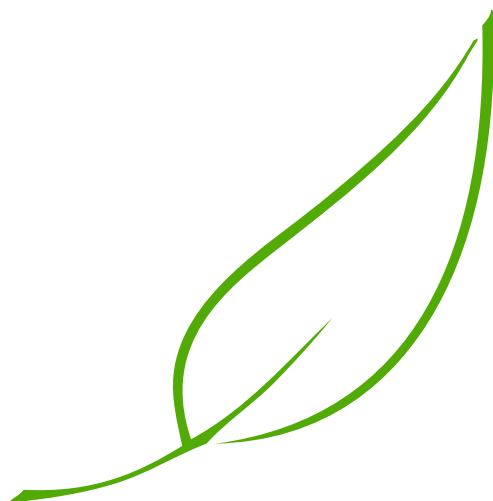


HAIL, THE HUNKERING HERO

By Donald Payton



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SYNOPSIS: This story depicts the struggle of Clifford Shnorkel, the hillbilly hunkering hero, in his climactic and meteoric rise from an unknown at home to an unknown in college—until he scores the winning touchdown for Gillette Tech against arch rival Schick University. The cast includes Ma and Pa Shnorkel, who think their son must have stopped to play on the way home from school (he’s been gone about two weeks). The boisterous, hot-tempered coach who hasn’t won a game in years; the cunning and stunning campus cuties; the all-beef-and-no-brain football team and last but not least, the shimmering cheerleaders who “wow” the audience with their dismal, lackluster cheering. The break-neck, slam-bang pace continues until the final curtain. Simple area sets.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8 female, 13 male, 5-20 extras)

CLIFFORD SHNORKEL (m) The Hunkering Hero; He’s tall and slender, wears patched overalls first act, changes to new ones for ensuing acts. Wears straw hat, too. *(122 lines)*

MAW SHNORKEL (f) Clifford’s mother, hillbilly type; Wears apron and saggy dress, heavy shoes. *(68 lines)*

PAW SHNORKEL (m) His hillbilly father; Slender, wears overalls with one gallus, has a beat-up hat and heavy shoes. Has a beard. *(70 lines)*

COACH O’BROTHER (m) Head football coach at Gillette Tech; Short and stocky, he’s the ranting, raving, short-tempered type. Wears raincoat and hat pulled low, chews on a cigar. *(149 lines)*

- DR. KLUNK (m) Professor of Science; Coach's assistant. He's precise, sedate, wears cap and gown if possible. (14 lines)
- MYRT BLIRT (f) Cute college co-ed (18 lines)
- LOTUS SHMORGUS (f)..... Another campus sharpie (7 lines)
- FLETCHERWITZ (m)..... The Hunkering Hero's roommate; typical college boys (2 lines)
- RATTENSTALL (m)..... The Hunkering Hero's roommate; typical college boys
- RADIO ANNOUNCER (m) Fast-talking sports commentator, wears slacks and loud sport shirt (26 lines)
- STUDENT (m)..... College Student (11 lines)

FOOTBALL PLAYERS: They come in assorted shapes, sizes and numbers and are all wrapped up in football regalia.

- CLINKINSTEIN (m)..... (20 lines)
- SNIFFLEBAUM (m)..... (17 lines)
- FLETCHERWITZ (m) (2 lines)
- BLOOMERBURG (m)..... (2 lines)
- PLAYER 1 (m)..... (2 lines)
- EXTRA PLAYERS (m) At least 3. (Non-Speaking.)

THREE GIRLS: Campus cuties

- GIRL (f)..... (3 lines)
- GIRL 2 (f)..... (2 lines)
- GIRL 3 (f)..... (3 lines)

- CHEERLEADERS (f)..... Wear skirts and letter-sweaters. At least two females. (7 lines)
- COLLEGE GIRLS (f)..... These luscious campus cuties are attired in skirts and sweaters, and they seem to be bent on vamping our young hero (1 line)
- COLLEGE BOYS (m)..... Debonair and dashing, they wear sport clothes

NOTE: To increase the humor, add “witz,” or “berg,” or “onski,” etc., to the real names of the boys portraying the football players.

SET

The setting for each scene of the play is the same, and only requires that there be an exit to right and left, so it can be played in front of curtains, as well as a regular stage set; The change of scene is depicted by signs on the wall and a few simple changes in furniture.

