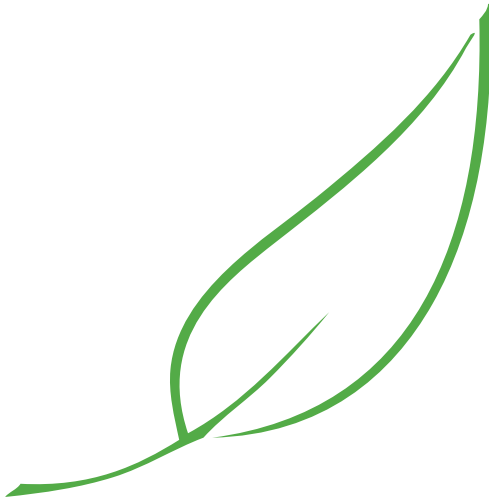


Roadside Freakshow

By Michael Soetaert



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SYNOPSIS: It's a good, old-fashioned American vacation, traveling cross-country in the station wagon with the windows rolled down. You get both the sounds and the smells that way. And my, oh my! There's so much to see! There's car henge and refrigerator henge, the Yaks that Yakitty Yak, Jet Boy, and the world's largest hypodermic needle (67 feet, 9 and 7/8ths inches from plunger to point). But the best roadside attraction of all might have to be the flying saucer just across the Oklahoma State Line. You have to get lost to find it, but if you do, and if you get there by four, maybe you can catch the show. The one where they vaporize the entire planet. There's no charge.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 females, 6 males)

THE LOCALS

HORWITZ FINKELMEYER	Owens the land where the saucer landed
ALLISON FINKELMEYER	His daughter, in love with Robbie
ROBERT ROBERTSON	Finkelmeyer's neighbor, who used to own the land
ROBBIE ROBERTSON, JR.	His son, in love with... well...
LAURA JOAN	The local mechanic

THE ALIENS

FLUKE	A G-19; home planet: Nerkon 2
VROONT	A G-18, with hopes of promotion; home planet Nerkon 2
NWEEP	Their boss; home planet Canterianus
LANGLEY LANGEHORN	Austin, Texas (one of the normal ones)
DOLLY LANGEHORN	Langley's lovely wife, also from Austin
INTERCOM VOICE	Thank you for choosing Vreezon

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CASTING

10-11 players -- originally written for 6 males and 4 females, with the Intercom Voice being doubled, but could be played with 9 males and 2 females, or 2 males and 9 females.

Whereas Nweep was written for a female, and Fluke and Vroont were written for males, they all could be played by guys or girls with only minor changes. Finkelmeyer and Robertson were written for guys as well, but could be played as either.

Act I: Mid-morning on a beautiful summer day somewhere in Southern Oklahoma.

Act II: Early afternoon of that same day.

One set. On a scale of 1-10, with one being *Our Town* and ten being *Noises Off*, I'd give it a 6.

SET NOTES

A flying saucer will take up most of the stage, pretty much dead center. It doesn't have to be very big, but it needs to be big enough to get inside. In reality, you only need to build the front half, especially since it will need to "fly" out backwards in the end.

It's not hard to get it to "fly," and it will be a really cool effect. You only have half a ship anyway, the half the audience sees. Have a lever (or two) underneath it that will raise it up, the higher the better, but you only really need a foot or so. You're only building a shell, anyway, so it can be rather light. And the people who are supposedly in the ship when it takes off can just exit on out the back.

Once the ship is in the "air," you can have wheels that pivot down, which the audience will never see because of the fog. Then just pull the whole thing backward into the curtains while you have the engines "roar" a bit louder, which can be done over the sound system. Lots of fog. Lots of fun. Don't pull out the extension cord when you're going backward.

Of course, if your stage is big enough and you have the fly space above, you can *really* have some fun...

The ship should be a classic flying saucer: gray, windowless, with lots of lights. There needs to be a practical door leading inside set a bit off center to the Right to block the audience from seeing inside. The door should hinge up and be rigged so it looks like it closes automatically. There also needs to be an engine compartment big enough to crawl into with a door that can be opened on the outside, left of the main door.

The rest of the stage should give the impression of a clearing in the woods, with the wings representing trees and underbrush. A fallen tree trunk to sit on, and maybe some bushes would be nice. There is a “No Trespassing” sign tacked to one of the trees.

SOUND EFFECTS

Car trying unsuccessfully to start
Various explosions

PROPS

(in order of appearance and need)

VROONT

Operations Manual

Sealed Tube, inside of which will be a flag pole (possibly in sections) and a flag

Safety goggles

Work gloves

Forms Number 884, both A and B, 79C, 132A, 36C, 28A, and 36D

Communicator box

FLUKE

A yellow, #2 pencil

Communicator box (functional)

A large wad of what looks to be chewing gum (I’d use clay)

DOLLY

Pocket mirror

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Camera – the older the better
Cell phone
Purse with cash

LANGLEY

Plastic wrapped snack cake (a Moon Pie would be perfect)
Guide book
Rock
Cell phone
Wristwatch
Wallet with cash

FINKELMEYER

The deed for his land
Cell phone
Wallet with cash

ROBERTSON

Cell phone
Wallet with cash

ROBBIE

Cell phone
Wallet with pictures

ALLISON

Several cell phones

NWEEP

A calculator
Watch
Communicator box
Ray gun
Suitcase
Pillow

LAURA JOAN

Toolbox with tools

A long, mechanical looking cylinder that water can be poured out of

A bill (not a duck or a cap)

A pen

Lawn chair

COSTUMES

The Aliens

FLUKE and VROONT: They are from Nerkon Two (there is no Nerkon One). Fluke technically outranks Vroont and would like to think it matters, but really, these guys are just delivery drivers, and not very good at that. But that doesn't make them bad. They both will be dressed in somewhat baggy, silver jump suits with silly, pointy, high collars. They each have insignias of some sort on their chests, which need to be different than each other. Their hair will be dark and slicked back. The only thing really incongruent is that they both have their names embroidered on patches on the front of their suits, and on the back are large embroidered patches that say, "Transgalatic Delivery Company: When it simply has to get their eventually." Their movements need to be stiff, like they are only capable of any kind of movement through slow jerks. They will turn their entire bodies, for instance, just to look to the side. The accent I was going for was somewhat eastern Indian.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT NWEEP: She is Vroont and Fluke's boss, Executive Vice President in charge of Resource Development. Forceful and humorless. She wears a severe pant suit with high heels. The only thing remotely alien about the way she dresses is her cape, which should have enough pockets inside for the gizmos she will have. Her hair needs to be very business-like. She speaks slowly and deliberately. She thinks about every word before saying it, except those times she's obviously repeating company dogma.

