



Carl L. Williams

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BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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**“When I met Gertie,
most of my hair
was on my back.”**

—Hubert

A Little Off the Top

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A Little Off the Top was first produced at the Pasadena Little Theatre, Pasadena, TX, July 1, 1998. Directed by Karen Winn.

STEVE: Bruce Howard

JERRY: Walt Zipprian

LISA: Christina Newcomb

CHERYL: Carolyn McLeod

LEWIS: Frankie Flores

PEGGY: Virginia Collazo-Knox

HUBERT: Larry Durbin

A Little Off the Top

COMEDY. With the help of a toupee salesman, Steve and Jerry, two lonely prematurely balding bachelors, find a perfect toupee with which to attract women. The only problem is that they don't have enough money to buy it. Desperate for hair, they purchase a used toupee that was "repossessed" from a dead man and decide to time-share the toupee by taking turns wearing it. The new toupee gives Steve and Jerry a confidence boost, and they soon meet two lovely ladies. Romance is in the air until both girlfriends show up at Jerry and Steve's house at the same time. With two bald men and just one toupee, things get a bit hairy for Steve and Jerry.

Performance Time: Approximately 90-120 minutes.

Characters

(4 m, 3 f)

JERRY: Plumber, would-be playboy; balding.

STEVE: Paramedic; sincere, more balding.

LISA: Novelties clerk; sexy, ditzy.

CHERYL: Nurse, sensible.

PEGGY: Housewife.

LEWIS: Building inspector, Peggy's husband.

HUBERT: Toupee salesman; burly, wears an obvious toupee.

Setting

The set is divided with a living room on one side and a patio on the other. There is a front door, a door that leads from the living room to an unseen kitchen, and another door that leads from the kitchen to the patio.

All other scenes are played downstage. The toupee salon requires only a table or cart that can be wheeled on and off.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Scene 1: Living room, morning.

Scene 2: Living room, late that afternoon.

Scene 3: Patio, two hours later.

Scene 4: Toupee salon, later that week.

Scene 5: Supermarket aisle.

Scene 6: Neighborhood sidewalk.

Scene 7: Living room, two weeks later.

ACT II

Scene 1: Living room/patio, seconds later.

Scene 2: Supermarket parking lot, one week later.

Scene 3: Living room.

Props

2 Fishing poles	Toupee, for Jerry/Steve
2 Fishing caps	Grocery hand basket
2 Tackle boxes	Groceries
Shopping cart	Box of Red Hots (candy)
Hand mirror	Baby stroller
Toilet plunger	Cap for Jerry/Steve
Coffee table	Jogging suit, for Cheryl
Patio table and chairs	Nurse uniform, for Cheryl
Large tub of popcorn	Chef's hat
Cans of soft drinks	Large ladle
Salt/pepper shakers	Potholders
Mannequin heads	Large pot
Rolling table or cart	6 Bowls
Chair	6 Spoons
Mirror on a stand	Napkins
Frizzy toupee	Dishcloth
Pompadour toupee (Elvis style)	2 Paper grocery bags
Hitler-esque toupee	Clear glass bowl
	Bad toupee, for Hubert

Sound Effects

Doorbell
Car horn

ACT I

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Living room, morning. Steve and Jerry, both wearing fishing caps, gather their fishing gear.)

JERRY: I hope I have better luck today than I did last night.

STEVE: Didn't work out?

JERRY: She took my worm. Ate it right off the hook and got away clean.

STEVE: Good for her.

JERRY: Two hours of mindless chatter at one of the best restaurants in town, and what do I get out of it? Bonus points on my credit card.

STEVE: Frustrating.

JERRY: That's the word for it.

STEVE: She was too young for you, Jerry. Not a keeper.

JERRY: I would have thrown her back!

STEVE: You scared her off.

JERRY: That wasn't it.

STEVE: She didn't have your experience. Too innocent.

JERRY: I don't think so. Steve, do you remember when you lost yours?

STEVE: Many years ago.

JERRY: Did it happen fast?

STEVE: Seemed like only a minute.

JERRY: I was older.

STEVE: For some guys it's later than others.

JERRY: It changes everything. The way people relate to you. Especially women.

STEVE: Naturally.

JERRY: I did a lot better with the ladies when I still had it.

STEVE: That doesn't make sense.

JERRY: You don't agree?

STEVE: How can you do better with women without losing it?

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JERRY: What are you talking about?

STEVE: Losing your virginity.

JERRY: I'm talking about losing my hair! *(Whips off his fishing cap to show his balding scalp.)*

STEVE: Oh. Mine's been gone so long, I don't even think about it...much. *(Lifts his cap, revealing a bald head.)*

JERRY: The simple fact is, women are attracted to men with hair. At least the kind of women who attract me.

STEVE: You mean superficial, vain, and vacuous.

JERRY: Yeah. So what can I do?

STEVE: Look for women whose fathers were bald. They're predisposed to like us. Assuming they liked their fathers.

JERRY: But I don't want to be bald!

STEVE: You've got to be realistic about it.

JERRY: Like you?

STEVE: If the fish don't like the bait, let them swim on by. As a matter of fact, you don't have to fish at all.

(Jerry makes a casting motion with his fishing rod.)

JERRY: Oh, man, I've got to fish or die. And soon.

STEVE: You need to find one good woman who loves you and stick with her.

JERRY: How about one who can tolerate me, and just spend the night?

STEVE: Think how many nights there are compared to how many women fit that description.

JERRY: So why don't you take your own advice?

STEVE: Knowing what to do and doing it are two different things. Besides, the women I meet on the job are either having coronaries or crying hysterically. The closest I come to sex is CPR. And CPR is nowhere close to sex. *(Closes up his tackle box.)*

JERRY: As least as a paramedic you have that heroic image going for you. There's nothing heroic about plumbing.

