I'd rather give it to Grandma Lady. Her birthday is tomorrow.

KATHERINE. So we'll save it.

CARL. Yeah, we'll save it for now. See ya', Katherine.

KATHERINE. Yeah, see ya'.

(KATHERINE and CARL exit in opposite directions.)

(ARNOLD and SYLVIA approach COBURN.)

SYLVIA. How's the training going?

COBURN. There is development.

ARNOLD. Perhaps it's time for a test to see.

(ARNOLD takes out the Alarm. He starts it ringing.)

LUCY. Bandits!

(MAD DOG, YOYO, and CHICKY rush on and get to their posts. COBURN and ARNOLD go to theirs. SYLVIA takes out a stopwatch and watches to see what will happen.)

(ALICE and HARRY rush to YOYO.)

YOYO. Where's Lucy?

ALICE. *(Calling out:)* Lucy, over here.

(LUCY comes over.)

ALICE. You forgot your Kleenex.

YOYO. She doesn't need them. Right?

LUCY. *(Forcing herself:)* Right.

(SMILEY rushes to join MAD DOG. The LITTLE BOY calls after SMILEY.)

LITTLE BOY. You forgot your spear.

SMILEY. Oops.

MAD DOG. Smiley, where's your spear!

SMILEY. Sorry.

(JANE and FRED rush to CHICKY.)

(MARTHA and SLACKER 2 join COBURN.)

(NARRATOR 1 and NARRATOR 2 set up with ARNOLD.)

ED. Where was I supposed to go again?

SLACKER 1. And me?

CHICKY. Over here with me. Come on.

(SLACKER 1 joins CHICKY's group.)

ED. Me, too?

HARRY. You're with Coburn.

ED. Where's Coburn?

REGINA. I'm scared.

ED. Where's Coburn?

REGINA. Where am I?

(ED begins to cry.)

(The LITTLE BOY runs on with SMILEY's spear.)

LITTLE BOY. I brought your spear!

(But he stumbles. The spear goes flying and lands on the ground.)

REGINA. Where are we?

(SYLVIA swoops over, picks up the spear and corners ED and REGINA.)

SYLVIA. You are dead, that's where you are.

(ED and REGINA scream.)

(SYLVIA stops the stop watch.)

SYLVIA. That's two minutes and seven seconds.

(To ED and REGINA:)

Enough. Enough. Arnold, stop the alarm.

(ARNOLD turns the alarm off.)

SYLVIA. (*Quietly to ARNOLD:*) What are we going to do?

Scene 4

(*GRANDMA LADY sits with CARL [no longer in his little girl dress] and KATHERINE at her feet.*)

GRANDMA. Still no sign of the Bandits?

KATHERINE. But we must keep up our guard.

CARL. That's what Sylvia says.

KATHERINE. And Sylvia tells the truth.

GRANDMA. You like Sylvia, don't you?

KATHERINE. She changed my life.

CARL. She certainly changed the village.

GRANDMA. I don't agree.

CARL. Uncle Smiley can spear a bulls-eye from twenty feet away. That's a change.

KATHERINE. Lucy and Ed stopped crying all the time. Jane's actually being nice.

CARL. And two slackers from the city threshed as much grain as me and Kat and we've been doing it for years.

KATHERINE. The perimeters of the villages have high sturdy walls.

CARL. We have emergency supplies of water. Before the harvest, people divided up what food they had so no one would starve.

KATHERINE. Everyone is committed to the safety of the village and they speak with one voice about how to defend it.

CARL. My mom even agreed to let me fight.

KATHERINE. See? Everything's changed.

GRANDMA. I don't deny it.

CARL. So why did you say you didn't agree? Sylvia did all that.

GRANDMA. No. *You* did all that. The Farmers. You made those changes happen. Even if the Bandits come now and prove themselves too crafty for us, too numerous; we have already won.

What have you got there in your pocket?

(CARL takes the chocolate bar out and presents it to GRANDMA LADY.)

CARL. *(Singing:)* Happy Birthday, dear Grandma Lady.

(KATHERINE lights a candle.)

KATHERINE. *(Singing:)* Happy Birthday to you.

(The crowd of FARMERS and SUPERMANS enter in time to see GRANDMA LADY blow the candle out.)

FRED. Grandma Lady, where did you get that chocolate?

(CARL and KATHERINE jump up. They've been busted for giving away chocolate which was meant only for Supermans.)

(COBURN steps forward.)

COBURN. I gave it to her.

KATHERINE. You did?

COBURN. It's her birthday, and I gave it to her.

LITTLE BOY. I want chocolate, too.

YOYO. You do?

LITTLE BOY. Yes.

GRANDMA. Everyone wants chocolate.

MAD DOG. *(Imitating the boy:)* I want chocolate! I want chocolate!

(Very serious face.)

Well, we have no chocolate.

(Smiling.)

Except for this.

(MAD DOG takes a chocolate bar out of the pocket in his tights. He gives it to the boy. All the SUPERMANS share their chocolate with the FARMERS.)

(KATHERINE approaches COBURN.)

KATHERINE. Didn't you... Did you... Did you see me the other day over there with...

COBURN. Carl?

KATHERINE. Yes. Why didn't you tell the others?

COBURN. Do you want me to?

(KATHERINE runs off.)

(CARL watches her go. He is about to follow.)

MARTHA. Carl, where are you off to?

CARL. Nowhere, Mom.

(Pause. She looks at her son.)

MARTHA. It's all right, Carl. Just be home before it gets dark.

(CARL follows KATHERINE.)

(REGINA enters with a banner.)

YOYO. What's that?

ED. Our banner.

YOYO. Banner?

SLACKER 2. In battle, we'll need something to wave.

YOYO. Guys, come take a look at this.

(The SUPERMANS gather around the banner.)

ALICE. Regina organized it.

REGINA. I'm not sure I'll ever learn to fight as well as Sylvia wants me to.

SYLVIA. That's nonsense. You're coming along beautifully.

MAD DOG. What does the banner say?

REGINA. *(Gesturing to the banner:)* This symbol stands for the Farm. And here are the seven Supermans protecting us.

ARNOLD. You must add a mark for each and every Farmer.

CHICKY. Every Farmer is a protector, too.

GRANDMA. This is the greatest birthday of my life. I want to dance. Play music. I want to dance.

(All of a sudden, the ALARM sounds.)

MAD DOG. It's not me.

ARNOLD. It's not me.

(SMILEY comes running in banging the alarm, and, of course, frowning.)

SMILEY. It's me. It's Bandits! From the front road.

(All the FARMERS immediately get into battle positions with the SUPERMANS at the lead spot of each post. They look fierce and prepared.)

GRANDMA. The greatest birthday of my life!

We're not afraid of you! We're not afraid!

(A GUN SHOT sounds.)

GRANDMA. But I think I'll just take cover just in case.

(The BANDITS ride up on their horses from one direction. [BADDY and BANDIT 1 are still the only BANDITS with guns.] They stop in front of the barrier.)

(They're surprised to see a wall.)

BADDY. What's this?

BANDIT 1. It looks like a fence.

BANDIT 2. It's made of wood.

BANDIT 3. It's keeping us out.

BANDIT 1. Yup, definitely a fence.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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