INTERCOM VOICE: From offstage, never seen. Should sound like a drive through restaurant. Having the voice crack occasionally would be perfect. Note: This voice can be either sex, and can be doubled.

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The Locals

HORWITZ FINKELMEYER: He's the Robertson's neighbor. 50ish. Rotund. Dresses like a farmer: Overalls, boots, work shirt. He has a successful farm, but has cheated his neighbor out of his land just the same.

ALLISON FINKELMEYER – Horwitz's daughter. 20 something, pretty. She is home from college for the summer. She and Robbie used to date, and she has never gotten over him, nor will she, even though Robbie really wishes she would. Wears an ankle length print dress. She would be the kind of girl who wears a headband.

ROBERT ROBERTSON: He's the neighbor. 50ish. A gentleman farmer. He has some college, making him feel superior to the other locals, even though his farm isn't nearly as successful. He dresses like he's trying to make a farming fashion statement. Pressed blue jeans, pressed and tucked in plaid shirt, neatly buttoned at the sleeves. A hat he will never wear. Tries to speak like he's not from the sticks. Yup. He's pretty much a stuck up.

ROBBIE ROBERTSON, JR.: Voila! The son. 20 something. Handsome. Articulate. Home from college, but it's pretty obvious someone's not getting their money worth. Dresses like he's still on campus. He used to date Allison, but they broke up. They're both still in love with each other (although, her more than Robbie). Speaks with a touch of a southern accent, as they probably all do.

LANGLEY LANGEHORN – Gregarious. It's a polite word for obnoxious, but it won't get you sent to the office. He's from Austin, Texas, but they're not the weird ones. Along with his wife, they're on vacation. They're doing a driving tour of the Trail of Tears. They're lost. 40ish, large. Does the stereotype to a tee. Don't feel bad about exploiting stereotypes. They exist because people really are like that. Cowboy hat, lariat, jacket, big belt buckle. Have some fun.

DOLLY LANGEHORN – Langley's lovely wife. 40ish as well. Thin...er. Long sundress with pearls. High heels. Matching handbag. Her hair is boufed up, but it's hard to tell since she always wears a headscarf. She

also always wears horned-rimmed, jewel encrusted sunglasses. She and her husband have a lot of very polite fights.

LAURA JOAN – She’s the mechanic from Silas’ Garage. Young, mid-20s. Pretty, but rough. Hair pulled back, maybe a ball cap. Coveralls with work boots. A cigarette hanging out of her mouth would work, but maybe not on your stage. And lots of grease.

ACT ONE

As the curtain rises we see the spaceship in the clearing surrounded by smoke with its lights flashing. Give it a few ominous moments, followed by the sound of a car trying – unsuccessfully – to start. After several tries FLUKE emerges from the fog, trying to fan it away while choking.

FLUKE: Turn it off! Turn it off!

(The engine sound stops. After a beat VROONT appears from inside of the ship.)

VROONT: Maybe it is flooded.

FLUKE: Flooded? With what?

VROONT: Whatever would flood an engine.

FLUKE: Oh, you do not know, Vroont.

VROONT: You do not know, either, Fluke. Maybe if we open up the engine compartment – wherever that might be – and stare at the engine for a while.

FLUKE: How would that help?

VROONT: I do not know. But it is what my father always did.

FLUKE: Did it ever work for him?

VROONT: No.

FLUKE: Oh, this is just great. First, Vroont, you get us lost. And now you break the spaceship. *(HE sits on a log and cradles his head in his hands.)* I finally get off probation, and now I am in trouble again.

VROONT: *(trying to console him)* Do not take it so hard, Fluke. It was not your fault our last ship was eaten. They should have leash laws on that planet. And we did save the cargo.

FLUKE: It was an empty box.

VROONT: It gave us some place to stay until we were rescued. At least this time we do not have to sleep in a box.

FLUKE: The day is young, my friend. Maybe if you actually knew how to work on a spaceship we would not have to sleep in a box.

VROONT: *(taking out a manual and opening to a well-marked page)* That is not my job. See. *(points to a paragraph)* I am a G-18, which is a Class 2 Pilot's Assistant. It clearly states that my job

responsibility is to Assist the Pilot, not repair engines. (*thumbing to another section*) That is the job of the Mechanic.

FLUKE: (*rising*) What if the pilot needs assistance getting the engine running?

VROONT: Oh, no no no. I cannot do the job of a mechanic. That would violate Union Rules. (*thumbing to another section*) See. It is plainly written here. "No non-union worker may do the job of a union worker." That is bad. Very bad. You would have to wait for a union worker.

FLUKE: But we are both union workers.

VROONT: Yes, but not *that* Union. We are both in Local 942. Brotherhood of Delivery Drivers and their Assistants. Mechanics are members of Intergalactic 717. We are Local. They are Intergalactic.

FLUKE: (*taking the manual*) Give me that stupid thing. (*HE will start thumbing through it.*)

VROONT: You cannot take my manual. How do I know what to do if it is not written down for me to do it? And please do not call it stupid. It is an inanimate object. It cannot help how it was created.

FLUKE: (*reading while simultaneously pushing back VROONT's grabs; suddenly very interested in what HE's reading*) Wait a nurple! Be aware of this information. (*HE shows VROONT the manual.*)

VROONT: I never read that part of the manual, and neither should you.

FLUKE: Why the Glorgg not?

VROONT: Because that is the part for Explorers, Scouts, and Imperialists. You have to be a G-39 to qualify for any of those. And then you have to pass the Test. You cannot even take the Test until you are a G-38. I am only a G-18. And you, my friend, are only a G-19.

FLUKE: I was a G-20.

VROONT: That is still a long way from a G-38.

FLUKE: Just read this.

(*VROONT crosses his arms and turns his back on FLUKE.*)

FLUKE: Fine. Then I will read it to you.

VROONT: You can read it, but only a G-38 is allowed to listen.

FLUKE: (*reading, which means you don't have to memorize the lines*) "In the event that any employee of the Transgalactic Delivery Company, a subsidy of the Envrison Corporation, official sponsors of the 193rd Trans-dimensional Nuclear Annihilation Championship, should find a Hither Before Unknown World, that employee may claim that world in the name of the Company."

VROONT: (*his interest is piqued*) Excuse me?

FLUKE: I thought a G-18 was not allowed to listen.

VROONT: A G-18 with hopes of being a G-40. (*HE quickly takes the book from FLUKE and thumbs to another section; reading*) "Any employee who claims a Hither Before Unknown World is immediately eligible for G-40, provided he, she, it, or they pass the Test." That, my friend, is a pay raise, and another week's vacation every year.

FLUKE: That, my friend, gets us out of the current predicament we are in.

VROONT: But our spaceship still will not start.