STEVE: It's a necessary occupation.

JERRY: What a turn-on. "Hello, sugar—what do you say I come over tonight and unclog your drain?" But the sink isn't where she's looking to see some hair.

STEVE: You're too sensitive. You imagine women make more of it than they do.

JERRY: Oh, yeah? Last week I was in the grocery, picking up a can of jalapeño chili—

STEVE: Not that stuff again.

JERRY: Regular chili's for wimps.

STEVE: Defined as anyone who doesn't like swallowing fire.

JERRY: I was in the grocery, okay? *(Jerry walks downstage. Lights dim on Steve.)* Along comes this woman pushing a shopping cart. *(Lisa, very sexy, enters pushing a shopping cart.)* I don't see her. I'm looking at the cans. *(Lisa looks him over with interest.)* She accidentally bumps into me.

(Lisa deliberately bumps him in the rear with her cart.)

LISA: I'm so sorry!

JERRY: I hope you're not the kind to hit and run.

LISA: Did I put a dimple in your cheek? How can I make up for that?

JERRY: How about if I bumped into you?

LISA: You don't have a cart.

JERRY: I could improvise.

LISA: The only reason I bumped you...I was looking for the candy.

JERRY: I don't think it's on this aisle.

LISA: That's why I couldn't find it.

JERRY: I could show you where it is.

LISA: What a gallant gentleman you are!

JERRY: At your service, my lady.

(Jerry doffs his cap and gives a deep bow. Lisa reacts with shock at the sight of his bald head.)

LISA: Oh, wait. I remember where it is now. Thanks, anyway. *(With a snicker, Lisa pushes her cart past Jerry and exits.)*

JERRY: *(To Lisa, shouts.)* You're so superficial! And vain! And – and –

STEVE: Vacuous.

JERRY: *(Shouts after her.)* Vacuous! You're vacuous! *(Jerry rejoins Steve. Lights rise.)* And that's how it goes. She was a real babe, too.

STEVE: What if she hadn't been?

JERRY: Then why would I be talking about her?

STEVE: Superficial.

JERRY: Yes, she was. Made me so mad, I went home without my chili. I tell you, Steve, we gotta do something about this.

STEVE: Not we. Fishing is we. Sharing a house is we. Going nuts about hair is only you.

JERRY: You're not fooling me. I've seen you wince when people start making bald jokes.

STEVE: That can be irritating, sure. They tell them straight to your face, as if you're supposed to laugh.

JERRY: It's like telling short jokes to midgets. Except there, the jokes go right over their heads.

STEVE: Talk about offensive.

JERRY: I would never say that to a midget...which brings up another point. For all the jokes they make in front of us, what are they saying behind our backs?

STEVE: Either way, they don't mean anything by it.

JERRY: That doesn't make me feel any better, especially when I say hello to a gorgeous woman and she turns away and snickers.

STEVE: Maybe it's the way you say it.

JERRY: No, I can tell what she's laughing at.

STEVE: All you can do is shrug it off.

JERRY: You want hair as much as I do. You just won't admit it.

STEVE: Will admitting it change anything? Wishful thinking won't grow hair.

JERRY: You're right. What do you think about transplants?

STEVE: Ow! All those little plugs? What if they sewed them in upside down?

JERRY: Then how about that stuff you're supposed to rub into your scalp?

STEVE: You'll just get hairy fingers.

JERRY: And I want a full head of hair, not a crop of fuzz. You know what option that leaves, don't you?

STEVE: Resignation.

JERRY: A toupee.

STEVE: A rug?

JERRY: A hairpiece.

STEVE: Nah.

JERRY: Not anything gross. Something subtle.

STEVE: Subtle like a squirrel on your head.

JERRY: No, they're better now. Some of them look like the real thing.

STEVE: Like a real rug.

(They begin to exit with their fishing gear.)

JERRY: But it's something to think about.

STEVE: You think about it. I'm going fishing. For fish.

(They exit front door. Blackout.)

Scene 2

(AT RISE: Living room, later that afternoon. Steve sits looking at himself in a hand mirror, examining his hairline. He hears someone at the front door, looks quickly for a place to hide the mirror, then sits on it as Jerry enters with a plunger.)

JERRY: I love making eighty bucks for three minutes' work with a wooden stick.

(Jerry sets the plunger upright on the coffee table.)

STEVE: You really have to put that there?

JERRY: I washed it off. *(Jerry hangs his cap on it, then spots the mirror handle sticking out from under Steve.)* What's that?

STEVE: What's what?

JERRY: You're sitting on something.

STEVE: I am? Oh. *(Steve pulls out the mirror.)*

JERRY: Interesting place for a mirror. I won't ask what you were looking at.

STEVE: All right, I was checking my hair. On my head.

JERRY: Because of what we talked about this morning?

STEVE: No, because of what somebody said to me this afternoon.

JERRY: A woman?

STEVE: Close enough.

JERRY: She insulted you.

STEVE: Not really. She didn't mean to. But yeah. I stopped at a chicken place and ordered take-out. I gave the little girl behind the counter a twenty, and she gave me change. "This is too much," I said. "Oh, no, that's right," she tells me. "You get the senior discount."

JERRY: *(Laughs.)* That's wild! She really thought you were—? What did you say?

STEVE: Nothing. I kept the change and left.