PROPS

- ☐ Magazine (PAW)
- ☐ Large can(MAW)
- ☐ cord (MAW)
- ☐ Gunny sack (CLIFFORD)
- ☐ Football (CLIFFORD)
- ☐ red handkerchief tied in bundle (CLIFFORD)
- ☐ Papers (COACH)
- ☐ Note (CLIFFORD)
- ☐ Bottle (PLAYER)
- ☐ Spoons (PLAYER)
- ☐ bottle of pills (PLAYER)
- ☐ Letter (COACH)
- ☐ Several sheets of paper (ANNOUNCER)
- ☐ Binoculars (ANNOUNCER)
- ☐ microphone (ANNOUNCER)
- ☐ Glass (CLIFFORD)
- ☐ Letter (COACH)
- ☐ Stretcher (PLAYERS)
- ☐ firecracker (PLAYERS)
- ☐ Broom (MAW)
- ☐ Bucket (PAW)

SCENE 1

SCENE: *Living room in the Shnorkel home, 'way back in the hills.*

SET: *The room is barren except for two chairs, preferably rockers. There's a "Home, Sweet Home" sign hanging on the wall center. The only other piece of "furniture" consists of a can at front center, between the chairs, used for a spittoon.*

AT RISE: *MAW SHNORKEL is sitting in chair, left, chomping laboriously on a cud of tobacco. A few seconds after the rise she "lets fly," orally, at the spittoon, which is at least six feet from her. A loud clang is heard as the cud "hits" the can. This is accomplished by dropping a large marble in a can behind stage. MAW is a trifle on the heavy side, wearing a bonnet and tight-fitting over-alls. MAW propels again and another clang is heard. She settles back in chair, closes her eyes, and continues to chomp tobacco. With her eyes closed she again "lets fly" toward the can, and it, too, plops in with a clang. PAW looks over top a pulp magazine that he's reading, sees what MAW is doing, and he, too, and lets fly orally toward the can. Nothing happens. No clang is heard.*

MAW: (Sharply.) Paw!

PAW: Huh? (Loud clang is heard from can.)

MAW: Nothing.

PAW returns to his reading. MAW is rocking and dozing. PAW cuts loose again, loud. Nothing is heard. All is silent for a few seconds. MAW opens her eyes and peers at PAW, glares at him, leans toward him, is about to speak when the clang is heard. She takes a deep breath as he returns to his reading

MAW: What time you got, Paw?

PAW: Wouldn't know, Maw. Shall I go look at the sun?

MAW: The sun's down, Paw.

PAW: When did it go down, Maw?

MAW: 'Bout thirty minutes ago, Paw.

PAW: Reckon it must be 'bout half hour after sundown then.

MAW: Blamed if you ain't about the best calclater I've ever seen, Paw.

PAW: Never miss on nothin', I don't. (He "lets fly" toward the can again, nothing is heard)

MAW: *(After a pause.)* What did you say, Paw?

PAW: I said I never miss on nothin'. *(Easily.)* Better pull the can up about a foot, Maw.

She pulls the string attached to the can.

PAW: Just a little more, Maw.

She does.

PAW: That's it. *(The clang is heard. He settles back in chair and continues reading.)*

MAW: Whatcha doin', Paw?

PAW: Readin' a mystery.

MAW: How can you do that when you kain't even read?

PAW: That's the mystery, Maw.

MAW: *(Rising, peering out right.)* I'm getting' worried 'bout Clifford, our lovin' son. He ain't got home from school yit.

PAW: *(Easily.)* He's a Shnorkel, Maw. Give him time. He warn't supposed to get here 'fore sundown, was he?

MAW: That's when it was sposed to be, Paw, 'bout sundown – two weeks ago.

PAW: You mean he hain't been here fer two weeks?

MAW: Two weeks exactly. I counted each day by whackin' a notch in that oak tree by the chicken house. Today that tree went down, Paw. You know what that means?

PAW: Probably means we ain't got no chicken house.

MAW: It means our lovin' son Clifford is two weeks overdue.

PAW: Didn't need no chicken house anyway. Chickens have all been sleepin' in the kitchen here of late.

MAW: *(Pacing around the room.)* He left school two weeks ago and ain't got here yit.

PAW: Maybe be stopped to play on the way home. Probably stopped to play mumbledepeg with Clem Drizzlefizzle's young'un. When me and Clem was boys we used to play mumbledepeg for hours on end.

MAW: (*Glaring.*) Might know that. You wouldn't play nothin' standin' up.

SFX: Knock on door.

MAW: Someone's at the door, Paw.

PAW: (*Easily.*) Durned if they ain't. (*More knocks.*)

MAW: Don't that sound friendly, Paw? Shore am glad we put up a door.

PAW: I ain't. We didn't have nothin' to disturb us like that till you got to hankerin' last summer fer a door. Fer twenty years we been livin' in peace, dad rat it. (*He lets fly toward the can again – loud clang is heard.*)

MAW: Come in.