FLUKE: Oh, it is just flooded. When it gets unflooded, it will start right up. If not, we will stare at the engine for a while. That is something to worry about later. For now, we have a need to claim this planet. (*HE takes the manual back from VROONT and thumbs to another section; reading*) "Claiming a Planet: In order to claim a Hither Before Unknown World in the name of the Transgalactic Delivery Company, when it simply has to get their eventually, you must... One: Locate the company flag in the company flag compartment, which is located in section 48B dash 22a."

VROONT: Where is that?

FLUKE: (*HE thumbs to another section and folds it open like a centerfold; in fact, HE responds to it like it's a centerfold, doing a double-take.*) Wow! That is impressive.

VROONT: (*crossing over to look at the centerfold, too; not impressed*) What? It is just the schematic for the Holihell 1200 Death Cannon. And besides, I believe you have the picture upside down.

(*FLUKE will spin the magazine around, try to cover with a knowing smile, and then fold the centerfold back up. HE will turn to yet*

another page which HE will have to look at from different angles before finally announcing...)

FLUKE: The company flag compartment is the little skinny compartment right by the main door.

(VROONT quickly ducks into the ship and returns with a large, sealed tube.)

Good. *(going back to the section in the manual HE was at before and continuing to read)* "Next, carefully open the end of the protective cylinder marked 'A'."

(VROONT spins the tube around and starts to open it, but stops when FLUKE says...)

(still reading) "Make sure to take caution with tube sealing materials, for they have been known to produce nasty paper cuts."

(VROONT takes out a pair of safety goggles and puts them on, then HE puts on a pair of work gloves.)

That is good, my friend. Nobody wants to collect workmen's compensation.

(VROONT easily removes the end of the tube, and then removes his safety glasses and gloves.)

"Once the end has been safely removed from the protective cylinder, remove the flag from said protective cylinder."

(VROONT tries to reach into the top of the tube, but can't get the flag, so HE turns the tube over. The flag quickly slides out and hits VROONT on his foot, which obviously hurts, causing him to hop around painfully.)

(who has not been watching VROONT) "Be careful when removing the flag from the protective cylinder. Flags have been known to

slide quickly from tubing and hurt feet.” (HE looks up; VROONT has stopped hopping.) Good. You got it out safely. (once more reading) “Next: Unfurl the flag.”

(VROONT unfurls the flag. It is a blue triangle with large, red “© ® ™” symbols more or less in the middle. While VROONT is unfurling the flag, unnoticed to both VROONT and FLUKE, LANGLEY and DOLLY LANGEHORN have wandered into the clearing UR. DOLLY is absorbed with a small pocket mirror, making sure her hair is still contained beneath her head scarf. Only LANGLEY has noticed the aliens. HE has been unwrapping a Moon Pie, pauses momentarily, then throws the wrapper on the ground. HE continues to watch while eating the cake. Both VROONT and FLUKE are too engrossed in what THEY’re doing to notice them.)

“Next, insert flag firmly into the surface of the Hither Before Unknown World.”

(VROONT hesitates, then pushes the flag into the ground. In case you can’t put a hole through your stage, just have a flag stand hidden inside some fake foliage. With the flag in the ground, VROONT smiles at FLUKE, who smiles back.)

Now it’s my part. I will officially claim this Hither Before Unknown World.

VROONT: Why cannot I claim this Hither Before Unknown World?

FLUKE: Because I am the senior officer.

VROONT: You are not an officer. You must be a G-25 before you become an officer. And you must pass the Test.

FLUKE: You are not an officer, either. And I am senior.

VROONT: Only by one.

FLUKE: And that, my friend, is good enough. (reading) “I hereby claim this Hither Before Unknown World in the name of the Transgalactic Delivery Company, a subsidy of the Envrison Corporation, makers of the new Planet Scooter, averaging 32 parsecs a gallon. A cleaner scooter for a cleaner galaxy. Have you driven a Planet Scooter today?”

(Both FLUKE and VROONT come to attention facing the flag and salute, which comprises of smacking the backs of their right hands against their foreheads. It doesn't hurt that bad.)

LANGLEY: *(finally)* Well, look at them there fellers all done up like that. I do believe we've stumbled across two of them rap performers. They must be filmin' one of their so-called music videos way out here in the middle of nowhere. *(calling, but not looking at DOLLY)* Dolly, tell the kids we done found us a couple of rap singers.

DOLLY: *(not looking away from her mirror)* I'm right here, Langley, dear.

LANGLEY: *(still not really looking at DOLLY)* What did you say, dear?

DOLLY: I said if you would roll up the car windows and turn on the air conditioning, like most normal Americans, we wouldn't all be going deaf.

LANGLEY: *(not hearing her at all)* I think they're fixin' on singin' us a number. *(shouting, but not looking at, DOLLY)* Honey, tell the kids they're gonna perform. *(to the ALIENS)* Personally, I don't care for that new fangled music. For me, if it don't have a fiddle, it ain't worth the effort. But you go right on an' play. I'll just nod my head, smile, and pretend that you boys got talent.

DOLLY: Langley, dear? Don't you remember? We left the kids at home.

LANGLEY: Are you sure? I could a sworn they were with us when we stopped back at Jesse James' Hideout.

DOLLY: *(unsure)* No, dear.

LANGLEY: Are you sure?

DOLLY: *(suddenly very resolute)* I am sure that I am sure. And besides, we can always check on the way back. And Langley, dear, I hate to contradict you...

LANGLEY: Then don't.

DOLLY: *(ignoring LANGLEY, which SHE's good at)* ...but I don't believe, Langley, that those are rap singers.

LANGLEY: Well, look at the way they're dressed. What normal person would dress like that?

DOLLY: Langley, dear, rap singers haven't dressed that way since the 1980s.

LANGLEY: Well, that doesn't stop them from ever dressing that way again. Now, does it? Maybe they're an old group tryin' to make a come-back.

DOLLY: Not to be critical, dear, but it is more than obvious that you have failed to stay abreast of the current trends.

LANGLEY: *(trying not to be heard, poorly)* I told you not to talk that way around the children.

DOLLY: And I told you the children were not around.

LANGLEY: I don't see how that makes a lick of difference.

(During the following lines, DOLLY and LANGLEY will follow the ALIENS' conversation. DOLLY with increasing confusion, LANGLEY with increasing anger.)

FLUKE: *(to VROONT; as if the LANGEHORNS are not really there)*
It must be Hither Before Unknowlians.

VROONT: Oh, that is good. That is a sure promotion. And maybe they will know how to fix our spaceship.

FLUKE: Dibs.