JERRY: Steve, you don't look old. Not that old, anyway.
STEVE: Not to you, maybe. Obviously to her I did.
JERRY: So now you know where to go for a deal on chicken.
STEVE: She never would've said that if—
JERRY: If you had hair? You want to reconsider my suggestion?
STEVE: What? Wear some moss-covered skullcap?
JERRY: Put some hair on your head and people are gonna see youth, virility, good looks. With all that going for you, who needs discounts?
STEVE: I'm not going to do it.
JERRY: Okay.
STEVE: Why should I? Why should I have to? Why am I even thinking about this?
JERRY: Are these all different questions, or the same one?
STEVE: Would the world be a better place if I had hair?
JERRY: It might be, for you. Not to mention everyone who has to look at you. I'm kidding. For the sake of my own vanity, I'm kidding.
STEVE: My father was bald, and I tell you in a suit and tie he was a handsome man.
JERRY: Apparently your mother thought so.
STEVE: All of my uncles were bald.
JERRY: Any of your aunts?
STEVE: Baldness goes back generations in my family. You want me to go against my heritage?
JERRY: I want you to do whatever you want to do.
STEVE: I don't want to do it.
JERRY: Then it's settled.
STEVE: Settled. But I will say I'm tired of not recognizing myself. Even after all these years, whenever I look in a store window and see my reflection, I'm startled by it. And I think, "What happened to my hair? That's not me."
JERRY: The worst are those mirrored columns where your face comes back one big nose and a bulging forehead.

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STEVE: I try to ignore what I look like, but then I go for a haircut and face an endless row of bald spots reflected back and forth, and every one of them's mine. How did that get there? It's just—

JERRY: Appalling. Infuriating. Mind-blowing.

STEVE: Inescapable.

JERRY: Unless—

STEVE: I'm living with it. That's it.

JERRY: You're sure?

STEVE: Sure. Absolutely.

JERRY: In that case, I'm going to fix a sandwich. Want one?

STEVE: No, thanks.

JERRY: Don't forget Lewis and Peggy are stopping by later.

STEVE: Great. We get to hear all about the latest thing their baby threw up.

JERRY: Hey, it's better than seeing it. They've got a sitter tonight.

STEVE: Special occasion?

JERRY: Just getting out of the house without the kid is a special occasion. Sure you don't want a sandwich?

STEVE: I'm still full of chicken. *(Jerry exits through a swinging door to the offstage kitchen.)* Extra crispy, discounted chicken.

(Steve picks up the mirror and looks at his hair again. Blackout.)

Scene 3

(AT RISE: Patio, two hours later. Steve, Jerry, Peggy, and Lewis sit around a patio table with a big tub of popcorn and canned drinks.)

STEVE: Great popcorn.

LEWIS: Dinner was hot dogs at the twilight show.

PEGGY: *(To Jerry and Steve.)* But we thought of you guys on the way out.

JERRY: Think it needs a little more salt? Maybe some pepper...?

(Jerry shakes some salt and pepper on the popcorn.)

STEVE: It's fine. Leave it alone.

PEGGY: *(To Lewis.)* I hope the sitter fed Natalie on time.

LEWIS: And changed her after that.

PEGGY: *(To Jerry and Steve.)* Lewis says we should take the strained peas and just dump them straight into her diaper.

LEWIS: Cut out the middleman.

PEGGY: You're so bad.

LEWIS: It's either that or buy a set of nose plugs.

PEGGY: *(To Jerry and Steve, indicating Lewis.)* He's so bad.

LEWIS: *(To Jerry.)* But I don't need to tell Jerry about smells like that, do I? Not in your line of work.

JERRY: And I love talking about it.

STEVE: *(To Peggy and Lewis.)* I've told him he can't bring his work home with him.

PEGGY: I adore this little patio you put in. It adds so much to the house.

JERRY: We did the whole thing ourselves.

LEWIS: I could tell.

PEGGY: Lewis.

LEWIS: What? I'm a building inspector and I could tell. It's good. It's just not professional.

JERRY: He's so bad.

LEWIS: I gave you the permit, didn't I?

STEVE: Gave? What was that fee we paid the city?

PEGGY: It could use some decorating. What you need is a woman's touch.

JERRY: You're telling me.

PEGGY: Maybe one of those old-fashioned lampposts with frosted glass.

STEVE: We thought we'd add a barbecue pit.

LEWIS: It's got to have a cover.

STEVE: As long as I can grill some meat and get away from Jerry's cooking.

PEGGY: Typical bachelors. When are you two ever going to get married?

JERRY: He hasn't asked me yet.

PEGGY: You know what I mean. Oh! Not unless...I never thought...you're not...?

STEVE: No, Peggy, we're not.

PEGGY: Not that it would make any difference to us. You'd still be our friends.

LEWIS: Peggy, they're not. *(Pause.)* Are you?

JERRY: Bring us some women and you'll see.

STEVE: Tell them we have a patio.

PEGGY: Two good-looking guys like you shouldn't have any trouble attracting women.

JERRY: Did you hear that, Steve? We're good-looking. Peggy says so.

STEVE: I heard. But will she put it in writing?

JERRY: Will you, Peggy? And swear to it.

STEVE: And sign it.

JERRY: And date it.

LEWIS: Don't forget to have it notarized.

STEVE: We could make photocopies and hand them out at parties.

JERRY: Or have it reduced and laminated and clip it to our shirt pockets when we go out clubbing.

STEVE: Clubbing them might work. The caveman approach.

JERRY: Low-tech, but effective.

PEGGY: I hardly think you'd have to knock the women out and drag them back to your lair.

STEVE: Patio.

JERRY: It's the first impression that counts. For example, how did you and Lewis meet?

PEGGY: We were in a computer class together. He showed me how to work my mouse.

JERRY: I don't want details. All I want to know is, what if he had looked like this?

(Jerry moves behind Lewis and covers his hair with his hands.)

PEGGY: If he had hands on his head? Oh – you mean if he didn't have any hair.

(Lewis ducks away.)

LEWIS: Cut it out.

JERRY: It's getting a little thin up there.

LEWIS: It is not. *(Feels his hair.)*

PEGGY: It looks fine, dear. You look fine, too, Jerry. And Steve.

STEVE: We're all very encouraged.

JERRY: But would you have gone for him anyway?

