

A BUCKET IN THE DROP

**A new Stage Play by
Keith Fox**

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A BUCKET IN THE DROP.

BY KEITH FOX

CHARACTERS:

FREDDY:

Early 50's Good looking, Ne'er-do-well. Slightly more than enough inherited wealth to get by. Earned some kind of an MFA in antique American furniture. Gets occasional gigs doing estate assessments. Natty dresser. Generally cheerful lightweight.

FELICIA:

Same age as Freddy. Thin, eccentric but affective appearance. Was briefly a dancer with Alvin Alley. Highly opinionated, never wrong, knows what's best for everyone. Thinks anyone who charges for goods or services is cheating her. The only right price for anything is free. Strong and capable, but essentially lazy.

SONYA:

Their daughter, 17, a junior in high school. Does okay in school, but seldom motivated to excel. Smart, pretty, but somewhat gawky and tall. Not much of a figure. Sweet, but easily hurt and vulnerable. Wants to conform, but her family is so weird it's impossible.

PETE:

The next door neighbor. Bachelor. Critical, but tries to be helpful when he can. Annoyed that F & F take advantage of him and are not gracious. Let's them get away with it, because he believes everybody has a right to be who they are.

RICARDO:

A classmate of Sonya's. Latin appearance, tall handsome. Doesn't fit in and assumes there is an ethnic bias against him at the high School, but still he's successful. A good athlete, modest student, ambitious to succeed in life.

SEPTIC PRO:

Easy going. Non-confrontational. Empathetic about the trouble and pain he causes people when he tell them the fees he has to charge. Gentle, kind, good humored.

TOWNSHIP SEWER INSPECTOR:

Civil service pro.

TOWNSHIP SEWER INSPECTOR: (CONT'D)

45, wears a well fitted uniform. Sober, patient, listens to another person's point of view.

SCENE:

Freddy & Felicia's living room. A large open ramshackle space. Furniture was collected when it was curbside and being thrown out by someone else. Half finished art on an easel. Dining room table and chairs DR. There is an old beat-up cathode ray tube TV in front of a equally beat up couch DL. On top it has an aerial made of wire coat hanger and aluminum foil. UR is the smoked glass bathroom door. UC is a hall that leads to front door, Sonya's bedroom, and the cellar steps, which lead to the side yard outside. UL is the staircase to the second floor and the bedroom of Freddy and Felicia. The house was bought while only half way built 5 years ago. While progress is being made, it is by no means complete.

ACT I

SPOT LIGHT ON AN ORANGE HOME DEPOT 5 GALLON BUCKET SUSPENDED BY A ROPE IN FRONT OF THE CURTAIN. IT HANGS TWO FEET OFF THE STAGE. AS THE HOUSE LIGHTS DIM THE BUCKET RISES SLOWLY TO THE TOP OF THE PROSCENIUM. THEN DROPS. BLACK OUT, SFX SPLASH NOISE.

CURTAIN.

FELICIA IS D.S. CENTER, LISTENING INTENTLY TO THE NOISE OF THE SHOWER COMING THROUGH THE BATHROOM DOOR. THE SOUND OF FREDDY SINGING CAN BE HEARD OVER THE POUNDING OF THE SHOWER WATER HITTING THE FLOOR. SHE LOOKS AT HER WATCH.

FELICIA:

Okay Freddy. Your two minutes are up. Get out of the bathroom. Now.

FREDDY:

I'm taking a shower. I'll be out when I'm done.

FELICIA:

There's an emergency and we have to deal with it. Now! Not 15 minutes from now. Not a half hour from now. Now. Get out of that shower this very minute.

FREDDY:

Hold your horses. I've just started to lather up the big guy.

FELICIA:

I said now. Now means now from anybody. From me it means yesterday.

FREDDY:

Got to get everything right. Sportave, attentive, alert. Don't want an inspector finding any loose cheese down there.

FELICIA:

I am not going to listen to this vulgarity. I am not going to say it again, get out of that shower.

FREDDY:

Hey, here's a thought. Why don't you come in and help? Might make things go a lot faster.

FELICIA:

If I have to come in there, I will tear your ears off.

FREDDY:

(Shower SFX goes off) Okay. Okay. (He appears in a terry cloth robe) I'm ready. You ready?

FELICIA:

For what?

FREDDY:

To accept my God given rights to ravish your body for sexual pleasure.

FELICIA:

Absolutely not. Not remotely appropriate.

FREDDY:

Why not?

FELICIA:

Same reason as always. I don't feel like it. Furthermore, we don't have time for foolishness. The septic system. (Trouble breathing). It's broken. It backed up all over the basement floor. Foulness. Beyond belief.

FREDDY:

Okay. Take it easy.
(MORE)

FREDDY: (CONT'D)

These things happen. First thing, call Wilkinson Tank over in Breville. They installed the damn thing. What was it, three years ago? Get them out here to fix it.

FELICIA:

Do you take me for an idiot? I called them an hour ago, the minute I saw the problem.

FREDDY:

Did they say they would come?

FELICIA:

As if they'd say, "Forget it Lady, we're too busy. Maybe next week?" Me? You think they'd talk that way to me?

FREDDY:

No, not to you. But it is three years since they installed it. Likely out of warranty.

FELICIA:

What are you talking about? They installed it. They have to fix it. Period.

FREDDY:

Sure. For a fee. And my bet is it'll be a killer.

FELICIA:

No way. We are not paying a nickel. It's their responsibility. They fix it and fix it now. No fee. No issues.

FREDDY:

Felicia, do you know what a warranty is? When something fails after the warranty runs out, it's no longer the company's responsibility. So they charge you. That's the way it is. The facts.

FELICIA:

Facts? They made the tank, they installed it. It broke. That is all that matters.

FREDDY:

Maybe you should take a look at the contract, it's down in the files. Right there on the first page it says: "Warranty - all parts and service are covered for one year." Below that you will see where we both signed our agreement to this deal. The date - three years ago.

FELICIA:

You know what your problem is Freddy? Too much Mr. nice guy. You just give up. Roll over at the first sign of a problem. Not me.

FREDDY:

All you care about is being right. Which means everyone else in the world is wrong.

FELICIA:

Being wrong is a sign of weakness. People steam roller right over you.

FREDDY:

I don't see it that way. I think the truth matters. Fact are facts and people can't argue about them.

FELICIA:

Argue? There's no argument. People do what I tell them to do.

FREDDY:

You tell them. Then they tell you. Pretty soon everybody is yelling and screaming. Goes nowhere, gets nowhere and everyone ends up pissed off.

FELICIA:

I have a wordless answer for that.
(Flips him the bird)

FREDDY:

That's helpful. I hope you're ready to spring that on the Wilkinson guy. Once he sees your middle finger, he's bound to see your point of view and instantly agree to do whatever you want.

FELICIA:

Time to get your clothes on.
(MORE)

FELICIA: (CONT'D)

You are close to useless regardless, butt naked, you achieve full and complete uselessness.

FREDDY:

There are things I can do naked that have value. Not that you would know anything about that.

FELICIA:

Your brain is no different than the Wilkenson tank that dumped foul waste all over the cellar floor. Now, get down there and clean up that mess before they show up. Then Clorox the area so it doesn't smell too bad.

FREDDY:

First, the right outfit for the job. You leaving the wardrobe decision to me?

FELICIA:

Now! Or must I get persuasave. I know, how about a baseball bat?

FREDDY:

There's my blue velvet slippers with fox head embroidery? Hmmm? The burgundy Hermes ascot? No, not quite. The Duke of Windsor mauve blazer? Can't risk it. Dilemma! What's the right outfit to motivate shoveling turd?

FELICIA:

Hmmm, let's see, I know, how about a swift kick in the pants? (Wags her foot in the air)

FREDDIE:

Perfect. Just what I needed (*exits upstairs to their bedroom*)

SONYA, THEIR DAUGHTER, COMES DOWN STAIRS GROGGY AND DISHEVELED

FELICIA:

Sonya, you can't go to school looking like that.

SONYA:

Like what?

FELICIA:

Like some kind of tramp. Those pants.
Ripped to shreds.

SONYA:

Mom get real. You're so out of it.
That's the style. The only kind of
jeans they sell in the real stores.
It was amazing you found these in
your store.

FELICIA:

My store?

SONYA:

The Penny-wise Thrift. Nothing over
a buck.

FELICIA:

What do you mean the real stores?
Oh, of course, Humph! The mall. I
am not going to squander \$25, or \$30
on ripped jeans.

SONYA:

When's the last time you were actually
in a mall? Twenty years ago? How
about \$60, or \$70. In real stores
that's what they cost.

FELICIA:

Outrageous.

SONYA:

Okay, maybe the cost is outrageous.

FELICIA:

It is!

SONYA:

But since you're not going to buy,
it doesn't cost you a red cent. What's
the outrage?

FELICIA:

Those places are just a rip-off

SONYA:

Good. So you hop on over to the
Penny-Wise for an outstanding bargain
at a buck or two tops.

FELICIA:

Some of that stuff looks brand new.
Hardly worn.

SONYA:

Brand new ten years ago. The real outrage is when you try to pawn that crap off on your daughter as fashionable.

FELICIA:

Your hair? Can't you brush it out? Why don't you take care of it?

SONYA:

It's the style. Come down to the school sometime and take a look. I gotta get ready, I'll miss the bus.

FELICIA:

You haven't eaten breakfast. That's not healthy. You need fruit and cereal and yoghurt and eggs and ...

SONYA:

I'm not hungry

FELICIA:

No breakfast. No wonder you get B's and C's.

SONYA:

You want to bring up my grades ... Now?

FELICIA:

Your father and I were very disappointed in your last report card.

SONYA:

So not true. He told me I did a lot better in high school than he ever did. He congratulated me, said he was proud.

FELICIA:

Your father is not the standard for anything, certainly not for academic achievement.

SONYA:

Mom, you want to help my school work, here's a quick tip. How about I get a real computer for my room.

FELICIA:

Your room's a disaster zone ...

SONYA:

(Breaks off Felicia's protest) And. And we actually subscribe to an internet service. Going to the public library to save forty dollars a month doesn't cut it.

FELICIA:

You think you've earned it. You don't do anything around here to help out. Ever.

SONYA:

You got a point. I think I need a maid.

FELICIA:

I see, you think this is all a big joke. Your appearance, your laziness, your grades. What about last night, did you do your homework or did you just yak away to your friends on your cell phone?

SONYA:

The only reason I have a cell is because some kid gave me hers when her parents bought her a new one.