VROONT: Oh no no no, my friend. That is not how things are done. *(thumbing to a section of the Manual; reading)* "In order to claim an indigenous life form on a Hither Before Unknown World, forms 396B and 397A must be filled out in triplicate and filed with Central Office at least three weeks before said life form is to be discovered... *(reading with increasing disbelief)* However, it is also acceptable to simplify the process by loudly calling out 'Dibs.'" Well, I most certainly am surprised.

FLUKE: Do not feel bad. Maybe we will discover more.

VROONT: Dibs on the next ones we find.

FLUKE: You cannot call dibs in advance.

VROONT: *(handing the Manual toward FLUKE, which HE won't take)*
I do not know why not. You just show me in the Manual where it says I cannot.

LANGLEY: *(HE has been following the conversation with increasing irritation.)* Excuse me!

VROONT: The larger of the two is attempting to communicate with us. (*thumbing through the Manual, but finding nothing that will help*) What should we do? There is nothing here about communicating with Hither Before Unknownlians.

FLUKE: That does not matter. I still have dibs.

DOLLY: (*excited*) See, dear, I was right. Them ain't no rap singers. I think we may have discovered aliens. This almost makes you missin' I-44 worth-while.

LANGLEY: I did *not* miss I-44. I followed the sign. It was the sign that was wrong.

FLUKE: On second thought, you may have these.

VROONT: Oh, no no no. You claimed them. You have to take them. Dibs cannot be undone.

FLUKE: It does not say that in the Manual.

LANGLEY: (*to VROONT and FLUKE; stepping forward*) Now hold on there just a minute! You can't just go claiming people to be your own! That's not how things are done around here!

VROONT: (*pulling back the Manual*) We most certainly can. We have the Manual.

LANGLEY: Well, I don't know where you boys are from...

FLUKE: Do not feel bad. You have not been told.

LANGLEY: What?

VROONT: We come from Nerkon Two.

LANGLEY: Nerkon Two? I didn't see no exit signs for that.

FLUKE: It is in a different Galaxy.

DOLLY: (*excited*) See, dear. I told you they were aliens. (*taking out a camera*) Why don't you go stand next to the nice aliens and I'll take your picture?

LANGLEY: (*outraged*) Nice aliens? They called "dibs" on us. They probably want to have us for dinner!

(*VROONT and FLUKE look at each other and shrug their shoulders.*)

DOLLY: Oh, don't be silly. They wouldn't want to eat us. (*knowingly*) We're from Texas. Now where did you boys say you were from?

VROONT: We come from Nerkon Two.

DOLLY: Oh, Nerkon Two. That sounds very exciting. (*trying to act educated*) Isn't that near Nerkon One?

FLUKE: No. There is no Nerkon One. We come from a very boring part of the Galaxy. Our planet used to be called Snore, but we changed it to Nerkon Two in the hopes that others might actually go there. The sludge pools are very beautiful this time of the year.

VROONT: Very beautiful, indeed.

FLUKE: When the swamp gases spontaneously ignite...

VROONT: Ah... It is a thing to behold.

FLUKE: A thing indeed.

DOLLY: Swamp gases? Why... that sounds absolutely dreadful.

FLUKE: It is.

VROONT: Absolutely.

DOLLY: How would changin' your planet's name make it any less dreadful?

FLUKE: It is like the movies. We hoped others would think our planet is really exciting since they only make sequels to really good movies.

DOLLY: See, dear. I told you they weren't from around here. Why, you boys will have to excuse our manors, or lack thereof. We have not properly introduced ourselves.

(DOLLY walks up to VROONT and FLUKE and offers her hand. VROONT and FLUKE will stoop down and carefully inspect her hand, puzzled, for a few moments while DOLLY continues to smile with her hand outstretched. Finally, VROONT, thinking HE's caught on, will stand up, smile, and extend his hand. Only HE has his hand on the wrong side of DOLLY's – the backs of their hands are facing each other. VROONT is obviously very pleased with himself. DOLLY will politely smile and then switch her hand so their palms are facing each other, but VROONT will immediately switch back. THEY will do this a couple of times.)

FLUKE: What are you doing?

VROONT: I do not know. But I find it enjoyable. Would you like to try?

(VROONT pulls his hand back to give FLUKE a turn, and DOLLY uses the opportunity to politely retreat.)

DOLLY: (*while SHE's retreating; with a nervous laugh*) We're from Austin, Texas. But don't worry, we're not the weird ones. My name is Dolly Langehorn, but you can call me Misses. That there is my husband Langley. And what did you boys say your names were?

VROONT: They are the same as they've always been.

FLUKE: And I hope they will always be.

VROONT: Though I'd be open to suggestions.

FLUKE: Which is nothing to be ashamed of.

DOLLY: I'm sorry, but you boys aren't makin' a lick a sense.

FLUKE: We will try harder then. My name is Fluke.

DOLLY: Your name is Fluke?

FLUKE: That is what I said.

DOLLY: Like the tail of a whale?

LANGLEY: Or a worm?

DOLLY: Or random chance?

LANGLEY: Or maybe a worm that infests the tail of a whale by random chance?

FLUKE: Where I come from, Fluke means "One who is likely not to know what his name means."

DOLLY: (*puzzled*) But you do know what your name means.

FLUKE: I know. It is... how do you say...

DOLLY: A conundrum?

VROONT: Yes?

DOLLY: Excuse me?

VROONT: You called my name.

DOLLY: Your name's Conundrum?

VROONT: Yes. I am Conundrum. Vroont Conundrum. People who I am on pleasant terms with call me Vroont.

LANGLEY: (*suspicious*) So... you boys are a claimin' our planet for your planet...

VROONT: Oh, no no no. We are not claiming it for our planet. We are claiming it for our Corporation: The Envrison Corporation, LLG, now offering full term after-life insurance. Can you ever be safe enough?

LANGLEY: LLG?

FLUKE: Limited Liability Government.

LANGLEY: (*suspicious*) What, exactly, are you boys intendin' on doin' with our planet?

FLUKE: All we intend to do with your planet we have already done.
Your planet has been properly claimed...

VROONT: Ahh... A proper claiming. It is a delight to behold.

FLUKE: And now that it is claimed, others will come.

LANGLEY: (*with suspicion*) And what will these others do?

FLUKE: That all depends on the planet. Sometimes they simply extinguish all the non-foliate indigenous life forms.

VROONT: Other times they strip the surface clean of all vegetation.

FLUKE: And other times they kill off all the indigenous life forms, strip the surface clean of all vegetation, and *then* dig all the minerals out of the ground.

LANGLEY: Why, you just can't tear up a planet and leave it that way!

VROONT: Oh, no no no. After they get done taking all the resources, then they smooth it back over and build a strip mall.

LANGLEY: You're gonna build a strip mall on our *entire* planet?

VROONT: Most certainly. They are very popular.