Son CLIFFORD enters right. He's a long, lanky, overgrown boy, with a straw hat that's much too large for him, heavy shoes, and over-alls that are much too small for him, striking him about the knees. He's carrying a gunny-sack over his shoulder.

CLIFFORD: (*Entering.*) Howdy, Maw. Howdy, Paw. (*Paw rises.*)

MAW and PAW: (*Together.*) Clifford.

MAW: (*Proudly, hands together.*) My how you've growed since the last time we saw you, Son.

CLIFFORD: I've growed most out of my over-alls since I left that mornin' for school.

MAW: Tell us, Son, whatcha been doin' fer the last two weeks?

CLIFFORD: We been playin' a newfangled game at school, Maw, and we just got so excited we couldn't quit. I think they called it football.

PAW: Football you say, Son? Me and Clem Drizzlefizzle used to play leapfrog. I'd leap over Clem and then Clem'd leap over me and we'd go up one hill and down another like that. One day we got to leapin' and sorta got carried away and wound up in the next county. That's how I met your Maw.

MAW: I was out diggin' yor great-grandpappy's grave and long comes your Paw here and leaps in the hole.

PAW: That was a grave mistake. But more about this game you call football.

CLIFFORD: There's eleven men on each side. When one side has the ball the other side runs at 'em and tries to keep 'em from getting anythin'. And there's always a big pile-up right in the middle.

PAW: Sorta like yor family always was in the mealtime, Maw.

MAW: Oh? Did you get gravy all over you, Son?

CLIFFORD: (*Strutting around.*) They never could catch me. I was too fast fer 'em. I carried the ball thirteen times and scored thirteen touchdowns.

PAW: I was allus fast myself. Me and Clem Drizzlefizzle was both fast. We out ran the sheriff more than once – even with him shootin' at us. We just out ran them bullets, me and Clem Drizzlefizzle did. (*Lets fly at can again. Clang is heard.*)

MAW: Let the boy tell us about this thing he calls football, Paw.

CLIFFORD: A quarter lasts fifteen minutes.

PAW: Sounds like a mighty expensive game, Son, if a quarter lasts just fifteen minutes. Better find somethin' where you get more fer your money. Me and Clem Drizzlefizzle used to play leapfrog and it wouldn't cost us nothin'.

CLIFFORD: That's one-fourth of the game, Paw.

PAW: Now don't go tryin' to mess me up with them fractions, Son. I ain't no good when it comes to figures. Never like 'em. Never even like yor Maw's.

MAW: Don't start makin' no crack 'bout my figure, Paw. It's better than the average.

PAW: The average what, Maw?

MAW: Did you bring back your homework, Son?

CLIFFORD: (*Opening the sack he's carried in.*) Got it right here, Maw. (*Takes out a football.*)

PAW: What kind of book is that, Son?

CLIFFORD: It's a pigskin, Paw.

PAW: A pigskin, huh? *(He takes it.)*

CLIFFORD: We play football with it.

PAW: Poor little critter. *(He sits.)* You can tell us all about this li'l animal here after you do the chores, Son. But now you'd best go out and chop the wood and bring it in, and milk the cow, and slop the hawgs, and hay the mule, and feed the chickens and goats, and gather the eggs, and see that everything is took care of fer the night.

CLIFFORD: *(Crossing and going out left.)* I'll be in when the work's done.

MAW: Why do you make Clifford do all them chores, Paw?

PAW: I ain't aimin' on raisin' a lazy young'un, Maw. I ain't gonna have nobody sayin' he turned out like his old man. *(Cuts loose at can again.)*

MAW: *(Cocking ear.)* What's that rumblin' noise I hear, Paw?

PAW: I don't hear nothin'. Maybe I better tune in my good ear. *(He tilts his head sideways.)*

MAW: *(Peering right.)* There's somethin' comin' up the trail, Paw.

PAW: *(Peering over her shoulder.)* Durned if there ain't. It's a critter with two big eyes.

MAW: It's one of them newfangled gadgets they call autymobeels. And it's a-stoppin', Paw.

PAW: Ain't that a monster?

Knock on door.

MAW: *(Shouting.)* Come in!

PAW: I better get my gun, Maw, that monster may try to come in, too.

COACH O'BROTHER of Gillette Tech, enters right, along with DR. KLUNK of the school's science department. COACH is a short, clunky, nervous, little chap, wearing a raincoat pulled high and a left hat pulled low. DR. KLUNK is tall, wears glasses, and if possible is attired in cap and gown. If none is available, he may wear business suit and have a beanie parked a-top his head, and carry a briefcase.