FELICIA:

You have a lot more than a lot of kids.

SONYA:

And the only reason I have connection is because Pete next door has a family plan and there was a place on it not in use.

FELICIA:

So what's the problem, you're all set.

SONYA:

Nooooo. My cell phone is old. Means a lot of the programs other kids use don't work. Means I don't fit in. Means the kids think I'm weird. Means I need a new cell phone. Means for once I want to be just like every other 17 year old girl in the country.

FELICIA:

At what, \$800?

(MORE)

FELICIA: (CONT'D)

And then \$95.00 a month for the contract. Outrageous. And look at those sneakers. You haven't even bothered to tie the laces.

SONYA:

Yard sale sneaks. Cost you a buck.

FELICIA:

A buck and a half.

SONYA GRABS A BANANA OFF THE COUNTER AND MAKES HERSELF A QUICK PEANUT BUTTER SANDWICH FOR LUNCH.

SONYA:

They're totally nasty at either price. Buy me a new pair of Nikes and I'll tie the laces, okay? Handled. Set for lunch.

FELICIA:

Not wholesome. Not good. You are eligible for a free federal lunch at the school cafeteria. I signed you up. You know that.

SONYA:

You think I want the other kids to know I'm on welfare?

FELICIA:

You're being a coward. There's nothing wrong with a free lunch. It's a civil right. The other kids are just spoiled brats and should be ignored.

SONYA:

Especially I don't want Ricardo to find out.

FELICIA:

Ricardo? Who's Ricardo?

SONYA:

No one. Just this boy I know.

FELICIA:

What do you mean he's a boy?

SONYA:

Say he puts his hands up. I sneak around, yank his pants down.

(MORE)

SONYA: (CONT'D)

You see a dick, that's what I mean,
he's a boy.

FELICIA:

Don't be vulgar Sonya. This is your
mother you are talking to. So what
kind of boy is Ricardo?

SONYA:

I like him. He's cool and ou-wee,
what a dancer. So we've hung out at
parties a bit, but never really gone
out together. Like he hasn't asked
me or anything.

FELICIA:

Ricardo? What kind of name is that?
Sounds foreign.

SONYA:

His whole family is originally from
Nicaragua, if that's what you mean.

FELICIA:

Doesn't sound right.

SONYA:

You mean how all those people are
rapists and murderers?

FELICIA:

Well, they're not American.

SONYA:

Mom, can I ask you to do one thing?

FELICIA:

Maybe, depends on what it is.

SONYA:

Not going to tell you unless you
agree to think about it seriously.

FELICIA:

Ok what? Tell me quick, you're going
to be late for the school bus.

SONYA:

First thing in the morning, I am not
all that sharp. So I would like you
to dial back the harassment.

FELICIA:

Harassment? I am trying to help you put your life in order.

SONYA:

Like the way Genghis Khan helped the Afghans put their lives in order?

FELICIA:

I don't know what you're talking about.

SONYA:

Every single morning, every single day, here it comes, the Mongol Hoard thundering through my life.

FELICIA:

Humph. Without me you'd probably end up like your father.

SONYA:

I guess I'm not getting through. Let me try something different. Knock knock. Hello. You there?

FELICIA:

This conversation is going nowhere. Okay, hello.

SONYA:

What I truly need first thing in the morning is peace. (Pause) Want to know what that sounds like? Silence. Complete and total silence.

FELICIA:

You mean I should arrange for the birds to stop singing?

SONYA:

If anybody could do it, it's you.

PHONE RINGS, FELICIA ANSWERS. SONYA WAVES GOODBYE, EXITS FOR SCHOOL

FELICIA:

(on phone) Good. When will you get here? Ten minutes? Why so long? This is an emergency. I called you an hour ago. No, it was not a half hour ago, it was an hour. Well then your computer log is wrong, it was an hour. No I am not wrong.

(MORE)

FELICIA: (CONT'D)

I am never wrong. That's enough. I have heard enough. The failure of the tank is entirely your fault and you need to get here immediately and fix it. Do I make myself clear? I said immediately. Do you hear me? Good.

SHE HANGS UP. FREDDIE COMES DOWNSTAIRS NATTILY DRESSED AS ALWAYS.

FELICIA: (CONT'D)

I guess I don't have to tell you this sewage back-up is all your fault.

FREDDIE:

Hmmm?

FELICIA:

You didn't hear me?

FREDDIE:

I never fail to hear you Felicia. Me? My fault? What could be the basis of such a conclusion?

FELICIA:

You want to know why it's your fault?

FREDDIE:

Probably not, however, if you state it in 25 words or less, I'll try to pay attention. More and I'm bound to lose interest and start thinking about something else.

FELICIA:

Two reasons. First you use too much toilet paper.

FREDDIE:

How would you know that?

FELICIA:

I know how much is on the roll before you go in. I check the usage after you come out.

FREDDIE:

Get the fuck out.

FELICIA:

To run a taught ship, you have to keep track of inventory.

FREDDIE:

God, if that's the first. I can't imagine the second?

FELICIA:

Ready?

FREDDIE:

Only the start of World War III could keep me from it.

FELICIA:

The food you eat. Too many hot dogs and hamburgers. Leads to overly hard stools. Blocks up the plumbing. The system can't process all that case hardened crap.

FREDDIE:

I was kidding before, this time it's for real. Get the fuck out.

FELICIA:

You better start listening to me Freddy. Your diet and other life style decisions are causing too many problems. You are going to have to change and I mean now!

FREDDIE:

You know why I eat hot dogs and hamburgers? Do you?

FELICIA:

An absence of any will power whatsoever?

FREDDIE:

It's because I have to buy all my food at the gas station.

FELICIA:

That place where the idea of fresh fruit is a Cherry Coke.

FREDDIE:

I like fruit, that's not the issue.

FELICIA:

Ever thought of the Super Market. Plenty of fruit and veggies, only two miles.

FREDDIE:

Oh sure. I could buy stuff, but where would I put it. Our fridge? You got to be kidding? It's wall to wall deals you got at Costco.

FELICIA:

They have bargains. Saves money.

FREDDIE:

Not saves money. Saved money, Like five years ago, that's when you first bought it. Felicia, the stuff in there is gray with freezer burn.

FELICIA:

Good wholesome food.

FREDDIE:

Any item in there, take your choice. No telling if it was once a pound of spinach or a Woolly Mammoth steak, gray with Rhizopus mold. When you die you should leave that fridge to the Smithsonian. They'd love it.

FELICIA:

You're just wasteful and extravagant Freddie, that's why you have nothing to show for yourself.

FREDDIE:

But enough of this witty repartee. What do you want to do about all the toilet back-up on the floor in the basement?

FELICIA:

It's your fault it's there. You deal with it.

FREDDIE:

Like how?

FELICIA:

Shovel it into the wheelbarrow and take it out of the house.

FREDDIE:

Where?

FELICIA:

Do I have to solve every problem? You caused the back up. It's your job to figure out where to dump it.

FREDDIE:

"Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more. God for Harry, England and Saint George." (Exits center hall to basement)

Felicia putters a bit. There is a banging on the door.

FELICIA:

Come in.

SEPTIC PRO:

(operatic singing)

"Mathematical can be problematical,
Psychological requires therapeutical,
Financial leads to destititional,
Sexual these days means LGBTable,
Social, you said it, fauxpasable,
But of all the problems in the world,
The worst, no question, is toiletable"
(returns to talk)

I hear that's what you've got.

FELICIA:

I? I have a problem? No you. It's you who has the problem.

SEPTIC PRO:

That's the problem with problems.
Nobody agrees on who has the problem.
Leads to a disagreement, then a
dispute, then hurt feelings. And
that's no solution, just an all new
problem.

FELICIA:

Don't worry about hurt feelings. No sissies here. But you're wrong about problems, see the problem with problems can be defined by one word: pain. One person inflicts, that's me. The other person suffers, that's you.

SEPTIC PRO:

Wait! Whoa! Hostility? Uh ugh. Plays no part in effective problem solving. First, problems are not owned. It's not "your problem" or "my problem". Rather it's "the problem." That way we cooperate. Work together.

FELICIA:

You know, that's really kind of spiritual. You should consider draping in orange, dancing barefoot and banging on a tamborine.

SEPTIC PRO:

(singing & dancing)

"Hare Krishna, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Hare Krishna." That it?

FELICIA:

As for not spiritual, and definitely not orange, our toilet issue. It discharged human waste all over the cellar floor. The cause, your septic tank. It tanked.

SEPTIC PRO:

Could be anything. I'll have to take a look, find out what happened.

FELICIA:

Who cares what happened? The only thing that matters is fixing it. So Guru, this meditation is over. Time for action. As in, get to work.

SEPTIC PRO:

Oh God. Suddenly it's all coming back to me.

FELICIA:

What?

SEPTIC PRO:

You. 3 years ago. I did the work here. Keeeerist, what a pain in the butt.

FELICIA:

The pain is about to metastasize. Your butt is only the beginning.

SEPTIC PRO:

Whoa, take a step back, how about we hit the re-start button. First you are not going to bully me like last time.

FELICIA:

Bully?

SEPTIC PRO:

The mental beating you inflicted:
night sweats, shakes, PTSD, the whole
nine. I even had to get electro-
shock.

FELICIA:

Time to toughen up.

SEPTIC PRO:

I swore, never again, never ever.
Please pay attention. I am only
going to say this once.

FELICIA:

Are you delusional? You think this
is a therapy session? Wrong couch.
Wrong place. Wrong thinking.

SEPTIC PRO:

No. Wrong person. This time you
are going to be nice, as in polite,
as in considerate, as in respectful.
If not, you are not going to get any
help from from me. In fact I will
simply leave.

FELICIA:

Our toilet is unuseable. Maybe you
should be talking to my husband.
He's polite, considerate, respectful,
but that's just because he doesn't
care. He'd probably be happy crapping
in a bucket, his right hand armed
with a rolled up newspaper.

SEPTIC PRO:

What?

FELICIA:

You know to beat off the dogs --
they get over excited around the
odor of a fresh steamer.

SEPTIC PRO:

That sounds completely degrading.

FELICIA:

That's Freddy. But Sonya, my 17
year old, eleventh grade, sensitive.
She'll be hysterical.

SEPTIC PRO:

Sounds like you might be there already. So first things first. Let's start by taking a deep, cleansing breath.

(pause)

This isn't going to work if you don't join me. Ready?

FELICIA:

Okay, but it won't be cleansing if you use your nose, take it through your mouth.