LANGLEY: But that's just not right.

FLUKE: It will be duty free. You won't have to pay taxes. Does that make it any better?

LANGLEY: No!

DOLLY: (*interested*) Just what kinds of *things* are you planning on selling at your strip malls?

VROONT: They sell lots of things.

FLUKE: But mostly shoes.

VROONT: That is true. A lot of shoes.

DOLLY: (*definitely excited*) Oh! Did you hear that, Langley? They're gonna have shoe stores. *Imported* shoes. How exciting!

VROONT: And handbags, too.

DOLLY: (*very excited*) Handbags! Oh, I can't wait.

FLUKE: (*in confidence*) Trust me, they are not that great.

VROONT: They are cheap shoes that are poorly made in the Sarius Nebula by cheaply made Sarians.

FLUKE: Then they increase the price by 400% so they can cut it in half and make you think you are getting a good deal because you have to go out of your way to get them.

LANGLEY: Why would anybody think that's a deal?

VROONT: Because we will call it a Discount Outlet.

DOLLY: *(who is obviously only hearing what SHE wants to hear)* Did you hear that? It's a Discount Outlet! We'll get imported shoes and save money, too!

(LANGLEY pulls DOLLY aside. While THEY're talking, VROONT and FLUKE will return to the spaceship and look around for something to fix.)

LANGLEY: *(in confidence, not wanting to be heard)* We've got to stop these boys.

DOLLY: Stop them from making a shoe store? Are you out of your mind?

LANGLEY: They are planning on destroying our planet! And probably us, too.

DOLLY: Do you know how hard it is to get a handbag that matches your shoes at a decent price? Now you just leave these boys be!

(Enter ROBERTSON and ROBBIE from UL, pushing their way through the foliage. VROONT and FLUKE will watch them with quiet interest, somewhat like mildly interested people at a tennis match.)

ROBERTSON: *(trying not to act out of breath – it's subtle, but it can be done; outraged)* What is going on here? I didn't give anybody permission to film an alien movie.

ROBBIE: I don't believe they're making a movie, Daddy. I think that's a real spaceship.

ROBERTSON: Well, what's it doing here?

ROBBIE: I think it's parked here, Daddy.

ROBERTSON: Well I can see that. Tell me again, son, why I'm spending all that money on college when you ain't gettin' a lick smarter? *(not letting ROBBIE answer; noticing the LANGEHORNS, in particular, LANGLEY)* And who are you?

LANGLEY: *(a bit offended)* Why... I am Langley Langehorn from Austin, Texas. And this is my lovely wife, Dolly...

DOLLY: *(with a curtsy)* Howdy do.

ROBERTSON: *(not wanting to be polite, but still...tipping his hat)* Ma'am. *(to LANGLEY; softening up; offering his hand)* I'm Robert Robertson... and this is my son, Robert, Jr.

ROBBIE: You can call me Robbie... It's short for Robert.

ROBERTSON: They say that intelligence skips a generation.

(ALL of the MEN shake hands and politely nod to DOLLY.)

LANGLEY: We were just tryin' to find our way back to pavement when we stumbled on this here flying saucer parked right here. What brings you out in the woods in the middle of the day?

ROBERTSON: *(defensive)* A man don't need a reason to be on his land at any time, does he?

(With the mention of land, both VROONT and FLUKE become very interested. THEY cross to ROBERTSON. VROONT will have several forms in his hand.)

FLUKE: Excuse me. Did you say that this was your land?

ROBERTSON: And if I did, what's it to ya?

FLUKE: *(to VROONT)* He has answered a question with a question. Very confusing.

VROONT: Very confusing indeed.

ROBERTSON: Yeah. This is my land.

(Enter FINKELMEYER and ALLISON from UR, where THEY'll stand unnoticed until THEY are.)

VROONT: Excellent. Then we will need you to fill out Form Number 884...

(VROONT hands the form to ROBERTSON, who, confused, takes it, as HE will do with the others.)

FLUKE: Both A and B...

VROONT: Form Number 79C...

FLUKE: *(holding one up)* Please use a number two pencil...

VROONT: Form 132A...

FLUKE: Press heavy. You are making several copies.

VROONT: And Forms 36C and 28A and 36D.

FLUKE: If you are ready, you have 15 minutes. Begin.

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ROBERTSON: (*outraged; throwing the forms on the ground*) I ain't fillin' out no stupid forms!

VROONT: Oh, but you must.

FLUKE: More than must. It is imperative.

ROBERTSON: And just what are these forms for?

VROONT: (*while picking up the forms from the ground*) Form number 884...

FLUKE: Both A and B...

VROONT: ...authorizes us to take your land without your having to be notified.

ROBERTSON: Excuse me!

VROONT: Form number 884...

FLUKE: Both A and B...

ROBERTSON: I heard what you said the first time!

FLUKE: (*to VROONT*) He is very confusing.

VROONT: (*to FLUKE*) Very confusing indeed. (*to ROBERTSON who will become even more outraged*) Form 79C allows us to take all of your possessions, including mineral rights and anything in any other dimension, even those dimensions that we are not yet aware of. 132A allows us to completely destroy everything that you have, including you, and 36C, 28A, and 36D...

FLUKE: Lovely forms.

VROONT: Lovely forms, indeed. They allow your cable to be signed over to us without having to wait for a cable repairperson to do so.

FLUKE: It is very inconvenient to have to wait for the cable repairperson.

VROONT: Very inconvenient indeed.

(*VROONT offers the forms once again to ROBERTSON, who once again knocks them on the ground. VROONT will immediately begin picking them up again.*)

ROBERTSON: Now get this straight! Ain't nobody taking this land from me! Ever!

(*FINKELMEYER, in a huff, crosses to ROBERTSON; his daughter, ALLISON, hangs back and is unnoticed, especially by ROBBIE.*)

FINKELMEYER: Of course nobody's taking this land from you, Mr. Robert R. Robertson! Because I, Horwitz Finkelmeier, have already taken this land from *you*!

ROBERTSON: (*ready to fight*) This is not your land, sir!

FINKELMEYER: (*with righteous indignity*) It most certainly is! I have the deed for this land.

VROONT: (*offering the forms*) Oh, good. Then it is you who should have these forms.

FINKELMEYER: (*making no move whatsoever to take the proffered forms*) You want me to show you where to file them forms, boy?

VROONT: That will not be necessary. They are to be returned to holding bin 92C.

(*FLUKE crosses over and whispers in VROONT's ear. VROONT gets a look of shock on his face, which quickly passes.*)

VROONT: (*to FINKELMEYER, feigning pleasantness*) No, thank you.