PEGGY: Of course I would've. *(Looks around.)* Japanese lanterns. That's what you need out here.

LEWIS: Then it won't matter to you? If I lose it someday?

PEGGY: You're so silly. *(Looks around.)* Or how about a small fountain?

JERRY: With a naked mermaid spitting water.

STEVE: We'll still be your friends, Lewis.

JERRY: Will the mermaid need a cover?

STEVE: We're going with the barbecue. I'll barbecue my chicken.

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LEWIS: I just wanted to know.

PEGGY: You're all being ridiculous. You're being such men!

JERRY: A compliment I can believe.

STEVE: If you can believe it's a compliment.

PEGGY: I'm just trying to help.

STEVE: Remodeling by Peggy. Exteriors include paper lanterns, while interiors are constructed of less substantial stuff...male ego.

PEGGY: Ego you've got plenty of.

JERRY: It's other things we're lacking.

LEWIS: I may let mine grow out a bit.

PEGGY: Down your collar? What will that accomplish?

JERRY: You could comb it forward and tie it to your eyebrows.

STEVE: Lately the barber's been itching to trim my eyebrows. And my ears! I'm getting hair where I don't need it.

PEGGY: Why don't we get back to the patio?

LEWIS: Yeah, it's a fine job, fellas. Really.

JERRY: This popcorn definitely needs something more. *(Jerry shakes more salt on the popcorn.)*

STEVE: Take it easy with that.

PEGGY: I do like the idea of a fountain. But no mermaid, Jerry.

JERRY: Aw.

STEVE: Mermaids are a myth...like finding the right woman.

LEWIS: I found the right woman.

PEGGY: Thank you, sweetheart.

JERRY: A mermaid's only a myth until she gets married. Then she's a "myth-is."

(No one laughs at the joke.)

LEWIS: *(To Steve.)* So look for an almost-right woman.

STEVE: I just meant...oh, forget it. Jerry, you ruined this popcorn with all that salt.

JERRY: Dig down in. I didn't toss it like a salad.

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STEVE: The only salad you ever tossed was in the trash.

PEGGY: There's someone out there just perfect for both of you.

JERRY: If she's perfect for both of us, there's going to be a heck of a fight.

STEVE: All my life I've had people telling me there's someone out there for me, usually right after I've broken up with someone. And maybe there is. But who has time to look? And look where? And why bother? I don't need a woman to make my life whatever it's supposed to be. I've got my work, and I've got my friends, and I've got a patio and a barbecue and a fountain if I want to build it, so I've got a lot more things to do than worry about finding someone who maybe, maybe—if everything went just right—would fall in love with me. *(Steve exits into the house.)*

JERRY: A little extra salt, and he goes nuts.

(Blackout.)

Scene 4

(AT RISE: Toupee salon, a few days later. Hairpieces adorn mannequin heads. The salon set can be just a table on wheels, positioned downstage, with a chair. Jerry enters, with Steve lagging behind.)

JERRY: Come on, Steve. Nobody knows us here.

STEVE: I'm only along to see you don't make a total fool of yourself.

(Hubert, burly and boisterous, enters wearing an obvious toupee.)

HUBERT: Hey, guys! Welcome to Hubert's Hair. I'm Hubert.

(Hubert shakes hands with Jerry.)

JERRY: Hi there, Hubert.

STEVE: *(Hanging back.)* Yeah, hi.

HUBERT: How could I help you? Or is that a silly question?

STEVE: *(Indicates Jerry.)* It's him. He's the one.

JERRY: I want to see...one of those. *(Points to a hairpiece.)*

HUBERT: Of course you do. Why else would you be here, right? We've got all kinds of different models. Have a seat.

(Jerry sits at the table, where there is a mirror on a stand.)

JERRY: I want one that'll match.

HUBERT: What? Match your shirt? Your eyes? Your friend's eyes? Of course it'll match.

STEVE: We're just roommates. In separate rooms.

HUBERT: Did I ask? *(To Jerry.)* Try this one. *(Hubert puts a pompadour on Jerry's head.)* It's always in style. A real classic.

JERRY: *(Looking in the mirror.)* I don't know...

HUBERT: Add some sideburns, and you'll look just like Elvis.

JERRY: *(To Steve.)* It's a little too much, don't you think?

STEVE: Maybe just a little.

(Hubert removes the toupee.)

HUBERT: All right, then. How about our up-and-jumping, I'm-younger-than-anybody model? *(Fits him with a frizzed-up style.)* When they see you coming, the gals are gonna say, "Man, he is with it!"

JERRY: No, no. No. *(Pulls it off.)* I'm looking for something more traditional.

HUBERT: Ah. Something dull. How about this one? Very understated. For the conservative businessman.

(Hubert puts a small, slicked-down, Hitler-esque model on Jerry's head.)

STEVE: *(To Jerry.)* All you need is a little mustache and you could march across Europe.

(Jerry pulls the toupee off.)

JERRY: Look, Hubert, let me explain it to you. I want to attract women. That means I want something natural-looking. Just normal, regular-guy kind of hair. I want women to see me, not the piece.

HUBERT: Girlfriend problems, huh? It happened to me, too. Would you believe it?

STEVE: *(Mock-serious.)* You're kidding.

HUBERT: When I met Gertie, most of my hair was on my back. We went out a few times, but no fireworks. Then one day I got this head-warmer, and it's been the Fourth of July ever since.

JERRY: It really did the job?

HUBERT: I'm telling you, she didn't take it off till I put it on. That's when I went into the business.

JERRY: So what have you got that'll work for me?

HUBERT: Let me show you something from our catalogue.

Whatever you want, I can get it for you. *(Hubert opens a catalogue and starts paging through it.)*

JERRY: Remember, it has to look real.

STEVE: Like it might've actually grown there.

HUBERT: Gotcha. Like those guys in the shirt-and-tie ads.