MAW: *(As they enter.)* Howdy.

COACH: *(Talking rapid-fire.)* You're Mr. and Mrs. Shnorkel, I'll betcha. I'm Coach O'Brother, from Gillette Tech. And this is Dr. Klunk, from our school's science department.

KLUNK: *(Doffing cap.)* Klunk that is, A.B., B.S., Ph.D., M.A., B.M., LL.D., and B.S.C.

PAW: Did he say that one war a doctor, Maw?

MAW: That's what he said, Paw.

PAW: Ask him if he wants to take a look at my sick hawg, Maw.

KLUNK: I'm just terribly sorry, but I'm afraid I'm not that kind of a doctor.

PAW: Then maybe he'll take a look at your back, Maw.

COACH: He's not that kind of doctor either.

PAW: *(To MAW.)* I'm getting mighty durned suspicious of these here varmints, Maw. If that doctor kain't cure hawgs or wommin, he just ain't too much if a doctor.

COACH: I'm head football coach at Gillette Tech., Mr. Shnorkel, and we're interested in your son.

PAW: Well, that's right thoughty of you there, neighbor. We're sorta interested in our son, too – probably because he's our boy.

COACH: We want him to play football for Gillette Tech.

PAW: *(Thinking.)* Football...Football...what's football, Maw?

MAW: That game Clifford was a-tellin' us about, Paw.

PAW: Durned if'n it ain't.

CLIFFORD: *(Entering left.)* Somebody here?

COACH: *(Stepping forward and extending hand.)* I'm Coach O'Brother, from Gillette Tech. You're Clifford Shnorkel, aren't you?

PAW: *(As CLIFFORD looks around.)* Go ahead and admit it, Son. *(He nods.)*

COACH: My boy, we're after you to play football for old Gillette Tech. We'll make you the best football play in the country. You'll make Collier's All-American, Look's All-American, AP, INS, and all the other All-Americans. You'll make front page or every paper in the country. They'll have your face on covers of Life, Time, Look, Saturday Evening Post, Wheat Grower's Monthly, and the Yearbook for Poultry Breeders Association of America, and Pago Pago. *(To DR. KLUNK.)* Ain't that a physique?

MAW: What war that last thing he mentioned, Paw?

PAW: Durned if'n I know. I got thrown 'bout a half mile back.

COACH: How much does he weigh?

PAW: *(Sizing him up.)* Can't tell you for shore, but I can get pretty close. Me and Clem Drizzlefizzle used to make our livin' guessin' the weight of hawgs. Right off hand I'd saw he'd weight might near two hundred pounds with his pants on – and about a hundred sixty without 'em.

COACH: His pants weigh forty pounds?

PAW: Of course not. They just weigh five. He wears underwear, too, you know.

COACH: Whadya say, son? Come back with us to college and we'll make you famous, renowned, your name will be a household word.

CLIFFORD: Do I get to play football?

COACH: Do you get to play football? He asked if he'd get to play football, Doc.

DR. KLUNK: My boy, you'll play football all the time. Every day you'll be playing football.

CLIFFORD: Maw?

MAW: Yeah?

CLIFFORD: I'm goin' to college to play football, Maw.

MAW: If your mind's made up, Son, go and pack yor dud.

CLIFFORD: My mind's made up. I'm goin' to college and play football. *(He crosses left.)* I'll go pack my dud.

MAW: *(Sniffing.)* Our little son's leavin' us to go out into the world, Paw. *(She blows her nose on her apron.)*

COACH: You'll be proud of him, Mam. We'll make a football hero out of him. His name will be in all the papers...over the radio...the name of Shnorkel will circle the globe.

CLIFFORD: *(Entering with pack wrapped up in red handkerchief.)* I'm ready to be off. *(Kisses MAW on cheek.)* Goodbye, Maw. *(Shakes hands with PAW.)* Goodbye, Paw. I'm off to college.

MAW: Don't fergit to write, Son.

PAW: Twon't do no good to write, Maw. We cain't read.

MAW: Then draw us some pitchers, Son.

COACH and KLUNK grab CLIFFORD under each arm and hoist him out.

CLIFFORD: *(Looking back over his shoulder.)* I'm off to college. *(They exit.)*

MAW: There's goes a good kid, Paw.

PAW: Shore is, Maw. *(They each cut loose at spittoon. Two clangs heard.)*

Curtain.