(*VROONT, with his forms, and FLUKE will fade back to UL toward the spaceship. During the following lines... well, pretty much until THEY have lines again, THEY will take on the air of watching that slightly interesting tennis match once again.*)

FINKELMEYER: (*as VROONT's moving away*) What kind of a fool is that?

ROBERTSON: I'd say no bigger fool than you if you think you're just gonna waltz in here and take my land without a fight.

FINKELMEYER: I appreciate a good fight. But the fight's over. It's done. (*waving a piece of paper*) I got a legal writ right here that says this land is mine. It's official. It's signed by Judge Applegate himself.

ROBERTSON: Well, lah tee dah! Judge Applegate don't know Jack...

LANGLEY: (*cutting in*) Gentlemen! Gentlemen! I don't know what the problem is, but there is a lady present!

(*BOTH MEN look around, embarrassed, and mumble an apology to DOLLY, who gives a polite curtsy back. It is here that ROBBIE,*

looking around, notices ALLISON. THEY will lock gazes for an intense beat or two, and then ALLISON will suddenly look away. ROBBIE, after half a beat, give or take, will slowly look away himself.)

LANGLEY: Now if I may be so bold, why are you two fighting over this insignificant piece of land?

FINKELMEYER: It's only insignificant to people who don't want it.

ROBERTSON: That Finkelmeyer...

LANGLEY: Now, there's no reason to go making fun of a fella's name.

ROBERTSON: That is his name! *(with disdain)* Horwitz Finkelmeyer!

FINKELMEYER: *(obviously an issue HE's dealt with his entire life)* I am as my daddy named me!

ROBERTSON: That Finkelmeyer done cheated me out of my land. I owned this land fair and square. Why, it's been in my family since I bought it. But he went and found a loophole in the law, and I'll be boiled in clam sauce if he didn't just go ahead and use it. He doesn't need my land! And he especially shouldn't be cheatin' someone that used to buy him an occasional cup of coffee outta anything! Why, where I come from, that means something.

FINKELMEYER: I didn't put the loophole in the law; that was the lawmakers. And the way I see it, they wouldn't a put it there if they hadn't intended for me to use it. *(to LANGLEY; while pointing at unseen landmarks)* Ya see, the title clearly states that the eastern most boundary of my land runs on a line parallel with County Road 142, until that parallel line crosses Finkelmeyer Creek. And then it follows the path of the creek until it meets County Road 213. That is the law.

ROBERTSON: First of all, it is *not* Finkelmeyer Creek. It is Robertson Creek. And second of all, you changed the path of *Robertson* Creek by damming the stream.

FINKELMEYER: Hey, watch your mouth, boy. There is a lady present. Besides, it was my stream. That's why it's called *Finkelmeyer* Creek. And if I chose to construct an earthen wall across my very own stream, on my very own property, that would be my very own business. If the steam then chose to go elsewhere, well, that would be the stream's business.

ROBERTSON: That isn't right and you know it.

FINKELMEYER: You say it ain't right? It's the law. You're wantin' to pick nits, but the law don't work that way. They don't print the law books in those pretty pastel colors that you city boys like. It's in black and white. Black for the words. White for the paper.

ROBERTSON: I know why I can't reason none with you. It's because you're an idiot!

FINKELMEYER: *(ready to fight again)* I will tolerate many a thing, sir, but do not impinge on the good name of my intelligence!

LANGLEY: *(cutting in between)* Gentlemen! Gentlemen! We got bigger problems here than your petty land disputes.

ROBERTSON and FINKELMEYER: Petty?!

LANGLEY: *(motioning the OTHERS to a huddle, which THEY do)* Need I remind the two of you that not more than seven minutes ago these strangely dressed gentlemen... *(HE motions with his head toward VROONT and FLUKE, who will smile and give polite finger waves)* ... announced that they are planning on destroying the entire earth to make a strip mall? Now need I remind you that, in the event of such a catastrophe, who owns this miserable piece of land won't matter squat?

FINKELMEYER: Well, what do you suggest?

(LANGLEY looks over at the ALIENS and then THEY ALL huddle together, unheard. While THEY're doing that, ROBBIE has crossed to ALLISON, who still has her back to him.)

ROBBIE: *(after a beat, nervous)* Why, hello Allison.

ALLISON: *(slowly turning around, icy)* Oh? Oh, hello, Robbie.

ROBBIE: *(after an awkward silence)* And how are you?

ALLISON: I am fine. *(after another awkward silence)* So... how are things between you and... what was her name?

ROBBIE: *(offended)* You know darn good and well her name is Melanie. And, if you must know, we're not dating anymore.

ALLISON: *(at first elated)* You're not? *(almost nasty)* I can't say as that comes as a surprise.

ROBBIE: And just what do you mean by that?

ALLISON: Nothing... Except I'm not surprised that you can't stay with just one girl. Did you get tired of her, too?

ROBBIE: If you remember, it wasn't my idea to date around.

ALLISON: Well I only suggested it because I didn't think you would.

Besides, dating around means just that – dating *around*. Not just one person, and definitely *not* Melanie Blake. How could you?

ROBBIE: How could I? I asked her and she said, "Yes."

ALLISON: Which time?

ROBBIE: Every time. Except those times she asked me out.

ALLISON: (*shocked*) She asked you out?

ROBBIE: Yeah. Why not?

ALLISON: Because girls aren't supposed to ask out guys, that's why not. At least, not *good* girls.

ROBBIE: Maybe I don't want a girl like that.

ALLISON: Well maybe you don't want me.

ROBBIE: Hello? I don't have you. Remember? We broke up. In fact, you broke up with me.

ALLISON: I didn't really break up with you. We just put things on hold. Until you put Melanie Blake on hold. How could you?

ROBBIE: Isn't this where we started?

ALLISON: Oh stop!

ROBBIE: Fine by me.

(ALLISON turns back around again in a huff, and ROBBIE stomps off toward the OTHER MEN, who have broken up their huddle, giving knowing glances at the ALIENS.)

ROBERTSON: (*to LANGLEY*) So, what brings you and the family out here to this part of nowhere.

DOLLY: (*from off to the side*) His inability to find *somewhere*.

LANGLEY: (*ignoring DOLLY*) I told the misses that this year we was gonna take a vacation. A real vacation. An American vacation. Drivin' cross country in the station wagon with the windows down.

DOLLY: I still don't see why we gotta have the windows rolled down. That's why they invented air conditioning, so a lady's hair wouldn't be be blown to Kingdom Come. Why, if it weren't for a scarf, I'd a left my "do" at the Oklahoma State Line.

LANGLEY: (*to DOLLY*) I done explained that. I don't know why you bring it up every time we slow down enough to have a conversation. (*aside, to ROBERTSON*) Which, by the way, is an advantage.