(Thumbs through the catalogue.) Let's see...no...maybe...ah! Here. Page 17.

(Hubert shows Jerry.)

JERRY: That's it! Yes. That's just what I want. What do you think, Steve?

(Steve looks at the catalogue.)

STEVE: It looks good. *(Admiring it.)* Looks real good.

JERRY: *(To Hubert.)* How much would it cost me?

HUBERT: You can have this top-of-the-line hairpiece for the very reasonable price of...three thousand dollars.

JERRY: Three thous—! I'd rather go bare!

HUBERT: It's made with the finest human hair. Imported.

STEVE: What's wrong with domestic hair?

HUBERT: It's hand-stitched by the best European wig-makers.

JERRY: Still...three grand. Hubert, could we talk this over by ourselves for a minute?

HUBERT: You bet. I'll be in here, shampooing.

STEVE: Yeah, take a whole shower.

(Hubert exits.)

JERRY: I can't afford a \$3,000 toupee.

STEVE: Sure you can. You're a plumber.

JERRY: But *we* could afford it.

STEVE: I'm not buying you a hairpiece.

JERRY: Not for me. For *us*. You said you liked it. You said it looked good...

STEVE: It looks great, but—

JERRY: We could work out a schedule with it. Take turns.

STEVE: You want to time-share a toupee?

JERRY: What else can we do?

STEVE: Maybe they have some kind of home toupee kit, and we could make our own.

JERRY: Oh, sure, and how do you think that would look?

STEVE: We did the patio, didn't we?

JERRY: Steve...do this for me. Do it for yourself. This could open up a whole new world of interpersonal relationships.

STEVE: You mean help you get more women in the sack.

JERRY: Yes!

STEVE: It's too much money. I'll stick with what I've got.

(Hubert enters.)

HUBERT: Did I mention we take credit cards?

JERRY: How about coming down on the price a little?

STEVE: A lot.

HUBERT: Gentlemen, what is self-confidence worth? Let's face it. In that great genetic lottery, you scored a couple of goose eggs. You rolled off the assembly line with open sun roofs. Even on cloudy nights, for you two the moon is always out.

JERRY: We get the picture.

STEVE: We've had the picture for years. It hangs in the mirror.

JERRY: If you could just give us a break on the price.

HUBERT: Well...there is a way. It so happens I have a used toupee of that very style.

STEVE: A used toupee?

HUBERT: I had to repossess it. Not really the customer's fault. He died.

JERRY: You want to sell us a dead guy's toupee?

HUBERT: It was pretty distressing how it happened. They were going to bury him in the toupee and it wasn't paid for. So I went to the funeral home to view the body, and...you know...

STEVE: You swiped the guy's toupee off his corpse?

HUBERT: Do you really think he cared?

JERRY: Gee. The poor guy woke up in heaven bald.

HUBERT: No such thing. He was only bald in the flesh. In his spirit, he had hair. After all, in your own mental self-image, don't you see yourself with hair? When you wear a hair replacement, you're simply making your outer appearance reflect what you really are.

JERRY: So how much could you knock off the price?

STEVE: Jerry, it came off a dead body.

HUBERT: It's all right. We washed it. And since the customer had already made nearly half the payments when he, uh, terminated his contract, you could just take up the payments where he left off.

JERRY: Sounds fair.

STEVE: I don't feel right about any of this. I'm just not sure.

JERRY: Steve, take a look. It's either this... *(Holds up the mirror to his head..)* ...or this. *(Points to the catalogue.)*

STEVE: It goes on your credit card. I don't want my name involved.

HUBERT: I'll get it from the back. You'll want a head for it, of course.

JERRY: Aren't two enough?

(Hubert indicates a mannequin head.)

HUBERT: One of these. It's like a shoe tree, so the carefully crafted product won't lose its shape. You wouldn't hang a Rembrandt without a frame, would you?

STEVE: All of our Rembrandts have frames.

JERRY: We'll take one.

(Hubert exits.)

STEVE: I'm sure not wearing that toupee to work. And not just because the guys would make fun of me. I can see myself giving electric shock to a cardiac victim, and all of a sudden the rug falls off and lands on his chest—

JERRY: Where it hits the electrodes and bursts into flames, and you rush the patient to the hospital with third-degree burns and a smoldering toupee stuck to his chest!

STEVE: It doesn't work that way.

JERRY: Neither does the toupee. It doesn't fall off. It comes with tape. You tape it on.

STEVE: You think they give lessons?

HUBERT: *(Offstage.)* You'll get a video!

JERRY: A video. That'll work.

(Hubert enters.)

HUBERT: Come on back and I'll run it for you.

STEVE: You go on. I'll watch it later.

JERRY: Okay. Suit yourself.

(Hubert and Jerry exit. Steve looks around, then tries on one of the toupees and studies himself in the mirror. He yanks it off.)

STEVE: What an idiotic, totally stupid thing to be doing.

JERRY: *(Offstage.)* Did you say something?

STEVE: I said I'll wait for you outside. In the car. Down the street.

(Steve exits. Blackout.)

Scene 5

(AT RISE: Supermarket. No scenery required. Jerry, wearing the toupee, enters downstage carrying a hand basket of groceries and looks around expectantly. Lisa enters with a shopping cart. He sees her, but pretends not to. She speeds up and bumps into him.)

LISA: I'm so sorry! I didn't see you. I was looking for –

JERRY: Candy?

LISA: Candy? You must think I have a sweet tooth.

JERRY: You look pretty sweet all over.

LISA: *(Giggles.)* And you look familiar. Have we met?

JERRY: Not a very original line, but good enough for me.

LISA: You'd think I was trying to pick you up.

JERRY: I'd hope you were trying to pick me up.

LISA: Are you flirting with me?

JERRY: I thought it was the other way around.