THEY BOTH BREATHE DEEPLY

SEPTIC PRO:

Think about the happy gurgle of the toilet just before that explosive flush of clear clean water. Now we want to bring back that wonderful time.

FELICIA:

There was no wonderful time. We never wanted your stupid plumbing in the first place. The Township Council forced it on us. Fascist bastards.

SEPTIC PRO:

Remember what I told you before? About nice? That last remark is the kind of thing I directed you to not say.

FELICIA:

Why?

SEPTIC PRO:

Because it was NOT NICE. To repeat, if you say NOT NICE things I'll be forced to leave.

FELICIA:

Nice, schmice. You walk out on me I'll call the President of your company, get you fired.

SEPTIC PRO:

Won't work. New bylaws. We are no longer required to work with abusive customers.

FELICIA:

I'll call another company.

SEPTIC PRO:

I can't encourage that, you would not like the result.

FELICIA:

You mean with another company I'd have to start from scratch. Cost me thousands.

SEPTIC PRO:

God in heaven, I think you've seen the light.

FELICIA:

You are manipulating me. I don't like it.

SEPTIC PRO:

John Dillinger said you get further with a smile and a machine gun than with just a smile alone. Doesn't apply to you. You don't need a machine gun.

FELICIA:

I also don't need a smile.

SEPTIC PRO:

Wrong, wrong, wrong. Wrong again. You are going to smile. I'll say it again, you are going to be nice or you are not going to get any where.

FELICIA:

The problem here is you. All this niceness. Balderdash. Until we both get on the same page we won't get anything done.

SEPTIC PRO:

On the same page with you? Not possible. No living person could do it. Oh maybe Dick Cheney. I tried to explain the situation to you three years ago. You wouldn't listen. You wouldn't stop complaining. You couldn't process essential information.

FELICIA:

Essential information, what are you talking about?

(pause)

Oh for God's sake, okay.

(MORE)

FELICIA: (CONT'D)

(pause)
I said okay. So okay, I'll process it now. Let's hear this "essential information".

SEPTIC PRO:
First say the magic word:

FELICIA:
What's that?

SEPTIC PRO:
You know perfectly well what it is. Say it.
(pause)
Come on. You can do it. I know you can.

FELICIA:
(THROUGH GRITTED TEETH.)
P l e a s e.

SEPTIC PRO:
Doesn't that feel good? All right, ready? Here are the facts. You listening? Every time there was a heavy rain the septic systems here on Radley Road would overflow. Meant raw sewage ended up in Radley Creek? Had to stop.

FELICIA:
That is a lie. There was no raw sewage from our house. Want to know the guilty party? Irene Pearnley, two houses up. I saw pink toilet paper in the stream. That's what she uses.

SEPTIC PRO:
I've heard Irene Pearnley is a really nice person. What have you heard?

PULLS OUT HIS CAR KEYS, STARTS JANGLING THEM.

FELICIA:
Pink is the nicest color for toilet paper. I think I should get it for us.

SEPTIC PRO:
This problem has happened on all the old streets in the township.
(MORE)

SEPTIC PRO: (CONT'D)

Back when these houses were built, everybody had their own septic system. But the population grew. Now all township sewage is pumped to the central treatment facility for processing.

FELICIA:

Why us? This house isn't old, built just five years ago.

SEPTIC PRO:

Yeah. But but you hooked up your new house to the private septic that was here for the run-down house you had demolished.

FELICIA:

Why not. Worked great.

SEPTIC PRO:

Not in the opinion of the Health Department. That's why they dug a trench in the middle of Radley Road and installed a pipeline to the treatment facility. After that every house was required to connect and each home owner was assessed their share of the cost.

FELICIA:

Irene Pearnley should have paid for the whole thing. Our original, old septic field worked just fine.

SEPTIC PRO:

Old is right. That thing must have been installed the year TR charged San Juan Hill.

FELICIA:

Passed muster when we moved in. Only one thing changed. The Township tells us to come up with thirty thousand dollars.

SEPTIC PRO:

For two years the Health Department did coliform testing after every rain storm, the count was always up. Radley Creek is the township's primary water supply. Individual septic systems had to be terminated.

(MORE)

SEPTIC PRO: (CONT'D)

As far as identifying the particular residences causing the contamination, that wasn't relevant.

FELICIA:

You guys must have paid off the politicians. You made millions on the deal. Admit it.

SEPTIC PRO:

I think that statement is pretty darn close to hurtful and insulting, therefore, by definition, NOT NICE.
(rattles his car keys)
The process was transparent. Nine other contractors submitted bids. Ours was the best, we won the contract.

FELICIA:

Contract? Contract! It was no contract. It was a balls out rip off --\$30,000. You charged us \$30,000. And. And. And. Now everything is broken. \$30,000 for nothing.

SEPTIC PRO:

You're upset. But you're no where near as upset as you're going to be if you don't calm down.

FELICIA:

I'm trying, okay? But being nice? I don't see how that's going to fix our septic system?

SEPTIC PRO:

What's definitely not going to fix anything is nastiness which will cause me to leave before even looking at your tank.

FELICIA'S RAGE HAS TURNED TO TEARS.

SEPTIC PRO: (CONT'D)

Your system worked before, now it has to be fixed. How? Hostility for sure won't fix it. And you're right, being nice won't fix it either.

FELICIA:

What are you talking about?

SEPTIC PRO:

Only one thing can fix it, me. But ... I won't be able to fix it unless you work with me. That means we cooperate, do it together.

FELICIA:

Those bastards down at the township said they would fine us \$200. a day if we didn't connect to the new pipeline.

SEPTIC PRO:

That's the way it works. First there was the assessment for the pipeline installation. Then the residents had to pay for new septic tanks on their properties and have them connected out to the street.

FELICIA:

So unfair. No one else in the town has to pay for a sewer line.

SEPTIC PRO:

That's because the sewer lines were already there when they moved in.

FELICIA:

So how come we get singled out? We pay taxes. Why shouldn't the township pay the cost -- that way all tax payers could participate.

SEPTIC PRO:

The township doesn't pay for anything that would raise taxes, unless they absolutely have to.

FELICIA:

Great. What about the schools? Even if we don't have kids attending we get to pay the taxes. If it worked like this sewer deal, they'd stick the parents for thirty grand per kid, the rest of us would pay zero.

SEPTIC PRO:

Didn't you just say you have a kid in school - you want to pay thirty thousand?

FELICIA:

Ha.

SEPTIC PRO:

So count your blessings. Now I'm going out to take the lid off your tank. See if I can spot the problem from the top.

FREDDIE ENTERS FROM CELLAR DOOR

FREDDIE:

"Tank," kind of a troubling word. Does it ever bring good news. You get drunk, you're "tanked up." You run out of gas, it's an empty "tank." They decide to kill you in war, it's with a "tank."

SEPTIC PRO:

And now for the most untrustworthy "tank" of them all: the septic "tank."

FREDDIE:

Promises to make turd disappear, instead deposits it on the cellar floor.

FELICIA:

Freddy, Perhaps the Wilkinson man has more important things to do than listen to your nonsense. Even you have more important things to do.

Septic Pro exits. Freddy snaps to attention and gives Felicia a military salute

FREDDY:

Private Freddy here, reporting to Capain Felicia. Mission accomplished. Well, maybe semi-accomplished. Used the snow shovel, got most of the crap into the wheel barrow. Now, whither to for the dumping, Sir?

FELICIA:

Sir?

FREDDY:

Oh that's right. You're a woman. For some reason I forgot.

FELICIA:

Well obviously ...

FREDDY:

Don't even think it. The stream? Absolutely not.

FELICIA:

It's the logical place - why not?

FREDDY:

Felicia, as even you must remember, that's why they put the new sewer line in, to stop raw sewage from going into the stream.

FELICIA:

Nonsense. Streams are self-cleaning within 100 yards. That's an established fact. I saw it on some PBS program.

FREDDY:

Maybe, but that's not the way the Health Department sees it. Plus, what if someone saw me dumping a barrow full of human waste in the stream and called in. Can you imagine the fine?

FELICIA:

All right, suit yourself. Better try the woods out there at the end of our property. I know the township owns it, but no one ever goes in there. There's got to be some hidden nook where it can compost in peace.

FREDDIE:

Pretty bumpy and tangled. Won't be easy to get the wheelbarrow through.

FELICIA:

Maybe we should get a bull dozer to plow a path? You think? You caused the problem. You are the problem. You deal with the problem.

SEPTIC PRO ENTERS FRONT DOOR.

SEPTIC PRO:

Looks like the fixitive failed on a number of the PVC joints. I can't tell for sure, but I think some of the pipe looks corroded as well, just didn't hold up.

FELICIA:

I knew it. Should have been fabricated in stainless steel.

SEPTIC PRO:

Couldn't agree more.

FELICIA:

Well then ...

SEPTIC PRO:

Now just a minute. As you should remember, you were offered that option. I don't need to tell you what you said.

FELICIA:

What I said three years ago?

SEPTIC PRO:

You remember perfectly well. You've said it a million times since then.

FREDDIE:

I know what he's talking about.

SEPTIC PRO:

It's your favorite phrase.

FELICIA:

My favorite phrase?

FREDDIE:

It's not the \$64,000 question. Everybody knows your favorite phrase.

FELICIA:

No, Absolutely not.

SEPTIC PRO:

That's it, you just said it. Exactly the way you said it three years ago

IN UNISON WITH FREDDIE:

"No! Absolutely not."

FELICIA:

If you thought I was making a mistake, You should have told me.

SEPTIC PRO:

Me? Tell you you were making a mistake? Has anyone ever told you you that ... and gotten away with it?

FELICIA:

You didn't say I was mistaken then, so you can't change your mind and say I'm mistaken now. You didn't even try which would have been, your word, nice.

SEPTIC PRO:

If you weren't mistaken, means it's all my fault, that it? That's definitely not nice.

FREDDIE:

Felicia. Nice is hard for her anytime, but when it comes to money. Oh boy!

SEPTIC PRO:

You didn't want to spend a nickle you didn't have to. Making the right decision? Had nothing whatsoever to do with it.

FELICIA:

Why should we pay extra? Your job is to do the job right in the first place. You didn't. It's your fault. You did a crappy installation. Now you have to fix it and this time do the job right.

SEPTIC PRO:

Oh God. I should leave, and I mean now.

FREDDIE:

That is not a solution! There is something you can do, I know it. We can't go on like this. Please I'm begging you.

SEPTIC PRO:

All right, One last chance. So tell you what Mrs Lindsay. Wait, Course correction, uh, is it Mr. Lindsay?