(back to DOLLY) What's the point in seeing America if you can't smell America?

DOLLY: All I've been smellin' is diesel fumes. And dust. Why, if that's what America smells like, I'd just as soon stay indoors.

LANGLEY: (to ROBERTSON) We're takin' ourselves on an auto tour of the Trail of Tears. We're followin' the trail backwards.

ROBERTSON: Why?

LANGLEY: We thought it might be less tearful that way.

ROBERTSON: No. What I meant was, why follow it at all?

LANGLEY: Why? What kind of question is that? It's so me and the misses can learn some real American history, that's why. You ain't never too old to learn, that's what I was just tellin' the misses. Tell me, now, what are you ever gonna learn if all ya do is read it from some text book sittin' in some classroom? You know, everybody always goes on and on about how bad them Indians had it. Why, there's places to eat and sleep all along the Interstate. I don't see that they had a thing to complain about. Now that's the kind of learnin' you ain't gonna get from no teacher. Ya know, you depend on the schools to raise your children and look at what ya get. And then they expect ya to give 'em more money!

(Over the next several lines, DOLLY and LANGLEY will be having a very polite argument, as THEY often do. THEY will never raise their voices, but the tenseness should be very apparent.)

DOLLY: I hate to contradict you, dear...

LANGLEY: Well, if you hate it so much, dear, then don't...

DOLLY: ...but I believe the conversation we were havin' had very little to do with the current state of education, except, perhaps, when I suggested that you might stand to learn to ask for directions. Which, I believe, is why we are tryin' to find the Interstate at this very moment.

LANGLEY: Not at this very moment, dear. We are taking a break at this very moment.

DOLLY: If we were takin' a proper break, we would be at a Stuckey's. We're taking a break here, in the middle of nowhere, because you wouldn't go the direction the sign said we should go.

LANGLEY: That was *not* a sign for the Trail of Tears. That was a sign for the Lewis and Clark Trail.

ROBERTSON: There are signs for the Trail of Tears?

LANGLEY: How else would you know where it is?

DOLLY: The signs are only useful if you actually follow them, dear.

LANGLEY: I was not following a sign for the Trail of Tears. We had done got ourselves off on the the Lewis and Clark Trail. And I ain't followin' no trail laid out by nobody named *Meriwether*.

DOLLY: It doesn't matter what his name was, dear, because it wasn't his trail. The Lewis and Clark Trail did not come this far south.

LANGLEY: And how do you pretend to know that information?

DOLLY: Because I pretended to pay attention when I was in high school, that's why.

LANGLEY: I have told you before, I had plays to learn. If I would've wasted my time learnin' all that nonsense, it wouldn't have gotten our team to the state quarter finals, now, would it?

DOLLY: But it may have gotten us back to the Interstate.

LANGLEY: *(suddenly breaking away from his WIFE in a mighty effort to remain civil; to ROBERTSON; feigning happiness)* There's nothin' like a vacation to bring a family back together.

ROBERTSON: So... you're still on the outward loop of your vacation, then.

LANGLEY: Yes, we are. We figured we'd follow the trail 'till it ain't no more, and then that's where we'd turn around.

DOLLY: Well, then, I guess we're headed home... right, dear?

LANGLEY: You know good and well we ain't turnin' around until we get at least to Ill-in-noise. *(to ROBERTSON)* I made a promise that we'd go through Crossgrove, Ill-in-noise, on the way home, and that's a promise I intend to keep. According to our guide book, *(HE takes a beaten up book awkwardly from his pocket, since it had to be more or less folded in two to fit in the first place, and holds it up for emphasis.)* they got the world's biggest hyper-dermic needle in Crossgrove. 67 feet, 9 and 7/8ths inches from plunger to point. *(half reading)* You know, it says that they manufacture 82% of all the hyper-dermic needles in all the states below the Mason-Dixon Line. Now there's a place I never had much interest in.

ROBERTSON: What?

LANGLEY: Why the Mason-Dixon Line. What else? (*once more referring to his book*) They give tours Monday through Friday. According to the book, they start the last one at 3:45. It says reservations aren't necessary, but I'm plannin' on callin' ahead. That's the kind of thing I'd just hate to miss.

ROBERTSON: They give tours of the Mason-Dixon Line?

LANGLEY: No, son. I'm talkin' about the hyper-dermic factory. Who would want to take a tour of a line?

FINKELMEYER: (*looking at his watch; to ALLISON*) Shoot. I reckon them fellers we hired ain't gonna show.

ALLISON: Who was that, daddy?

FINKELMEYER: Why, them fellas that was gonna build the fence.

(At the mention of "fence" ROBERTSON perks up and begins crossing over to FINKELMEYER.)

FINKELMEYER: I knew it was fishy when they wanted to be paid up front. Well, let that be a lesson to ya, sweetheart. You have to know how to handle these types. Why, they wanted 300 dollars to build this fence, but I knew it was only worth 200. And then they only got half of that up front. They probably got busted by the border patrol. Serves 'em right.

ROBERTSON: (*alarmed; to FINKELMEYER*) A fence! It's bad enough that you steal away my land! And now ya gotta go and fence me out to boot! Well, that's where I draw the line!

FINKELMEYER: It is my land. I can do with it as I please.

ROBERTSON: And you were usin' illegal aliens, to boot.

(VROONT and FLUKE, at the mention of "illegal aliens" will pop to attention, so to speak, and cross over to DOLLY and LANGLEY during the following lines.)

FINKELMEYER: They're only illegal if they don't get caught.

(FINKELMEYER and ROBERTSON will turn their backs on each other in a huff, much like... well... everybody else.)

VROONT: (*alarmed; joining the conversation*) It is illegal to be an alien?

LANGLEY: No. Not at all. If you're where you ain't supposed to be, that's when you're illegal. (*thinking about it for a beat*) Pretty much, if you come here from somewhere else, then you're illegal.

VROONT: What a strange planet we are on, where people from somewhere else are illegal.

LANGLEY: Not everybody from somewhere else is illegal, just some of them

VROONT: And that is even stranger.

LANGLEY: Ya see, it's only the ones that didn't ask permission first who are the illegal ones.

FLUKE: Does everybody have to ask permission to go places?

LANGLEY: Why, heavens no! This is America. We're free to go where we want.

FLUKE: Then how do you become illegal?

LANGLEY: You're gettin' it all mixed up. It's when people come to America from other places... from other countries...

VROONT: And other planets?

LANGLEY: (*thinking*) Yeah, I reckon so. Maybe. Are ya plannin' on stayin'?

FLUKE: Would that make a difference?

LANGLEY: Most certainly.

VROONT: So if you come to America, you are illegal?