LISA: If I were flirting with you, I'd be more direct about it.

JERRY: Really? What would you say?

LISA: I'd say you were just the kind of man I have an eye for.

JERRY: Aw, go on.

LISA: I'm serious.

JERRY: Okay, tell me. What does a woman like you look for
in a man?

LISA: I like good shoulders...

JERRY: I do a few pushups.

LISA: And a cute butt...

JERRY: I jog, sometimes.

LISA: And...you really have the most wonderful hair!

JERRY: What can I say? I just look up and it's there.

LISA: But it's so well-kept and soft-looking and perfectly
styled. I love hair like that.

JERRY: Me, too.

LISA: You must spend a lot of time on it.

JERRY: Not that much. Regular trips to the barber. You'd hardly think it grows at all.

LISA: What's your name?

JERRY: Jerry.

LISA: I'm Lisa, Jerry.

JERRY: Lisa Jerry? Unusual name.

LISA: I do have an unusual name, but I never use it. Mona Lisa.

JERRY: Like the painting.

LISA: Like the song. My parents were big fans of Nat King Cole.

JERRY: Be glad it wasn't the Beatles. You might've been Eleanor Rigby. *(Gets a blank look from Lisa.)* Never mind.

LISA: What do you do for a living, Jerry?

JERRY: I'm a...a hydro-technology specialist.

LISA: Sounds impressive.

JERRY: *(Aside.)* Oh, I hope so. *(To Lisa.)* And what do you do?

LISA: Practically everything.

JERRY: That must keep you busy.

LISA: I work in a novelty shop.

JERRY: Novelties? Like balloons and things?

LISA: Sort of. So what are you hungry for, Jerry?

JERRY: Do I look hungry?

(Lisa picks through the items in his basket.)

LISA: I can tell a lot about a man by his appetite. Mustard, buns, crackers...you don't leave crumbs in bed, do you?

JERRY: Never.

LISA: I hate crumbs.

JERRY: I don't even bite the cracker. The whole thing goes in my mouth. No crumbs.

(Lisa still looking through the basket.)

LISA: Tabasco sauce, jalapeño chili. I'm crazy about hot things! See? *(Lisa holds up a box of Red Hots from her cart.)*

JERRY: Red Hots?

LISA: I love these. My tongue is always red.

JERRY: Let me see. *(She sticks out her tongue.)* That is the reddest little tongue I ever saw!

LISA: I have this trick I do with my tongue.

JERRY: *(Getting excited.)* Yeah?

LISA: I put out candles with it. I lick out the flames. You have to be quick, and your tongue has to be wet. Real wet.

JERRY: Oh...oohh. I'd love to see that.

LISA: First I have to finish shopping. But look, we don't have much in our baskets. *(Suggestive.)* Why don't we take what you have and what I have and put them together?

JERRY: Yes! *(He grabs her groceries and throws them quickly into his basket.)*

LISA: I've got the bigger basket.

JERRY: Okay. *(He hoists himself into her cart.)*

LISA: What are you doing?!

JERRY: Putting my buns in your basket. *(He sinks down in the cart with his legs hanging over the sides.)*

LISA: Careful – don't crush anything.

JERRY: Take me to the checkout!

LISA: I already checked you out. *(Lisa starts pushing the cart.)*

JERRY: You think I'll scan?

LISA: How much is prime per pound?

JERRY: Do you have any coupons?

(They exit. Blackout.)

Scene 6

(AT RISE: Neighborhood sidewalk. No scenery required. Peggy and Lewis enter downstage pushing a baby stroller.)

PEGGY: Such a pretty afternoon. And Natalie's being sweet today.

LEWIS: Sweetness and silence are the same thing.

PEGGY: I gave her a bath this morning, and her hair curled up so cute. She has so much of it.

LEWIS: Don't say that around Steve or Jerry.

PEGGY: Those guys. They shouldn't let it bother them.

LEWIS: Why not? It would bother anybody.

PEGGY: I don't see why.

LEWIS: You wouldn't mind losing your hair?

PEGGY: That's different. I'm a woman.

LEWIS: All right. Would you mind being flat-chested? Not just petite. I'm talking fried eggs.

PEGGY: I suppose I wouldn't like it much, no. But it wouldn't embarrass me.

LEWIS: At a topless beach?

PEGGY: I don't go to topless beaches.

LEWIS: For Steve and Jerry, the whole world's a topless beach.

PEGGY: Have you ever been? To a topless beach?

LEWIS: *(Evasive.)* I always go topless at the beach.

PEGGY: I imagine if you went, you'd see a lot of young women with big... chests. Wouldn't you?

LEWIS: Oh, yes. I imagine.

PEGGY: Lewis, do you think I'm flat-chested?

LEWIS: Of course not!

PEGGY: Not even by comparison?

LEWIS: See, that's the same mistake Jerry and Steve are making... comparing themselves to others instead of being

satisfied with who they are. Isn't that what you were saying?

PEGGY: Was it? Yes, I guess it was. Silly of them to get so worked up about it.

LEWIS: I think it's mainly Jerry.

PEGGY: Bald-headed men can be quite distinguished-looking.

LEWIS: Sure, if they're 60 years old.

PEGGY: I've seen bald men who I found very attractive.

LEWIS: Like who?

(Peggy thinks.)

PEGGY: Yul Brynner.

LEWIS: Everybody says Yul Brynner. He was a movie star. He doesn't count. Not to mention, he's dead.

PEGGY: Okay, then. I think Steve and Jerry are both attractive.

LEWIS: Not to me.

PEGGY: I'm so glad.

LEWIS: Attractive how?

PEGGY: Simply in their masculinity. They have different personalities, of course. Jerry's full of energy and fun, while Steve is kind of quiet and thoughtful. I can see how women could be drawn to either one of them.