FELICIA:

What, you think he's the pool boy? Well, close.

SEPTIC PRO:

(To Freddie)
Are you part of this?

FREDDIE:

Hard to say. Generally not, but if I'm the cause then I'll decide the course correction. What are my options?

FELICIA:

This is serious business. Don't talk to him.

SEPTIC PRO:

Okay. Okay. Both of you, calm down. This system was installed three years ago so, as you know, you are completely past the warranty. On the other hand, it should not have failed this soon. So here's what we are willing to offer. A rebuild of the infrastructure of the tank in welded stainless plus a new pump for half the usual fee.

FREDDIE:

How much is that?

FELICIA:

Don't even ask. We are not paying it. It's their fault and they are going to fix it. Rebuilt with stainless at no cost. We pay nothing. It's their fault. They owe it to us.

FREDDIE:

Like the Mexicans owe Don the wall? Felicia, slow down. How about we hear the rest of the deal before we turn it down.

FELICIA:

That's not the way it works. If we hear the deal, that means we are willing to consider it, which we are not. This job will be at no cost. Maybe it will cost them a few bucks, but that is no concern of ours.

FREDDY:

(to Septic Pro) Around financial issues, she gets a little un-hinged.

FELICIA:

I'm warning you Freddy. We are going to stand our ground.

FREDDY:

(to Septic Pro) No white flags for Felicia. It's John Paul Jones on The Bonhomme Richard: "We have not yet begun to fight."

FELICIA:

Freddy, the wrath of God is about to descend.

FREDDY:

Why don't you just write the estimate on a piece of paper and give it to me. It will be easier on her that way.

SEPTIC PRO:

(Hands Freddy a piece of paper)
Here you go sir. That's the full price we charge. That's the 50% reduction I'm offering you.

FREDDY:

Seems reasonable enough? When can you start?

FELICIA:

What are you talking about. How much do they want?

FREDDY:

You didn't want to know before, dear. And I assure you, you definitely don't want to know now. It's all too painful for your fluttering little heart.

FELICIA:

Give me that piece of paper, Freddy.
(She grabs paper from Freddy's hand).
\$15,000? \$15,000? \$15,000?

FREDDY:

Felicia, You can keep on yelling \$15,000 until Jesus returns in Glory. It still doesn't change the \$15,000. That's the number. But I remind you they are giving us a 50% discount, so the cost to us is actually \$7,500.

FELICIA:

Outrage. It was their equipment, their installation, their failure. They are responsible.

(MORE)

FELICIA: (CONT'D)

They are fixing everything for free.
We are not paying - not a red cent.

FREDDIE:

We can't function without a
functioning septic system. That
means it has to be repaired. We
have no choice.

FELICIA:

Freddie, time for you to disappear.
You don't know how to handle business
negotiations.

FREDDIE:

Negotiations are when two parties
get together and and agree to a
compromise both can live with.
Negotiations are not one person
yelling at the top of her lungs,
"Not a red cent."

FELICIA:

I warn you Freddie. I am getting
really angry.

FREDDIE:

Are you saying you have a degree of
hostility and craziness greater than
what we've just witnessed? Zowie!
I'd really like to see that.

FELICIA:

Freddie, you are about to cross the
line. I don't have to tell you what's
on the other side.

FREDDIE:

(To Septic Pro) So yes, we're going
to accept your offer, what's next?

SEPTIC PRO:

Well, The entire piping and pumping
system in your tank has to be rebuilt
from scratch and we can't do that
until the tank is completely cleaned
out. So first you have to get the
septic pumping company out here and
have the whole tank emptied.

FELICIA:

It's not the tank that's getting
taken to the cleaners, it's us.
Fleeced. Fleeced. Fleeced.

FREDDIE:

I think we know your feelings Felicia, nevertheless, thanks for sharing.
(To Septic Pro) So what does the pumping company charge?

SEPTIC PRO:

Depends on the size of your tank. For yours, let me see, I have their rate card right here. Ugh, last year it would have been \$900. Might have gone up a bit, not much. For the exact number, give them a call. Here's one of their cards.

FELICIA:

GRABS THE CARD AND THRUSTS IT BACK TO SEPTIC PRO.

No. You call them. You find out the fee, because you are going to pay them. This whole fiasco is your fault, and you are covering the cost, the entire cost. We pay nothing.

SEPTIC PRO:

Okay. That's it. This is as far as I go. I am now leaving. You two suit yourselves. If and when you get the tank pumped out and you are ready to pay our discounted fee for the system re-built, give us a call. Meantime I suggest you find someone nearby who will let you use their toilet.

FREDDIE:

That's one option. Is there another?

SEPTIC PRO:

Sure. Like your wife says, get a bucket ... some dogs, and a rolled up newspaper. (Exits)

CURTAIN

ACT II

LATER THAT AFTERNOON. FELICIA IS RUNNING THE VACUUM CLEANER. AFTER A WHILE WE HEAR FREDDY YELLING FROM THE BATHROOM.

FREDDY:

Will you turn that Goddamn thing off.

SHUTS OFF THE VACUUM CLEANER.

FELICIA:
What's the problem?

FREDDIE:
For Christ's sake. I'm trying to
jerk off in here.

FELICIA RESTARTS THE VACUUM. FREDDY ENTERS FROM BATHROOM

FREDDY:
Ah screw it. I lost my motivation.

URNS OFF VACUUM CLEANER

FELICIA:
Good. Foul thoughts lead to foul
behavior. Time for you to clean up.

FREDDY:
I don't have a pot to piss in. That's
not making me think clean.

FELICIA:
How about the basement? Is that
clean?

FREDDY:
The wheelbarrow went into the woods,
a clearing was found, the crap got
spread, loose dirt was shoveled over
it.

FELICIA:
How about the floor?

FREDDY:
Mopped and Cloroxed.

FELICIA:
Time for another bath. I know you
smell without even getting close.

FREDDY:
Wait, can I be trusted in the shower?
Just me and a cake of soap? All alone?

FELICIA:
Ugh. Thanks for not sharing.

FREDDY:
What are we talking about? We don't
have a functioning septic system.
(MORE)

FREDDY: (CONT'D)

The shower will just back up into the cellar again.

FELICIA:

It's just like you to forget. When I did the plumbing for the house, I put in a shut off valve that diverts the gray water to out on the lawn. The only water that doesn't go out there is the toilet flush.

FREDDY:

You mean the washing machine, the kitchen sink, the shower?

FELICIA:

Just goes out and waters the grass.

FREDDY:

Why did you do that?

FELICIA:

Dummy. The sewer bill monitors the water volume pumped into the system, The less in, the less we pay.

FREDDY:

Can that be legal?

FELICIA:

Who knows? I doubt it. But one thing's for sure, it's not illegal if they don't know about it. Plus it makes it free when we want to water the lawn. Doesn't add a red cent to the water bill.

FREDDY:

It's the "I doubt it" part that's got me worried.

FELICIA:

For cripes sake, Freddy, you sound more like a wuss every day.

FREDDY:

You know what makes me a wuss? An uncontrollable desire to pick up the phone and call the \$900 buck number.

FELICIA:

We are not knuckling under to those thieves. They robbed us three years ago. They are not robbing us again.

FREDDY:

The guys who installed the system are not the same as the guys who pump the tank, Felicia.

FELICIA:

They're all in the same racket. They get no easy money from me. They should know what it's like to feel rejected. If that's pain, good. They deserve it.

FREDDY:

Of course this see-saw has two sides. Their side rejection, our side, no toilet. Their side pain, our side, detergent chemicals hosed directly into the environment.

FELICIA:

You know what they irrigate with in the third world? Diluted pig manure. And that's what grows most of the veggies in the supermarket

FREDDY:

What if one of the neighbors notices us, the only house down here giving the lawn a bubble bath. Might look unusual, maybe even suspicious.

FELICIA:

Forget it. I planted a viburnum right where the pipe comes out. No one will ever see it. Not in a million years.

DOOR BELL RINGS.

FELICIA: (CONT'D)

I'll bet it's Pete from next door. He's just here to ask questions. I don't want to talk to him. You do it.

FREDDY:

Ugh ugh. He's over here because of something you did. He wants to talk to you.

FELICIA:

No siree. This one's man-to-man, I'm sure of it. You deal with it. I'm going upstairs.

DOOR BELL RINGS AGAIN

FREDDY:

What about his questions? I don't know the answers. Fact is, I don't know anything.

FELICIA:

Why not?

FREDDY:

If there is information or anything else involving you, I try to keep as far away as possible. Even if I thought I knew something, I'd be wrong. Far better to know nothing.

PETE ENTERS NEITHER FREDDY OR FELICIA SEES HIM

FELICIA:

Just one more reason why everyone thinks you're a wuss.

FREDDY:

If you think it accomplishes anything to demean, disparage, insult, or belittle me, you are wrong.

FELICIA:

Just telling the truth.

FREDDY:

It is not the truth. You just get a bang out of being hostile. Whatever's in front of you, bang, it gets your meanness, full force. That's why people hate you. Not me, of course. Though God knows, I should.

PETE:

Not me either. By the way, I'm happy to talk to either one of you. But don't let that influence your deliberations. Once you decide, I'm here for the winner, or -- is it the loser?

FELICIA:

The loser. I'm going upstairs.

FELICIA EXITS UPSTAIRS

PETE:

Howdy neighbor.
(MORE)

PETE: (CONT'D)

Saw that truck from Wilkerson in front of your place. Sure didn't expect to see them on Radley Road again. Gad, Three years ago they blocked traffic out there for the best part of 9 months. That was enough.

FREDDY:

Well our Goddamn septic backed up into the cellar. Had to call them to come take a look.

PETE:

What did they say?

FREDDY:

Not good. Out of warranty. Gotta rebuild the whole tank infrastructure. And pay again. At least it's not another thirty grand.

PETE:

What about your water? What can you do?

FREDDY:

No problem with the incoming. Works great,

PETE:

You can't have incoming if you don't have outgoing. I mean the outgoing, it has to have some place to go.

FREDDY:

We got it handled Pete, don't worry about it.

PETE:

Hmm. Well since it can't go into your septic tank without backing up unto your cellar, I couldn't help but wonder about the gray water coming out of of a PVC pipe into your side yard.

FREDDY:

Where? What are you talking about?

PETE:

Right there under that Hydrangea bush Felicia planted.

FREDDY:

Felicia says nobody can see what's going on out there, and as you know, Felicia is never wrong.

PETE:

Ahhhhhhh.