SCENE 2

SCENE: *A student lounge at Gillette Tech.*

TIME: *A few months after Scene 1.*

SET: *They "Home, Sweet Home" sign of Scene 1 is replaced by a sign reading "Student Lounge." School flags and banners hang from the wall. In the room are a few chairs and perhaps a sofa. A record player is back center.*

AT RISE: *Two or three boys are sitting around studying, and one or two couples are dancing to the soft music rippling from the record player. One of the boys rises, walks to another one, and they work together from a text. COACH O'BROTHER, attired as he was in Scene 1, come charging in right.*

COACH: *(As he enters.)* Stop the music! Stop the music! *(Someone cuts off record player)* Has anyone here seen Shnorkel?

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STUDENT: I ain't seen him, Coach.

MYRT: *(One of girls dancing.)* I have, Coach. *(Fluttering her eyelashes.)* All the girls have seen him.

COACH: *(Shouting.)* Where is he? *(She smiles at him.)* Well don't just stand there with that sick-calf grin on your face, where is he?

MYRT: I saw him walking on the campus with Lotus Shmorgus. And if you find him I wish you'd tell him I'd like to see him, too, Coach.

COACH: *(Barking.)* I most certainly will not. He's been seeing too many girls the way it is.

MYRT: *(Fluttering eyelashes again.)* I think he's cute.

COACH: Clifford Shnorkel is through with all girls on this campus, and there shall be a notice to that effect on the bulletin board in the morning.

MYRT: That's not what he says.

COACH: No, but it's what I say. I'm the Coach around here and that goes. Football season's comin' on, and everybody's in shape but Shnorkel. For the past few months he's supposedly been in training. But what's he been doing?

MYRT: *(Coyly.)* I can tell you, Coach.

COACH: *(Glaring.)* I'm not asking you. Every night he's supposed to be in bed by seven-thirty. Is he? No. He's out carousing around.

MYRT: I think he's cute.

COACH: *(Waiting.)* Why don't you girls give him a break?

MYRT: *(Fluttering eyelashes again.)* We are, Coach.

COACH: *(Walking madly around the room.)* Football season's comin' on and Shnorkel can't be found anywhere. The big game's comin' up and we've got to have Shnorkel. *(He crosses left, calls.)* Shnorkel!

MYRT: I know which direction he went. Shall I go get him?

COACH: You'd never get back here if you did. I'll find him myself.

He exits right. The record player is turned on again, and MYRT starts dancing with her partner. CLIFFORD enters left, with LOTUS SHMORGUS on his arm.

MYRT: *(Leaving partner immediately.)* Shnorkey.

CLIFFORD: Howdy.

MYRT: You want to dance with me, Shnorkey?

CLIFFORD: Heck, yeah, I'll dance with you. (*Looking around.*)

Anybody got a fiddle?

MYRT: (*Giggling.*) You say the funniest things, Shnorkey.

STUDENT: Coach was in here looking for you, Shnorkel.

CLIFFORD: (*Sitting.*) So what.

MYRT gets on one knee, LOTUS clambers onto the other.

CLIFFORD: I got else things to do.

COACH: (*Charging in right with PROFESSOR KLUNK, pointing.*)

There he is. Shnorkel, I want to talk to you.

CLIFFORD: (*Unconcerned.*) Talk away, Coach.

COACH: In private.

CLIFFORD: I'm pretty busy.

COACH: (*Growling.*) Whadya mean, busy? You haven't done a thing this whole term. You've been here for months and haven't accomplished a thing.

LOTUS: (*Pinching his cheek.*) You have too accomplished a thing, haven't you, Shug?

COACH: I man scholastically. Do you realize you're flunking all your courses, Shnorkel?

CLIFFORD: (*Blinking.*) What courses?

COACH: (*To KLUNK, wildly.*) See there? (*Louder.*) See there? (*Waves paper in front of CLIFFORD.*) Do you know what this is, Shnorkel? It's your biology report. You're flunking biology. (*Waves another sheet in his face.*) And do you know what this it? It's your English report. You're flunking English. (*Waving another.*) And you're flunking history and math. That's four for four. You're batting a thousand. (*In his face.*) Footballs season's comin' on and you won't be playing if you're not careful, Shnorkel – (*Shouting.*) You won't be eligible!

LOTUS: Don't you worry nothin', Shnorkey. You'll score five touchdowns every Saturday for the mean, little, old man.

COACH: You've got your exams coming up next week, Shnorkel. If you flunk them you're a gonner. We're here to help you pass, Shnorkel.

MYRT: I want to help little, old Shnorkey boy myself.

KLUNK: You'd help him more if you'd get out and leave him alone.

COACH: Get out. All of you get out. We've got to help Shnorkel cram or we're lost. (*Shouting.*) Lost!

MYRT: I won't leave.