LEWIS: *(A little jealous.)* You can, huh? Single women. Without a man of their own.

PEGGY: The point is, men have other qualities besides hair that add to their attractiveness. A bald head seems to say, "I've lived enough to know some things, and I'm better for it."

LEWIS: You're telling me that being bald shows depth of character?

PEGGY: Not necessarily. But it could.

LEWIS: I'd rather be shallow with hair.

PEGGY: Isn't it good when you get what you want?

(They exit. Blackout.)

Scene 7

(AT RISE: Living room, two weeks later. The bare mannequin head sits on the coffee table. Jerry picks at something on his shirt.)

JERRY: (To the tune of "Mona Lisa.") La da da da, la da da da, la da da da... (He checks his watch then picks at his shirt again. Steve enters wearing a cap.) Steve, where have you been? Where is it?

STEVE: What? Oh. Right here. (Steve removes his cap to reveal the toupee.)

JERRY: You were covering up the hair?

STEVE: Guys with hair wear caps, too, you know. Besides, it makes me uncomfortable. I feel like people are staring at me.

JERRY: They probably are and saying to themselves, "Look at that handsome, hair-endowed man."

(Steve puts his cap on the mannequin head.)

STEVE: Yeah, right. What's that you've got on your shirt?

JERRY: Candle wax.

STEVE: Lisa again? Two whole weeks now. Is it getting serious?

JERRY: It's always been serious. Oh, man, is it serious.

STEVE: I thought you liked to play the field.

JERRY: Once you've struck gold, why pull up stakes? How's it going with you? Still prospecting?

STEVE: Not exactly. I went for a walk through the park, and suddenly I heard some people over by the picnic tables yelling for help. I ran over there to see what I could do and found an old man choking on something. So I did the Heimlich on him and he spit it out.

JERRY: That's great.

STEVE: But then he collapsed. I already had a hold of him, so I eased him down to the ground. And then—

JERRY: What?

STEVE: Like I always do in that kind of situation, I threw off my cap—

JERRY: Oh, no! Don't tell me the hair came off.

STEVE: No, it didn't come off. At that point I'd forgotten all about it. I leaned over to find the guy's pulse and to listen for his breathing. He was okay. He had only passed out for a second. As he came to, I got up and looked around for my cap.

JERRY: And?

STEVE: There she stood.

JERRY: Who?

STEVE: This woman. She had been out jogging. She was glistening...shining. I could almost see the heat rising from her, and yet she had this calm, steady look in her eyes. She was smiling at me. And she had my cap.

JERRY: Is there another chapter coming?

STEVE: She handed it back to me. *(Steve picks up his cap.)*

JERRY: Now we know she's not a cap thief. Did she say anything?

STEVE: She said she liked what I had done and the way I did it. She's a nurse, it turns out. Her name is Cheryl.

JERRY: You got her name and everything. Did you talk to her long?

STEVE: We talked.

JERRY: What? Ten, twenty minutes?

STEVE: Two hours. She was like someone I had always known, or was meant to know. We walked along the jogging trail. People ran past us, but after a while I didn't see them. Only her.

(Steve puts on his cap and walks downstage as Cheryl, in a running outfit, enters and joins him. Lights dim on living room.)

CHERYL: Do you know how long we've been walking?

STEVE: No.

CHERYL: Nearly two hours.

STEVE: I didn't realize...

CHERYL: If I had been running instead of talking, think how many calories I could've burned.

STEVE: I'm to blame for setting back your cardiovascular system.

CHERYL: No, I've enjoyed talking to you. At the hospital, I stay as far away as I can from the Emergency Room and all that confusion, but then I never get to be around the paramedics. I know what you do isn't easy.

STEVE: We just try to keep each one alive till we turn him over to the M.D.s. Whatever happens after that, at least we did what we could. It's like handing off a football. My job is to get it safely in the hands of the runner. If somehow he loses the ball downfield...well, I'd just as soon not know about it.

CHERYL: You're screening away the emotion.

STEVE: Sure. Why hurt if you don't have to? You invest so much in saving someone. What if he doesn't make it?

CHERYL: But what if he does? You don't have the satisfaction of knowing he pulled through.

STEVE: No good news, no bad news. A trade-off. See, I could never be a nurse. Staying there with the patients. Dealing with the day-to-day rise or fall of their lives. Give me a crisis anytime. I'll do what's necessary and then move on.

CHERYL: I'm just the opposite. The sudden emergency...the alarm of a monitor...I've never gotten used to it. What I like is taking care of people and watching over them. Whether it's a long-term recovery or a gradual decline, I feel the most useful when I can be there for the duration.

STEVE: That's the better point of view, of course.

CHERYL: Not better. It's how I am. And you're how you are. No reason to wish we were something else, when we're both needed.

STEVE: That's pretty wise.

CHERYL: Naturally. I'm a nurse.

STEVE: Is there a wisdom test you have to pass to be a nurse?

CHERYL: Every day. Passing is not a problem, as long as you don't fail.

STEVE: Everybody fails sometime, professionally or otherwise.

CHERYL: You? How have you failed?

STEVE: When I can't get a heartbeat going again. I hate giving up, even when it's clear the patient's not coming back.

CHERYL: That's not failure.

STEVE: It sure isn't success.

CHERYL: You can't do the impossible. And failing "otherwise"? What is that?

STEVE: Old relationships fall apart. People drift away until you're not quite able to reach them anymore. After a while you stop trying and simply float along on the tide.

CHERYL: What if the tide takes you someplace you don't want to go?

STEVE: I suppose you finally start swimming.

CHERYL: Are you a strong swimmer?

STEVE: I'm out of practice. And yourself?

CHERYL: Red Cross certified.

STEVE: If I were going under, you could rescue me. But that would be one of those emergencies you don't like.

CHERYL: I had a teacher in nursing school who said every emergency was an opportunity to apply what I had learned and to learn more.