FREDDY:

So there you go Pete. Maybe you're confused, or at least mistaken about what you saw.

PETE:

Ahhhhhhhh.

FREDDY:

So good, we agree. There's nothing to talk about.

PETE:

Just a darn minute, so you put a shut off valve down there in the cellar to send gray water out that pipe, everything but the toilet, right? How the hell did you get away with that. No plumber around here would do it. They'd lose their license.

FREDDY:

Right. Then again, Felicia isn't a licensed plumber, so she has no license to lose. So, what the hey, we're just fine.

PETE:

Felicia?

FREDDY:

Pete, you know she doesn't spend a nickel she doesn't have to, so when we were building this house five years ago she did all the plumbing, electricity and heating herself.

PETE:

Wow.

FREDDY:

Yup, looked up how to do it on the internet at the library. She also drew up all the architectural plans.

(MORE)

FREDDY: (CONT'D)

Talked some architect she knows into signing off on them so she could get township approval.

PETE:

Unbelievable.

FREDDY:

And since she was doing everything herself, well, she could make certain improvements that maybe a real plumber wouldn't risk doing.

PETE:

The gray water diversion, I've heard of people doing it.

FREDDY:

It's supposed to be good for the environment, conserves water and stuff like that.

PETE:

Nevertheless, I don't think it's authorized in this township.

FREDDY:

Yeah, well I'm pretty sure she didn't make the alteration until we'd been through the final inspection and got our certificate of occupancy.

PETE:

Don't know what to think. We all live on this road, and I am assuming that everyone is lawful. Well, maybe they are too persnickety. For sure the Township Commissioners are a bunch of uptight stuffed shirts.

FREDDY:

Regardless, right now we are looking at another major problem.
(pause)

PETE:

No toilets?

FREDDY:

Bingo.

PETE:

What are you going to do?

FREDDY:

I'm looking at options. One of the is right here in front of me.

PETE:

Oh for Christ's sake, why me?

FREDDY:

I know. It's not your fault you ended up with us as your next door neighbor.

PETE:

Just a lucky break, that what you're saying?

FREDDY:

We are really in a bind. I don't know what else to do.

PETE:

Oh God. Okay. I guess it will be okay if Felicia and Sonya use the Powder room near our back door. I'll leave it open for them. But that's it. Not you. My mom's bed room is back there and that's her bathroom. She would have a conniption if she saw a strange man back there at four in the morning.

FREDDY:

Strange man? She's seen me three or four times a week for the last five years. I always say Hi, often stop to chat.

PETE:

I don't want to get into it, but it can be difficult to know what she remembers and what she doesn't. Multiply that by a factor of ten at four in the morning. So anyway, as I said, the girls, ok. You have to make other arrangements.

PETE'S CELL PHONE BUZZES, HE GETS IT OUT.

PETE: (CONT'D)

Whoops, there's Mom now. Gotta go. Let me know how things work out.
(Exits)

FREDDY:

Felicia, you can come down. Pete's gone.

FELICIA:

What did he say?

FREDDY:

Toilet crisis handled. At least for you and Sonya. You can use the powder room at Pete's. However, not me.

FELICIA:

His mom right?

FREDDIE:

You guessed it.

FELICIA:

That's okay. You'll be fine. You can go outside, use the bushes.

FREDDIE:

Oh yeah, what about the Big Necessity? You know why they call it that? Because when you gotta drop one, it's a big necessity.

FELICIA:

I know what the Big Necessity is Freddie. You can go down to Ziggy's bar.

FREDDIE:

That's a mile, maybe two.

FELICIA:

How about that BP gas station?

FREDDIE:

Worse, got to be three minimum. Listen, Goddamn it, going to the gas station is not a solution. I am American. It is my constitutional right to take a dump in my own home.

FELICIA:

Constitutional?

FREDDIE:

Freedom of speech. Freedom of religion. Freedom to drop a brown. Jefferson should have put it in the Declaration.

FELICIA:

How about one of those recycling chemical ones. There are tons of used ones on eBay. I've been looking at them. Best of all they're really cheap.

FREDDIE:

Cheap, I wonder why.

FELICIA:

Look around, do a search, maybe less than a hundred.

FREDDIE:

Trust you to know. Given that you approve the price, I'm amazed we don't own 20 of them.

FELICIA:

Good idea, maybe we should get one. That would skip the \$900 pump out rip off, the \$7,500 rebuild rip off, and all for a \$100 investment in a chemical toilet.

FREDDIE:

You know why that's a truly crappy idea?

FELICIA:

Oh, this is bound to be good. Okay, Mr. Smarty, SINGS: "Hit me with your best shot, fire away."

FREDDIE:

Because Felicia, they don't friggin' work. That's why. Ever talked to anyone who owned one. Decompose? No chance. Odorless, not even close, and as for when you have to empty them out, oh my God, stink-o-rama on steroids. Plus exactly where do you do it? Out on the lawn maybe?

FELICIA:

Well then, maybe you should think of something else.

FREDDY:

Why are all the problems of no interest or concern to anybody but me? Don't we live in this house as a family?

(MORE)

FREDDY: (CONT'D)

Shouldn't all our problems be shared.
Just like like our joys and sorrows?

FELICIA:

The main problem is that you are a
wuss. The second big problem is
that you are a crybaby. I'd like to
help, but I don't know how.

FREDDY:

Wait. I got it. I got it. How
about an out-house? I could stick
it out in front. That way passing
motorists needing a break could stop
off and drop a load. I'd get a
uniform, stand out there, offer them
handiwipes. Damn, I'd be a hero.

FELICIA:

Freddy, you need to calm down.

FREDDY:

Calm down? Calm down? Know what?
Absolu-friggin never! I need a toilet
in the Goddamn house. That's it.

FELICIA:

Constant whining is not going to
solve your problem. One thing we
are going to do is fork over \$900 to
to those thieves for the tank pump
out. Not happening. Never. That's
final.

FREDDY:

Know what? The suggestion I go to
Ziggy's Bar is beginning to sound
good. Really good. And not because
I need to take a crap.

FREDDY STARTS TO LEAVE. SONYA COMES THROUGH THE DOOR, SHE IS
HOME FROM SCHOOL.

SONYA:

Oh Hi Dad. You going somewhere?

FREDDIE:

Well going, Not sure it's somewhere.
We'll see.

SONYA:

Coming back soon? No rush. My friend
Ricardo is coming over and we'll
need the living room. No parents.

FELICIA:

No parents?

SONYA:

In one case especially, no parents.

FREDDIE:

I see, well, a gentle hint beats
hell out of a boot in the arse,
especially when the outcome is the
same. See you later.

FREDDY LEAVES.

FELICIA:

Why's he coming over here?

SONYA:

We have a history test tomorrow. He
isn't very good at it. He asked me
to help him out.

FELICIA:

He has to come here? Why here?

SONYA:

This is my house too, remember? I'm
a member of the family. So you have
to go upstairs, stay in your room.
No sneaking down to spy. No traipsing
in here saying you forgot something.

FELICIA:

Well I at least have to stay long
enough to meet him.

SONYA:

Ahhhhh, Okay. Meet him. But then
it's Vamoose Ville.

FELICIA:

All right. All right. But remember
I can hear everything, and if hear
anything I don't like I can be down
here in a minute.

SONYA:

What if you don't hear anything at
all?

FELICIA:

In that case, it'll be seconds.

KNOCK AT THE DOOR. SONYA RUNS TO OPEN IT. IMPROV GREETING
DIALOGUE BETWEEN HER AND RICARDO.

AUDIENCE DOES NOT NEED TO KNOW WHAT IS SAID.

SONYA:

So Mom, this is Ricardo, the boy I told you about.

RICARDO:

Hi, nice to meet you. (Shakes hands with Felicia)

FELICIA:

Ricardo, that's an unusual name?

RICARDO:

Not to me, I'm used to it. Of course, it's also my father's name. He's had it for 45 years. He just dropped me off, he'll be back to pick me up in a couple of hours.

FELICIA:

So, are you originally from around here?

RICARDO:

Yup. Born in Philly. So was my dad. Makes us American citizens, despite what some people think.

SONYA:

Hey Mom, why don't you ask him if he shot a border cop to celebrate *Cinco de Mayo*?

FELICIA:

All right Sonya. That will do. Well, I know you kids have to study for the exam, so I'll leave you alone. But I'll be right up on the second floor, in case you need anything.

FELICIA EXITS TO SECOND FLOOR.

RICARDO:

Seems like your Mom doesn't like Latinos, or at least guys with Latin names.

SONYA:

It's just different. When she went to high school, every kid was named Bill or Bob or Betsy or Sue. The names at high schools today would flabbergast her.

RICARDO:

Well for sure, my family's roots are in Nicaragua, but that's a while back. My grandmother and her friends still speak Spanish, but they're the only ones.

SONYA:

So like, how do they feel about us? You know white people.

RICARDO:

Not real good. They don't know what you feel so superior about. Your food is boring, your music is dead, and you can't dance.

SONYA:

Plus we have treated you and other people with foreign backgrounds like second class for a long time.

RICARDO:

You know what else: the stupidity of this history course. Every chapter it's the same. How white people beat the crap out of dark people in a bunch of stupid wars.

SONYA:

I guess that's a summary.

RICARDO:

You go through this whole history book (lifts it) and there is not one Hispanic name. So how did like 80% of the towns out west get Latino names?

SONYA:

Okay. Okay. But that's not going to get you through the test tomorrow.

RICARDO:

Like there's not a damn thing about brown people in here except how getting whipped, quick and easy was a lot of fun.

SONYA:

Come on. You think getting whipped is really what the brown people wanted?

RICARDO:

Absolutely. The quicker it's over the quicker they could get back to eating chalupas and dancing the Merengue.

SONYA:

Doesn't sound possible, but for sure it makes sense.

RICARDO:

Getting good at Merengue is not easy, takes dedication. And white guys shooting at you while you work on your moves would be a distraction.

SONYA:

Could you teach me?

RICARDO:

What?

SONYA:

What you're talking about, the Merengue

RICARDO:

The Merengue? Wait a minute. I came over here because you were supposed to teach me about the Civil War.

SONYA:

Ricardo, we are the new generation, we have got to fix on different priorities.

RICARDO:

You sure?

SONYA:

No hay preguntas.

RICARDO:

Okay, okay. I'll give you a quick lesson, but then we have got to hit the books, okay?