COACH: Good grief. (*Walks around room, comes back to her.*) Don't you have any school spirit?

MYRT: Of course I do. (*Running hand through CLIFFORD'S hair.*) That's why I don't want to leave poor, little, old Shnorkey alone.

KLUNK: Out...out... (*Herding them out right.*) Everybody out.

All exit but COACH, KLUNK, and CLIFFORD

COACH: (*Pacing, raving.*) Okay, Shnorkel, I'm gonna be frank. The big game's comin' up soon and unless you pass next week's exams you won't get to play. Can't you get that through your big, thick skull? We're here to help you. We've got your questions right here and if you can pass these you can play. Savvy?

CLIFFORD nods affirming.

COACH: Okay.

CLIFFORD, still sitting in chair, puts hands behind head, stretches legs straight out.

KLUNK: In history, Shnorkel, when was the War of 1812?

CLIFFORD: Questions like that take deep thought.

COACH: Then why don't you try thinking once in a while? It helps.

CLIFFORD: I never found history too easy, myself.

COACH: You probably never even found the room they were havin' it in.

KLUNK: (*Louder.*) When was the War of 1812?

CLIFFORD: Offhand, I'd say it was about – 1776

COACH: (*Shouting.*) Oh, brother! (*Louder.*) Don't you know what happened in 1776?

CLIFFORD: Accordin' to my figures, I think that was the year – the year – they had the war... (*Pause.*)

KLUNK: (*Anxiously.*) Yes?

CLIFFORD: Of 1812.

COACH: Oh, no!

CLIFFORD: It's what they call a vicious circle.

KLUNK: Shnorkel, the War of 1812 was in 1812.

CLIFFORD: I never was too good at rememberin' dates, 'ceptin' with Lotus.

LOTUS enters right, swaggering across stage.

CLIFFORD: That's Lotus now.

LOTUS stops at door left, turns, flutters her eyelashes at CLIFFORD, who whistles shrilly as she turns and exits left.

COACH: (*Sharply.*) Sknorkel, you don't whistle at the girls.

CLIFFORD: I don't whistle at girls, Coach. Lotus ain't no girl. She's a woman. (*He whistles again.*)

KLUNK: It's been found, by careful study and concentration, that the War of 1812 was in 1812. You'd better put that down in your notebook.

CLIFFORD: My what?

COACH: Your notebook! Your notebook! Don't you keep any notes?

CLIFFORD nods.

COACH: Lemme see one.

CLIFFORD takes one out of this pocket, hands it to COACH.

COACH: Dear Shnorksey Warksey. (*He explodes.*) You call this a note?

CLIFFORD: (*Nodding again.*) From Lotus. She's one of my girl friends.

LOTUS enters left, crosses stage and CLIFFORD whistles again. She exits right.

KLUNK: To continue. Who wrote the very famous Monroe Doctrine?

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CLIFFORD: I wouldn't say for sure, but I think it was _____!
[Names local history teacher.]

COACH: (*Shouting.*) That does it! (*Throws up hands.*) That does it. I quit. Resign. (*He sits.*) I'm through. (*Bouncing up.*) Look Shnorkel, get this through your sad head. If you don't pass these tests coming up, you won't play. (*Shouting in his face.*) You get that? You won't play. We brought you up to this college from off the farm so you could play football. Remember? Now, unless you pass these tests you won't be playing anything but the guitar, back on your old man's farm. Is that clear?

CLIFFORD: Yes, sir. Only I can't play the git-tar. Paw does, though. He plays the git-tar and Clem Drizzlefrizzle; plays the fiddle and they shore whoop it up nights 'round Christmas.

MYRT enters right, swings her way across stage, with CLIFFORD'S eyes on her all the way. MYRT exits.

KLUNK: We'll give you some spelling words, Shnorkel. Lest see if you can spell correctly.

CLIFFORD: C-r-j-t-o-n-z-r.

COACH: What are you doin' now?

CLIFFORD: Spellin' correctly.

KLUNK: Your first word is necessity. Spell necessity, Shnorkel.

CLIFFORD: (*Thinking.*) Necessity. N-E-C-E- How am I doin'?

COACH: Fine, Shnorkel. Keep up the good work.

CLIFFORD: N-E-C-E-S... (*Pauses.*) S...J-O-K-L-N-E-T-Y, Necessity.

COACH: Great jumpin' horses. You're as stupid as the day is long.

CLIFFORD: I guess I ain't quite real bright, Coach.

COACH: And don't say ain't. Your grammar's terrible.

CLIFFORD: (*Hotly.*) Oh my grammar ain't so bad. Course, she spent five years in the jug fer makin' moonshine, but there's none of us perfect.