STEVE: Now, there's a wise nurse.

CHERYL: She also told me if I ever needed to relieve stress that I should run. I figure by now I'm on my second lap around the world.

STEVE: I exercise, too.

CHERYL: You run?

STEVE: I fish.

CHERYL: Doesn't sound very strenuous.

STEVE: It is for the fish.

CHERYL: Are you a good fisherman?

STEVE: When the fish cooperate.

CHERYL: I should finish my workout.

STEVE: Of course. I've used up all your time.

CHERYL: I meant it when I said I've enjoyed talking to you.

STEVE: Could I call you at the hospital sometime?

CHERYL: I'd like that. Maybe we could go swimming.

(Starts jogging away.) Bye, Steve.

STEVE: See you, Cheryl. *(Cheryl exits. Calls after her.)* You know my number! 9-1-1! *(Steve rejoins Jerry. Lights rise on living room.)* Then she was gone, off and running.

JERRY: Sounds like a winner.

STEVE: *(Dejected.)* Yeah.

JERRY: So why so glum? The way you tell it, the lady showed a lot of interest in you.

STEVE: In me? What part of me is me? If only I hadn't been wearing this dumb toupee. *(Steve takes off his cap.)*

JERRY: On the other hand, what if you hadn't?

STEVE: Exactly my point. She saw me with hair when I threw down the cap. She likes me as a guy with hair. Would she still like me as a guy without hair? Would she like me as a guy without hair who put on hair when it wasn't his hair?

JERRY: It's a hairy situation.

STEVE: I feel like such a phony.

JERRY: You're not a phony. You're a very genuine person with a convincing hairpiece. And what was all this about in the first place? Attracting women. Now you've got one on the line. Reel her in.

STEVE: You don't have any qualms about fooling Lisa?

JERRY: As if women aren't always fooling us. Look how many women dye their hair. And what about push-up bras? You unhook one of those babies and the bust line drops three inches.

STEVE: Lisa wears one?

JERRY: No, not Lisa. But if she needed one, you can be sure she'd have it. She's into gadgets.

STEVE: I'm not.

JERRY: Think about it, Steve. Short men wear shoe lifts to look taller. Tall girls wear flats to look shorter. Fat women wear girdles. Skinny guys wear padded shoulders. Near-sighted people wear contacts. Guys with acne grow beards. Women with beards use hair-remover. They pluck their eyebrows, they shave their legs. Everyone uses deodorant. What's the problem, Steve? Get real!

(Steve pulls off the toupee and sets it on the mannequin head.)

STEVE: Now who's real? *(Indicates mannequin head with toupee.)* Him or me?

JERRY: Trust me. You're a lot better looking than he is.

STEVE: Would Cheryl think so?

JERRY: Women like illusion as much as we do. Look at Arnold Schwarzenegger. You can't tell me that guy is real. It's all done with camera angles. Marilyn Monroe wasn't real. She was hairspray and lip gloss on celluloid, perfectly lit, perfectly made up, with just the right pucker and prearranged curves. *(Pause.)* I loved Marilyn Monroe.

STEVE: If you're going somewhere with this, I wish you'd get there.

JERRY: All of us fall in love with illusion. And once we're in love, reality doesn't matter.

STEVE: It matters to me.

JERRY: Would you like Cheryl less if you found out she wore a padded bra? *(Indicates the hairpiece.)* This is your padded bra. You just wear it in a different place.

STEVE: It's such a silly-looking thing. I keep thinking any second it's going to stand up on little legs and run away.

JERRY: It better not. I've got a lot invested there, and not just money. Every time I see her, Lisa raves about my hair.

STEVE: *Our* hair. It doesn't bother you that without the hair she wouldn't—?

JERRY: Give me a tumble, so to speak? Hey, as long as I'm tumbling, what do I care? And if you were smart, you'd give Cheryl a call.

STEVE: Actually...and I shouldn't have...but I already did.

JERRY: You called her? Fast work!

STEVE: She told me she was working a split shift this afternoon, so I reached her when she got to the hospital. We're getting together this evening before she has to go back on duty.

JERRY: What do you mean *this* evening?

STEVE: This evening, like in a little while from now.

JERRY: It can't be this evening. I have a date with Lisa.

STEVE: You never said so.

JERRY: You didn't say anything, either.

STEVE: How could I when I didn't know yet?!

JERRY: You should've checked with me first. You know I've been using the hair at night!

STEVE: Which means it's my turn.

JERRY: You already had your turn...*all day*. You'll just have to call her back and tell her it's off.

STEVE: I can't do that. Not the first time out. You call it off with Lisa.

JERRY: How can I? We're having dinner together.

STEVE: Tell her the Health Department closed the restaurant.

JERRY: We're not going to a restaurant. She's coming here.

STEVE: Here? For dinner?

JERRY: I'm fixing her my extra hot chili, guaranteed to superheat the stomach and all adjoining organs. So call Cheryl and tell her you can't meet her.

STEVE: Considering the menu, you might be happy to have a nurse show up.

JERRY: What do you mean "show up"?

STEVE: I invited her over. She'll be dropping by— who knows— any time now.

JERRY: This is crazy! I'm expecting Lisa. We can't both wear the toupee.

STEVE: Not unless we cut it in half and stand in profile all night.

JERRY: Wait a second, wait a second! Easy solution. You never wanted to wear it in the first place, so I'll wear it and you be honest with Cheryl.

STEVE: No! It's too soon to be honest.

JERRY: You disappoint me, Steve. I thought you were a better man.

STEVE: I'm just not ready yet.

JERRY: Neither one of us is going to be ready unless we figure this out.

STEVE: Okay, okay! Let's just calm down and think of something while we still have time.

(The doorbell rings. Blackout. Intermission.)

[End of Freeview]