RICARDO HAS THE MUSIC ON HIS CELL PHONE AND PLAYS IT. HE TAKES SONYA THROUGH THE STEPS TRYING TO COACH HER. SHE IS A SLOW LEARNER, BUT THEY ARE HAVING PLENTY OF FUN AND LAUGHTER.

SONYA:

That's it, Busted. Send me to Merengue Rehab.

RICARDO:

Here, try it again. Watch me. One.
One, two. One, two, three.

SHE GETS BETTER AND HAS FINALLY GOTTEN IT DOWN WITH THE BASIC
MOVES AND THE BEAT.

SONYA:

This is really chill. We are not
going to think like our parents. I
already sort of don't, and once I
get this Merengue nailed I'll be
fully converted.

RICARDO:

Congrats. You can become a 100%
Latina. But first you got to get
some noisy jewelry.

SONYA:

Noisy jewelry?

RICARDO:

You know bracelets, and bangles and
bells.

SONYA:

How about I walk around clicking
castanets? Ugh, know what, You may
have to settle for a 50% Latina.

RICARDO:

That would be a disappointment.

SONYA:

Remember what Miss Wilcox said in
human relations class: "Nobody is
perfect, if you want to have friends,
you have to learn to accept other
peoples' shortfalls and inadequacies."

RICARDO:

Please, don't start quoting Miss
Wilcox. Ugh! Meantime I got to learn
this Civil War crap. That'll make
me at least 50% gringo myself.

SONYA:

Did you think about the write up of
a Civil War life? It's going to be
on the test. You got someone picked
out?

RICARDO:

Yeah. I Googled Civil War generals and tried to pick out the coolest looking dude. How about Nathan Bedford Forest, looks like someone on TV in the photograph - you think?

SONYA:

I guess so, and for sure he was a general in the Confederate Army, but his main claim to fame is as the First Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. That would qualify him to be on TV, but only in Alabama.

RICARDO:

Okay. Better pick someone else. (Picks up phone) What's your internet access code.

SONYA:

Ah, it's down for the moment. Ah, actually, we don't have one.

RICARDO:

Ah who cares. All they got on there is Nathan Bedford Forest lynching guys, right? Hey is that your TV?

SONYA:

No, it's our stove.

RICARDO:

Come on, I know it's a TV. I was in Nicaragua last summer. There are plenty of those old TV's down there.

SONYA:

That's a comfort, but I don't think we can pick up any Spanish language stations. So joining in the La CiCaRacha merriment won't be happening just now.

RICARDO:

Hey, what's that on top of it?

SONYA:

An art work, my dad made it. He calls it Seal Team 6 1/2. 6 1/2 channels is what it receives. It protect us from any other channels invading.

RICARDO:

Hey I need the bathroom. Can I use the facilities?

FELICIA BURSTS IN.

FELICIA:

No. No use of the facilities.

SONYA:

What?

FELICIA:

They're, um, non existent right now.

SONYA:

Non-Existent?

FELICIA:

We don't have facilities.

SONYA:

Unbelievable. This is not happening.

RICARDO:

This is a problem. My pops isn't going to pick me up for another hour.

FELICIA:

Tell you what Ricardo. I'll drive you down to Ziggy's. They have a mens' room. Besides, I have an issue to check on down there.

SONYA:

Unbelievable. This is not happening.

FELICIA:

Stop moping Sonya. It'll be okay. We'll be back in five or ten minutes.

FELICIA & RICARDO LEAVE. AFTER A MOMENT OR TWO SONYA GETS UP AND TURNS ON RICARDO'S CELL TO THE MERENGUE MUSIC AND STARTS PRACTICING. FREDDY COMES HOME.

FREDDY:

What's up Sugar Bean?

SONYA:

Mom just drove down to Ziggy's to check up on you?

FREDDY:

Phew, Break. Didn't see her.

SONYA:

She had my friend Ricardo with her.
He needed the men's room.

FREDDY:

Must have taken the upper road.
(Wipes brow)

SONYA:

Mom says our toilet is nonexistent.
What's up with that?

FREDDY:

Oh God. Who knows? Something went
wrong in the tank. I don't know,
the pump or the pipes or who knows?
Anyway, backed up. So not usable at
the moment. You and Mom are going
to have to use Pete's powder room
for a while.

SONYA:

Walk over there, in the middle of
the night?

FREDDY:

The good news is we still have water
and we can use the sink and showers
and stuff because Mom set it up to
shunt gray water out to the back
yard.

SONYA:

Unbelievable. This is not happening.

FREDDY:

Yeah, well it is.

SONYA:

My entire life is suck city.

FREDDY:

Don't like to hear that. How about
school? Everything okay?

SONYA:

Miss Zimmer.

FREDDY:

She still around? I had her when
was there.

SONYA:

What a bitch.

(MORE)

SONYA: (CONT'D)

So she wants us to learn all the world capitals. So okay. So the test. She hands each kid a blank map of the world. Then she puts the names of 20 countries on the board. We have to write the name of that country's capital city in the right location on the map. I really worked on it, knew those capitals cold. But you know my spelling, right?

FREDDY:

Oh God, just like me. It's all coming back.

SONYA:

So the test comes back today. Miss Zimmer says there's only one student who got all 20 perfect (thumbs to herself). All the capitals, all placed right, but guess what the kid got? Ten points out of one hundred. Ten points. A total "F". "F" as in flunk. "F" as in failure.

FREDDY:

Doesn't seem right. How come?

SONYA:

Spelling. I only spelled two cities right. Rome and Ottawa. See she gives 3 points for knowing the capital city, two points for putting it in the right location. But any spelling error, you're screwed. Zero points. Then she starts pointing at me and laughing. "Sort of a shame Sonya, you knew the information, but you get only ten points, ten points, flunked the test." Then all the kids start laughing.

FREDDY IS SHAKEN. HE CAN'T SPEAK.

SONYA: (CONT'D)

What's the point? I can't do anything right. Loser. I don't have any friends. I don't have any of the right stuff. I don't fit.

(tearing up)

FREDDY:

What do you mean right stuff?

SONYA:

Last week Mom actually scored me a pair of sneaks hanging off someone's trashcan. Sort of beat up but unbelievably, they fit. Anyway that's why the kids call me Thrift Shop and I deserve it. Everyone's mean.

FREDDY:

That's so unfair. Just because they're rich.

SONYA:

They hate me. Then again I hate them, so at least we're even. They all think I'm ugly? Do you?

FREDDY:

Ugly? Sonya, you are not ugly. You are beautiful. In every possible way, and always have been since the day you were born.

FREDDY IS WEEPING QUIETLY

SONYA:

Wait. Dad. Dad what are you doing? Are you crying? Oh Dad, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to make you cry. Please don't Dad. Please.

FREDDY:

It's really hard on me when you get hurt.

SONYA:

I know. Sorry Dad.

FREDDY:

You are such a good girl and you work so hard.

SONYA:

Okay Dad. That's enough.

FREDDY:

I think you are wonderful and it really hurts when others don't see you the same way.

SONYA:

I know that Dad. I know you feel that way.

FREDDY:

I do sweetie. I do.

SONYA:

And just because you are obviously wrong, about me being wonderful that is. Well, doesn't mean I don't appreciate it.

FREDDY:

You just wait and see. You are wonderful and one of these days you're going to know it. And you're going to show everybody. That's an absolute 100% guarantee.

FELICIA ENTERS ALONE

SONYA:

What happened to Ricardo?

FELICIA:

He had me call his dad to pick him up at Ziggy's.

SONYA:

You were supposed to bring him back here. We have to study. Plus he left his phone.

FELICIA:

He said he'll call you later, get his phone back in school tomorrow. Hey, guess what? That Ricardo kid turns out to be a really nice boy. I like him, Plus he's really very cute.

SONYA:

And you're surprised?

FELICIA:

Well kind of, yeah.

SONYA:

Why, because he's hispanic or because he's someone who actually likes me?

FELICIA:

Sonya, you are such a little mosquito. Always buzzing around trying to needle me.

FELICIA STARTS BUZZING AROUND AS A MOSQUITO AND SUDDENLY DIVES IN TO SCORE OF SONYA. SONYA SHRIEKS.

FELICIA: (CONT'D)

Ha, got you back for once. (To Freddy) So you're back too. Exactly how many drinks did you have at Ziggy's.

FREDDY:

One, maybe two.

FELICIA:

The way you look, all worked up and emotional, I'd say more likely three.

FREDDY:

Worked up, yup. Emotional, yup. Felicia, every man, even me, has at least one principal he holds to be sacred, immutable.

FELICIA:

Oh God, not again.

GRABS AN ORANGE 5 GALLON PLASTIC BUCKET FROM THE CORNER AND HOLDS IT LIKE IT CONTAINS HIS PRINCIPALS/HIS SOUL)

FREDDY:

The Grounds on which he takes his stand and will not retreat. In my case this principle is simple. I refuse to deficate in this bucket. Not doing it. Felicia, I've put up with all manner of ridiculous eccentricities from you over the years, but this goes too far.

FELICIA:

Bucket? Bucket? Give me that bucket. (Takes the bucket) Hmmmm. That gives me an idea. I suddenly see how we save the \$900 pump out fee. We'll ... we'll ... we'll do it ourselves. Lift the tank lid,

DEMONSTRATES EACH ACTION USING THE BUCKET AS A PROP)

drop in the bucket, hoist it out, into the wheelbarrow, off to the woods, repeat. Run that bucket brigade till she's empty.

SONYA:

Unbelievable. This is not happening.

FREDDY:

Sonya is right. That sounds totally disgusting.

FELICIA:

Wrong Freddy. Think about it. Instead of a rip off by the dirt bag pump company, it's redemptive, restorative. \$900. In our pocket.

SONYA:

Unbelievable. This is not happening.

FREDDY:

Think about it Felicia, There's a 1000 gallons of soggy toilet paper floating in lumpy brown turd water out there.

FELICIA:

Remember when you criticized me because I insisted on saving money with a 1000 gallon tank instead of the 2000 gallon tank.

FREDDY:

Oh God. How could I forget.

FELICIA:

Well right about now you should be thanking your lucky stars for my decision.

FREDDY:

Just never occurred to me to kiss your ass in gratitude. I can't imagine why.

FELICIA:

Don't you see Freddy, it will be our victory. (Grabs a soup ladle and beats the bucket) We'll have stood up to the Fascist Town Council and their nitsy regulations (beats it again), to the sewer line contractors, foaming at the mouth at the prospect of another highway robbery (beats it again).

FREDDY:

I don't know, maybe I'd be willing to consider this, but, and it's a huge BUT, if I say okay, we do it together.