COACH: (*Disgustedly.*) I wasn't talking about your relatives.

CLIFFORD: Well see that you don't. I'm purty touchy about my kinfolks.

MYRT swaggers across stage, exits right.

KLUNK: Back to the spelling. Please try to concentrate, Shnorkel. Here's a real simple little word, and it's on the English list. Capitulate.

CLIFFORD: Capitulate—that's a hard one.

COACH: Think, Shnorkel. You've just got to make up your mind that it's all to be learned and the sooner the better now—capitulate.

CLIFFORD: Can you give me a hint, Coach?

COACH: The first three letter spell something you wear on your head. *(To KLUNK, triumphantly.)* He can't miss this one.

CLIFFORD: *(Thinking.)* Something I wear on my head in three letters. *(He brightens.)* I got it. *(Coach beams.)* H-A-T.

COACH: *(Exploding.)* Hat? *(Pacing.)* I quit...resign. Call the president, I'm through...done.

CLIFFORD: Didn't I answer right?

COACH: You wouldn't answer right if I asked you what hand you wrote with.

CLIFFORD: What else could I have on my head in three letters?

COACH: Fat, F-A-T, fat. You're a fathead if I ever saw one.

CLIFFORD: *(To KLUNK.)* I don't think he likes me.

COACH: Things like this make me so D-A--- they make me mad. Shnorkel, at your earliest convenience I wish you'd D-R-O-P D-E-A-D. I'm through with you Shnorkel. Done. *(Pointing left.)* Back to the farm.

MYRT and LOTUS, together with a couple of the fellows, enter right.

MYRT, LOTUS, and OTHERS: *(Together, singing.)* How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm after they've seen college? How you gonna keep 'em diggin' turnips, platin' the grain When they'd rather raise cane?

MYRT: Come on, Shnorkey, we're goin' on a hayride.

COACH: You're what?

LOTUS: Shnorkey's goin' on a hayride with us.

COACH: Shnorkey's gonna stay here and cram. He's gonna work.

MYRT: In college? Are you kiddin'?

CLIFFORD: *(Starting right.)* I'm ready.

COACH: Wait a minute, Shnorkel. I take everything back. Everything I said. Don't leave me, Shnorkel. Please stay.

LOTUS: Don't pay any heed to the mean, little man, Shnorkey. *(They start right.)* We're off on a hayride.

COACH: Wait a minute. Klunk, call down town. Charter a wagon. We're gonna be right behind 'em all the way, firin' questions at Shnorkel. Get us a couple of horses to pull the wagon, too.

MYRT: There ain't no need for that, Coach. You can pull it just as well as any other nag. *(They all snicker, including KLUNK. COACH glares.)*

LOTUS: *(Turning to KLUNK.)* And you can help him, Professor. Two old nags are better than one.

KLUNK: Young lady, I don't know whether you're aware of it or not, but you can't talk like that to me. I'm a professor here. Professor Klunk, A.B., Ph.D., M.A., LL.D. and B.S.C.

MYRT: Well shake hands with me. Myrt Blirt, PDQ, DDT, YMCA, AWOL and _____ [Call letters of local radio station.]

LOTUS: *(With motion of hand.)* Come on, gang, leave us be off. The horses are waiting.

Shouts of "Come on," and "Hurry up," are heard as the gang exits right.

COACH: *(Wildly.)* Now wait a minute, Shnorkel. Think this thing over. Your future's at stake. Football season's startin' soon. Charter that wagon, Klunk, and make it snappy. I'll be waitin' out front. We'll cram him all the way out and all the way back. *(Starting right.)* We're still on the word capitulate, Shnorkel, capitulate. *(He exits right as there's a fast curtain.)*

SCENE 3

SCENE: *Athlete's Dormitory at Gillette Tech.*

TIME: *A few days later.*

SET: *The "Student Lounge" sign of Scene 2 is now replace by sign reading "Athlete's Dorm." There are three cots on the stage, one left, one center, and one right.*

AT RISE: *CLIFFORD is stretched out on the center cot, and a CLINKINSTEIN and SNIFFLEBAUM occupies each of the other two. All appear to be sleeping soundly except our CLIFFORD – who is tossing and turning and groaning. As the groans get louder, one of the boy's pushes up on an elbow, glares. CLIFFORD'S groans become painful wails.*

CLINKINSTEIN: Shnorkel. *(He moans.)*

SNIFFLEBAUM: Shnorkel.

CLIFFORD: Huh?

CLINKINSTEIN: Whatsa matter with you?