(MORE)

FREDDY: (CONT'D)

You are not sitting in here reading a magazine while I do all the work.

FELICIA:

Always with the complaints. What a whiner.

FREDDY:

I've been around you long enough. I know how you operate. You figure you came up with the idea so that's your job. My job is to do all the work.

FELICIA:

Untrue, at least some of the time.

FREDDY:

In addition, once we get it empty you will agree to have the tank company rebuild the tank system and pump for \$7,500., their 50% discount price. No ifs ands or buts.

FELICIA:

I told them the only deal is they do it free.

FREDDY:

We're paying their price and that's the deal you agree to now, right now. Or no deal. And no trying to squeeze them or niggle them for a few bucks here or there. Their price is our price. Final. No ifs ands or buts.

FELICIA:

Okay, okay. If you're that anxious to knuckle under to them. It's a weakness but given the source, hardly a surprise.

FREDDY:

Felicia, we are facing a very nasty few bunch of hours. I suggest you keep all your personal nastiness to yourself until we're finished.

FELICIA:

All right, all right, I'll try.

FREDDY:

You are going to do better than try.
A lot better.

FELICIA:

Are you ordering me around. You
order me? Is this possible?

FREDDY:

Yup, and I want to tell you why.
Once I get that son of a bitch tank
empty and the workings rebuilt with
new stainless steel fabrication, I
anticipate the glory of dropping my
pants, lowering my butt. Yup. It
will be waiting right there: the
loving embrace of a huggy white toilet
seat. Ahhhhh.

PETE COMES IN.

PETE:

Hey, hey, hey. Any update. What's
the plan?

FREDDY:

There has been a surrender. We have
come to terms.

PETE:

Surrender? What are you talking
about?

FREDDY:

Felicia has conceded, we will pay
Wilkerson to rebuild the septic tank.

PETE:

All right. So when are you going to
get it pumped out so they can start.

FREDDY:

That part of this surrender is still
highly classified.

PETE:

You need a secret surrender?

FELICIA:

We are not going to pay the larcenous
tank pumpers \$900 just to empty the
tank. That's a surrender we are not
making.

PETE:

I see. What's the option?

FELICIA:

We are Americans. We are going to do it the American way. Self reliance. We don't get other people to do our dirty work. We do it ourselves.

PETE:

Yourselves? What are you talking about?

SONYA:

That's it. No choice. I have to call the Child Abuse Prevention Hotline. You can't do this to me.

FELICIA:

Sonya, Rugged Independence. Show some spine. This is what we do. We are Americans. It's the price we pay for freedom from Tyranny. (Final beating of the bucket).

LIGHTS DIM TO DARKNESS.

A SINGLE SPOTLIGHT ON AN ORANGE HOME DEPOT BUCKET THAT DESCENDS FROM THE FLIES ON A ROPE. PAUSE FOR A MOMENT. THEN IT DROPS. THE SPOT IS CUT. PAUSE. SFX A LOUD SPLASH AS THE BUCKET DROPS INTO THE TANK.

CURTAIN

ACT III

TWO WEEKS LATER. THE TANK HAS BEEN BUCKETED OUT AND EMPTIED. WILKINSON HAS REBUILT THE TANK PUMPING SYSTEM IN STAINLESS. THE TOILET IS WORKING. WE HEAR IT FLUSH AND FREDDY WALKS OUT OF THE BATHROOM, BIG SMILE. FELICIA IS WAITING.

FELICIA: (CONT'D)

Well, how do you feel?

FREDDY:

Mission accomplished. People take a toilet for granted until they don't have one. That's when you realize it's not just a necessity. It's one of life's two greatest pleasures.

FELICIA:

Give me a break.

FREDDY:

(Pause) You going to ask me what the other is?

FELICIA:

I don't need to. I am familiar with the base direction of your thinking.

FREDDY:

Good. Because no one is home, just us, and having triumphed with the septic system has put me in the mood. You know, to head up to the bed room.

FELICIA:

Hasn't moved. Head right on up there if you are of a mind.

FREDDY:

The point is your coming with me.

FELICIA:

Me? Absolutely not. As you must know, I am not in the mood.

FREDDY:

How would I know that?

FELICIA:

Because I am never in the mood.

FREDDY:

That's just not true. When we first met you were a humping bunny. The car, under the moon, powder rooms, even the office broom closet at ten in the morning.

FELICIA:

In those days I needed a husband and I had to make sure I nailed you down.

FREDDY:

You said: "Consider me a big strawberry sundae. Sink your entire body into the whipped cream on top. After the wedding better. You said I'd now worked my way down to the strawberries: soft, juicy and sweet.

FELICIA:

Of course. I had to get pregnant. I was no spring chicken and I needed to get that baby started ASAP.

FREDDY:

Okay. What about after that?

FELICIA:

I was married, I had a baby, there was no further need for the ice cream parlor.

FREDDY:

That's 17 years ago.

FELICIA:

Correct. And for 17 years I haven't been in the mood. Except maybe a couple of times a year at best.

FREDDY:

Felicia, you ever heard of connubial rights. Where a man is entitled to the favors of his wife, just because she's his wife.

FELICIA:

Such thinking was before "Me Too!" And "Times Up!" Now it's called marital rape. Not even remotely acceptable to today's modern woman.

FREDDY:

But I mean, doesn't there have to be a little poon tang? Like more than once every six months?

FELICIA:

That's a man's problem. he must learn to deal with it.

FREDDY:

You mean one of the floozies hanging out at Ziggy's?

FELICIA:

Freddy, you took a sacred vow on the day we married: fidelity. No taking it back. Now or ever.

FREDDY:

So I get no sex but I have to stay faithful?

FELICIA:

The rules are the rules.

FREDDY:

They can't be based on fairness.

FELICIA:

They're not based on anything.
They're the rules.

FREDDY:

On the contrary, I'm guessing they
are based on the single principal
that organizes the entire universe:
Felicia is always right.

FELICIA:

Freddy I can put up with one, possibly
two wuss attacks a day. More than
that is intolerable.

FREDDY:

Here's the real piss-off Felicia, I
don't want anyone else. I only want
you. And the only way I want you is
plastered head to toes in squashed
strawberries.

FELICIA:

Thank you Freddy. It's nice to know
I am appreciated, but that doesn't
change anything. I am just not in
the mood. That's final.

FREDDY:

Any prospect for the future?

FELICIA:

The future is unpredictable. But
you should stay optimistic. Keeps
you amenable to the orders you are
given.

FRONT DOOR IS KNOCKED. PETE ENTERS WITHOUT PERMISSION.

PETE:

So Wilkerson's got your septic back
on the go. That's a relief.

FELICIA:

Well the bad part is that "we" (points
at Freddy) agreed to pay them their
ridiculous fee. Should have been
free. We just got done paying them
\$30,000 three years ago. Why should
we pay them again? They put it in,
it broke, their fault.

PETE:

You had a choice.

(MORE)

PETE: (CONT'D)

You can either be right or you can have a functioning bathroom. You can't have both.

FELICIA:

On top of that, they had the nerve to demand we pay a tank cleaning service ...

FREDDY:

(interrupting) So Pete how's the boat? Sea worthy? Ready to put her in the water come spring.

FELICIA:

Us, pay \$900. Can you believe it?

FREDDY:

(interrupting) That is one beautiful little boat. Hope you invite me out fishing. Maybe for the running of the shad.

FELICIA:

We out-foxed them. HA!

FREDDY:

Felicia, I am really trying to suggest that there is nothing more to be said on this subject. It's handled. It's over. Let's move on.

PETE:

If you two think no one knows what went on here, you are wrong. The neighbors heard you working out by the tank all night. We also smelled it. We knew what you were up to.

FELICIA:

The problem was taken care of. It's no one's business but ours, so who cares about the nosey neighbors.

PETE:

Not the way the rest of us see it. You bucketed up raw sewage from of the tank. Not hard to know where you dumped it, we can smell it in the woods driving by, we can smell it down the block, we can even smell it in our living rooms.

FELICIA:

They're imagining things.

PETE:

People worry it's close enough to Radley Creek to perk through and contaminate the water supply.

FELICIA:

Temporary problems. They'll disapeate in a week or two. Nothing for the neighbors to worry about. Fresh air is on the way.

(breaths deeply)

I can smell it already.

PETE:

They disagree. They are worried. They think it concerns everybody, the whole community.

FELICIA:

We had to do it. We did it. Time for everybody to move on.

PETE:

"Had to do it?" Search the whole country, you think you'd find one other person who thinks bucketing turd water out of a septic tank by hand is something they "had to do?"

FELICIA:

Bunch of fussy wussits.

PETE:

You know the place for you two, India. Over there people deficate on rock fields back behind the house. Other people come by to pick it up, bare handed. Can you guess what these people are called? Untouchables.

FELICIA:

Ridiculous. Why are you comparing that to us. We have a functioning septic system.

PETE:

Your behavior really upset people. Radley Road now condiders you two *untouchable*. One more thing, we have reported you to the Township Department of Sanitation.

PETE EXITS

FELICIA:

What's the matter with Pete?

FREDDY:

Just a guess, but I'd say he sounds kind of pissed?

FELICIA:

Can you believe it? I think he was actually trying to lay a guilt trip on me.

FREDDY:

Not just him. The whole neighborhood agrees. And you know what, I agree too.

FELICIA:

(sings and dances) "Here we go on the wussy-go-round, the wussy-go-round, the wussy-go-round. Here we go on the wussy-go-round. My name is Freddy the wuss."

SONYA COMES HOME FROM SCHOOL. THROWS HER BOOKS ON THE FLOOR. THEN CRUMPLES TO THE FLOOR HERSELF.

SONYA:

No one talks to me. People walk to the edge of the hall when I go by. In the cafeteria, someone threw a roll of toilet paper at me. You have to pull me out and find me another school.

FELICIA:

What is the problem around here. We didn't detonate the atom bomb. It is just sewage. A perfectly natural component of human nature. Within a month or so it will have completely composted and returned to dirt.

FREDDY:

You know what? Since Pete says they can smell it all the way down the block, we better go out there and pile some more dirt on top of the, ugh, "compost". If we can get the odor to disappear, maybe people will calm down, forget about it.

FELICIA:

All right, all right. If it makes you happy. Sonya, we will be back in a while. Cheer up. Things are going to be all right.

FREDDY AND FELICIA LEAVE. SONYA SHAKES HERSELF, FINALLY GETS UP, FOOLS WITH HER CELL PHONE A BIT AND GETS A MERENGUE TUNE. AT FIRST SHE DANCES TENTATIVELY, BUT AS SHE GETS MORE INTO IT, GETS MORE LIVELY. FRONT DOOR KNOCKS.

SONYA:

Who is it? Come in.

RICARDO ENTERS.

SONYA: (CONT'D)

Ricardo. Hi, I guess.

RICARDO:

Yeah, Hi.

SONYA:

What's up?

RICARDO:

Just wanted to tell you that this whole situation is not your fault. I know that. I actually told my dad about it. He said in Nicaragua, what your parents did would be the way anybody would have handled it. Nicaraguans do not pay some company to do something they can do themselves. Plus since a lot of people have an outhouse it's not even an issue.

SONYA:

The way things are going in school, I'm ready. Let's move to Nicaragua. Like right now.

RICARDO:

The kid that threw the toilet paper at you is an unbelievable jerk. I decided to give him the benefit of my opinion. He then offered me his opinion with a middle finger. So I thought it was time we go outside. You know settle things.

SONYA:

What happened?

RICARDO:

Let's just say the situation was taken care of.

SONYA:

You came to my defense?

RICARDO:

You could say that. These Americans are pussies. Nicaraguans grow up fighting, we know how to do it. I don't think you need to worry about any of those kids ever bothering you again.

SONYA:

You actually stuck up for me? For me? No one ever did that before. I don't know what to feel. (Starts to cry). No wait, crying can't be right, can it?

RICARDO:

You asking me?

SONYA:

Yes I am.

RICARDO:

Ask me the capital of Botswana. You got a better chance.

SONYA:

Ricardo, I'm beginning to really like you, but I've got to say, you could use some work on your sensitivity.

RICARDO:

Hey, how about we go out Saturday night?

SONYA:

You want to go out with me? You sure?

RICARDO:

There's a dance at the high school.

SONYA:

I guess if you're there I'll be okay, right?

RICARDO:

Don't get over-confident. I know the DJ. He will be playing a couple of Merengue numbers.

SONYA:

Can I get in another practice first?

RICARDO:

Maybe tomorrow. I'll let you know. But right now, I got to go. My mom is out there waiting in the car.

SONYA:

Oh wait, don't you want to use the bathroom facilities before you leave.

RICARDO:

(laughs) No that's okay. I know they're working. Maybe next time. (Gives Sonya a friendly smack on the butt)

SONYA:

You think a working toilet gives you permission to take liberties?

RICARDO:

Well everybody has permission to take liberties -- until someone tells them they can't.

SONYA:

I don't want to tell you you can't. When it comes to liberties, I want you to know you can't.

RICARDO:

Does this have to become a big deal?

SONYA:

Ricardo, there may come a time when you can take liberties, but not yet. We have to get to know each other better. Be patient.

RICARDO:

Okay, but if you are thinking about me the same way I am thinking about you, those liberties may be coming along sooner than you think.

SONYA:

Speaking of which, I think you may be taking liberties with your mom's patience.

CAR HORN HONKS. HE EXTENDS HIS HAND, SHE TAKES IT. HE TAKES HER HAND IN BOTH OF HIS, THEN PULLS HER HAND TO HIS CHEST AND BOWS SLIGHTLY. RICARDO EXITS. FELICIA AND FREDDY COME IN FROM THE CELLAR DOOR.

FELICIA:

Was someone just here. I thought I heard a car leave.

SONYA:

Ricardo came over.

FELICIA:

People don't just come over. Then again I forget Ricardo is a foreigner.

SONYA:

He defended me at school Mom. That means he's not a foreigner, he's my family.

FELICIA:

No he is not.

SONYA:

You're right. Given my actual family. I'd have to say better than family. A lot better.

FELICIA:

Maybe you better wait until you see what he wants before you saddle him with family membership.

SONYA:

"What he wants?" You are the only person who thinks everything is about what somebody wants. Believe it or not, there are other considerations.

FELICIA:

Like what, pray tell.

SONYA:

Like right and good, help and caring, kindness and consideration. And there are plenty of people who think about those things, not just what's likely to get them "what they want."

SONYA EXITS TO HER BEDROOM. IT'S A DOOR OFF THE HALLWAY TO THE FRONT DOOR.

FELICIA:

What's going on with people today?
Did you hear that girl, just like
Pete, trying to lay a guilt trip on
me. Me. Her own mother.

FREDDY:

Did it succeed?

FELICIA:

What?

FREDDY:

The guilt trip.

FELICIA:

You kidding? Not a chance. Never.

FREDDY:

But Felicia, you do know people are
really getting pissed at you, right?

FELICIA:

I can't help that.

FREDDY:

Maybe getting them to like you might
be better, make life easier, but
first you'd have to change.

FELICIA:

Never. I don't knuckle under to
people. If they don't like me, it's
not a problem.

FREDDY:

Okay then, As a personal favor to
me, I'm asking you to try to consider
other people's feelings, at least a
little.

FELICIA:

You saying I've got to stop being so
pushy.

FREDDY:

You not pushy? We both know that's
never going to happen. But hey,
just be nicer about it.

KNOCK ON THE OUTSIDE DOOR. COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER SHOWS UP.

COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER:

We've had a bunch of complaints from the neighbors here on Radley Road that you personally emptied the contents of your septic tank.

FELICIA:

What do they know?

COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER:

They say you dumped the contents in the woods. Our inspection out there shows that this is the case. I guess you know that's illegal, right?

FELICIA:

It is?

COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER:

Give me a break. You executed the bucket brigade at night. You tried to conceal the dump location by covering it with dirt. Claiming ignorance of the law - not remotely believable. And even if it was, that is no defense.

FELICIA:

Our whole septic system broke. Not our fault. It was built on the cheap by Wilkerson with PVC. Then they wouldn't stand by their work. Wanted to charge us again. On top of that those bastards said we had to pay to get the tank pumped or they wouldn't even start.

COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER:

They offered you stainless steel back at the initial installation. You demanded PVC to save a few bucks. "Buy cheap, get cheap."

FELICIA:

We aren't millionaires who just throw money away. We're trying to do the best we can, the best way we can.

COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER:

If this is an attempt at getting sympathy, forget it. I should prefer charges and give you a court date. Can't think of a single reason why not.

FREDDY:

Is there another option?

COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER:

Your neighbors would say we need to make an example of you so no one else would ever try this again.

FREDDY:

An example? They need an example?

COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER:

I agree with you. No example needed. They all know they don't want to personally bucket up 1000 gallons of turd water and dump it in the woods.

FREDDY:

So what are you going to do?

COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER:

If I charge you it'll get coverage in the media. And for sure, people benefit from knowing the lowness of fellow citizens. Without it there would be no TV news worth watching. And yes, that's what you truly deserve.

FREDDY:

Maybe there's another way to look at this.

COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER:

I guess you're right. I am considering the possibility of giving you a break.

FELICIA:

That is so right. We truly deserve a break. We didn't mean any harm. We thought what we did was okay.

COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER:

Get the frig out. Contaminating the Radley stream, poisoning the water table, was that was ok with you? But here's the thing, I've heard about your daughter Sonya and she sounds like a good kid. I don't think this shame should be allowed to hurt her.

FELICIA:

Sonya? How do you know about her?

COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER:

She is a friend of my son Ricardo. So, ok, for that reason, and that reason only I'm going to let this slide with a warning, but you try anything like this again, I'll make sure we throw the book at you.

COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER LEAVES

FELICIA:

Yipee. We pulled it off.

FREDDY:

You act like a teenager who snuck into the drive-in movies with a case of beer and 4 friends in the trunk.

FELICIA:

Screw you. You were just as big a part of it, and you loved it too,

FREDDY:

Are you saying I'm okay after all.

FELICIA:

Actually Freddy I am. In fact, I can't believe it, ready to be shocked, but I think I am actually in the mood.

FREDDY:

You mean, like what teenagers do at the drive-in?

FELICIA:

You got it. I'm talking doing the downward Merengue on the back seat of the car.

THEY KISS WITH FEELING.

FREDDY:

What say we head up to the bedroom?

THEY HOLD HANDS AND START UP THE STAIRS. AT THE LANDING FELICIA STOPS AND TURNS DOWN STAGE.

FELICIA:

You haven't done the breakfast dishes.

FREDDY:

So what. I'll get them later.

FELICIA:

No. Not right. We eat breakfast.
Then we do dishes.

FREDDY:

You mean now? Like right now?

FELICIA

That's what I mean.

FREDDY:

But by the time I'm finished, you'll
no longer be in the mood.

FELICIA:

I hadn't thought of that, but you're
probably right.

FREDDY:

So you can see what I mean about
avoiding a postponement?

FELICIA:

Not right. Eat breakfast. Do dishes.
No arguments. Get moving. Now.##

FELICIA WALKS BACK DOWN TO THE LIVING ROOM AND GLARES AT
FREDDY. FREDDY LOOKS AT HER STEADILY, THEN HE FLIPS HER THE
BIRD. THEN SHE FLIPS HIM THE BIRD. FREDDY THEN GIVES HER
THE FINGER WITH HIS OTHER HAND. SHE DOES LIKEWISE. THEN
FREDDY TURNS HIS BACK TO HER, PULLS HIS PANTS DOWN AND MOONS
HER. SHE TURNS HER BACK TO HIM, LIFTS HER SKIRT AND PREPARES
TO LOWER HER UNDERPANTS. STOPS.

FELICIA: (CONT'D)

No. Too undignified. That's it
Freddy. Over there. The dishes.
Now!

CURTAIN

##ALTERNATIVE ENDING

FREDDY GOES TO THE SINK. WE HEAR THE WATER TURNED ON.
SUDDENLY A GLASS BREAKS.

FREDDY:

That takes care of my orange juice
glass. Oh look. Here's your glass.
Ready for me to take care of it as
well?

FELICIA:

You stop that right now. You are
being a bad boy.

FREDDY:

You got it.

ANOTHER GLASS SHATTERS.

FELICIA:

That's it. Up to the bedroom right now. I'm going to pull your pants down, bend you over, and spank your naughty tush.

FREDDY:

With what? A ping pong paddle?

FELICIA:

No, no. I have a little whip up there. That should take care of things.

FREDDY:

How about if you tie me up first -- you know, to make sure you maintain total control?

FELICIA:

Freddy, wonderful idea. Okay, enough talk. Get up there. I'm ready and I don't want to waste another minute.

FREDDY MOVES TOWARDS THE STAIRCASE AS THE LIGHTS DIM.

CURTAIN