CLIFFORD: I'm dyin'.

SNIFFLEBAUM: *(Clambering out of bed he's attired in loud pajamas.)* Whatsa matter with the little itsy boy tonight?

CLIFFORD: I'm sick.

CLINKINSTEIN: *(Sitting up. He's also wearing loud pajamas.)* Well bless him's little heart. *(To SNIFFLEBAUM.)* Maybe you better get him's a little bottle.

SNIFFLEBAUM: *(Glaring.)* I think we're out of iodine.

CLIFFORD: I'm sick. And I've been sick for a long time. *(He throws arms over side of cot and groans.)*

CLINKINSTEIN: *(Climbing out of bed.)* What'll we do?

SNIFFLEBAUM: Same as usual. Call the coach.

CLIFFORD groans.

CLINKINSTEIN: *(Crossing right.)* I'll call him, but he ain't gonna like it. *(He exits right.)*

SNIFFLEBAUM: (*Growling, as CLIFFORD moans.*) Wonder what time it is? (*Looks at watch.*) Five in the morning. Holy smoke. Up every hour on the hour takin' care of Shnorkel. Oh, Shnorkel.

CLIFFORD: Huh?

SNIFFLEBAUM: Why don't you drop dead?

CLIFFORD: I'm sick. (*Groans again.*)

SNIFFLEBAUM: Then this is your big opportunity right here.

CLINKINSTEIN: (*Entering.*) I think he'll be right up.

SNIFFLEBAUM: You think?

CLINKINSTEIN: That's what I understood him to say---between cuss words.

CLIFFORD: (*Pushes himself up and looks around.*) I think I'm dyin'.

CLINKINSTEIN: (*Dryly.*) No such luck.

COACH: (*Charging in right. Has on bathrobe and house shoes.*) Where is he? Where is he?

CLINKINSTEIN and SNIFFLEBAUM point to CLIFFORD.

COACH: Shnorkel. Say something, Shnorkel.

CLIFFORD groans.

COACH: Where do you hurt? What's wrong? Any bones broken? Answer me, Shnorkel, answer me.

CLIFFORD: (*Wailing.*) I'm sick.

COACH: Oh, no. (*Louder.*) No! The big game's a week away and Shnorkel gets sick. Where do you hurt? (*To CLINKINSTEIN.*) It's probably strep throat. Diphtheria. (*Crosses to SNIFFLEBAUM.*) Blood poison...water on the brain. (*To CLIFFORD.*) Where do you hurt, Shnorkel?

CLIFFORD: (*Moaning.*) My stomach hurts.

COACH: (*Exploding.*) Stomach? He's got a bellyache and you get me out of bed. What is this, a nursery?

CLIFFORD: I wanna go home.

COACH: (*Bouncing to him and patting his forehead.*) Now, now Shnorkel. Don't you worry. Everything'll be all right.

CLIFFORD: (*Wailing.*) But I wanna go home.

COACH: The big game's a week away, Shnorkel. You can't say things like that.

CLIFFORD: But my stomach hurts, Coach.

COACH: (*Pacing again.*) This is terrible. Horrible. We gotta do something.

CLINKINSTEIN: You know what Mom used to give me when I had the bellyache?

COACH: What?

CLINKINSTEIN: Caster oil.

COACH: (*Triumphantly.*) Caster oil. (*Snaps fingers.*) That's it. Go get the bottle and spoon Fletcherwitz.

SNIFFLEBAUM: Yes, sir. (*He exits left.*)

COACH: We'll have you fixed up in no time, Shnorkel. You'll be out on that football field runnin' like a rabbit. (*Paces around again.*) We gotta be ready for that big game. The big game. And we gotta win that game, men. I've been here for seven year and ain't won a game yet. We're gonna win this game or my name ain't Coach O'Brother of Gillette Tech. Every night in my sleep I see little signs saying "Goodbye, Coach," "Drop dead, Coach," and "Catch the next train to Siberia, Coach." I can't stand that anymore. Men, we've got to win that game. (*He shouts.*) Shnorkel!

CLIFFORD: (*Jumping.*) Yes, sir.

COACH: Just lie still and relax. Everything is going to be all right.

SNIFFLEBAUM: (*Entering with large caster oil bottle and spoons.*) Here you are, Coach.

COACH: (*Snatching it, tries to pour some out, but his hand is shaking so he can't.*) Somebody pour him a spoon of castor oil.

CLINKINSTEIN takes bottle, spoon, starts pouring out a tablespoonful.

COACH: Get up and take your medicine, Shnorkel.

CLIFFORD crawls out of bed. The other pajamas are mild indeed compared to his.



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