LANGLEY: (*starting to get frustrated*) No! It's not the people who want to visit here who are illegal. They can come and go. As long as they eventually go. It's the people who intend to stay. They're the illegal ones. And when we catch 'em, we lock 'em up, so they can't get away.

VROONT: Why would they ever want to go to such a place?

LANGLEY: Why, it's because of all the freedom we have.

FLUKE: (*concerned*) Are we to be locked up?

LANGLEY: Oh, no. You boys aren't plannin' on stayin'... are you?

VROONT: Not any longer than we must.

LANGLEY: That's good. But if you stay longer than that, you need to get yourselves registered.

Fluke: Registered?

LANGLEY: Most certainly. You see, it's all about bein' registered.

That's what makes you legal.

VROONT: And to think...

FLUKE: Yes, my friend. Thinking is good.

VROONT: And to think, I was beginning to feel bad about this Hither Before Unknown World being blown to smithereens.

FLUKE: Oh, no no no. I believe they are only planning on blowing it to Kingdom Come.

VROONT: I have always had a hard time telling the difference.

(FLUKE and VROONT fade back to the spaceship while FLUKE is going through the motion of explaining the difference, leaving LANGLEY standing there by himself, more or less. I mean, how much by yourself can anybody be with seven other people on a stage? LANGLEY notices FINKELMEYER and ROBERTSON, both still with their backs to each other.)

LANGLEY: *(in a loud whisper)* Fellas! Hey, fellas!

(THEY don't respond.)

(even louder) Fellas!

(THEY still don't respond, so LANGLEY sticks his fingers in his mouth and lets rip with a whistle, the louder, the better. Of course, FINKELMEYER and ROBERTSON are the only ones who pretend to hear it. When THEY finally notice LANGLEY, HE motions that THEY join him, which THEY do.)

Well... alright then. I don't know about you fellas, but I'm through waitin'.

(THEY all nod in agreement and nervously look at the ALIENS, but nobody moves.)

You all remember the plan, right?

(THEY all nod again, but still don't move.)

Well... let's go!

ROBERTSON: You first.

(FINKELMEYER nods in agreement.)

LANGLEY: Oh, good grief! Get 'em!

(THEY suddenly rush the ALIENS, who, with only mild interest, watch them as THEY do so. ROBERTSON grabs VROONT firmly by the arm, and FINKELMEYER firmly grabs FLUKE's arm. THEY are all obviously proud of themselves, even the ALIENS.)

Ha! We got ya now!

(For a few awkward moments THEY continue to hold on to the ALIENS, who continue to smile politely.)

ROBERTSON: What do we do now?

LANGLEY: Well... I don't rightly know.

FINKELMEYER: That was it? That was your plan? "Run up and grab 'em!" And nothin' else?

LANGLEY: Well, you were there, too. I didn't hear you comin' up with any brilliant ideas.

ROBERTSON: That's because we thought you had the brilliant idea.

FINKELMEYER: Well, apparently not!

LANGLEY: Well... hang on! Hang on! Maybe if we threatened 'em!

ROBERTSON: What are we going to threaten them with? A Dutch Rub?

LANGLEY: Well, now, them do hurt.

(FINKELMEYER nods in agreement, while the ALIENS continue to politely smile.)

ROBERTSON: Well, I ain't gonna rub on 'em!

FINKELMEYER: *(noticing that THEY're all looking at him)* I ain't gonna rub on 'em, either!

LANGLEY: *(picking up a handy rock; to ROBERTSON)* I know! You can beat on them with this rock!

ROBERTSON: I'm not beatin' on nobody, even if they are an alien.
You're the one with the rock. You beat 'em.
FINKELMEYER: Yeah. Beat away.

(LANGLEY crosses to VROONT and raises the rock, but VROONT only continues to smile.)

LANGLEY: *(after a moment; lowering the rock)* Hey! I know!
(raising the rock again) Why don't I beat on their spaceship with the rock!

FINKELMEYER: *(letting go of FLUKE)* What good will that do?

LANGLEY: *(thinks for a moment)* Well... I don't rightly know.
(perking up) But it might be kinda fun to break somethin'.

ROBERTSON: *(letting go of VROONT)* Well... he does have a point, there.

(VROONT crosses over to FLUKE, and THEY both move DL. During the next few lines VROONT will be listening to FLUKE incredulously, which is a great word.)

FLUKE: Oh, no no no. Do not beat on our spaceship. It will initiate the countdown sequence for self destruction.

LANGLEY: What?

FLUKE: It will it blow itself up, and all of us with it.

FINKELMEYER: *(taking the rock from LANGLEY and taking a menacing step toward the spaceship)* I think he's bluffing.

ROBERTSON: *(holding him back)* Now wait a minute... supposin' he's not?

LANGLEY: *(nodding in agreement; to FINKELMEYER)* You know, Finkelmeyer, I'm gonna have ta side with Robertson on this one. I got me a family that I'd mostly not want to see get blown up. Not countin' myself.

FINKELMEYER: *(throwing the rock on the ground; to FLUKE)* You win this time... but have no doubt: Horwitz Finkelmeyer will not go down without a fight!

(While the OTHERS nod in agreement, FINKELMEYER returns to the group, and THEY ALL wander off down stage and once again begin quietly plotting.)

VROONT: *(to FLUKE)* I did not know that our spaceship has the capabilities for self-destruction.

FLUKE: That is because it does not, my friend.

VROONT: That was very clever. Very clever indeed. Where did you come up with such an idea?

FLUKE: From watching reruns of *Star Trek*. Technically, *The Next Generation* is far superior, but I've always had a place in my heart for the original series. Still, I always thought a self-destruction device was a rather silly thing to put on a spaceship...

VROONT: Or anywhere.

FLUKE: That is true, my friend.

VROONT: Very true.

FLUKE: But apparently the Hither Before Unknowlians think differently than we do.

VROONT: I find comfort in that.

FLUKE: As do I.

(A loud beeping suddenly starts. VROONT bolts upright, stiffly looks left, then right and starts checking his pockets. EVERYBODY else will check their cell phones as well. ALLISON will be checking several – the more the better... I mean, within reason.)

VROONT: *(HE has pulled a small box with an antenna at the top and a large red button in the middle out of his pocket; the button is not flashing; to FLUKE.)* It is not mine, my friend.

(EVERYBODY else on stage shakes their heads no and puts their phones away.)

FLUKE: *(as the beeping continues)* It must be mine!

(FLUKE reaches inside of his outfit and pulls out a box identical to VROONT's, except his red button is flashing. It would be a fairly easy prop to make. It doesn't even need to beep; that could be done over

the sound system. It will continue to beep and flash for a bit. Look for the cue.)

LANGLEY: It's a bomb! They've started the self destruct! They're going to kill us all.

(EVERYBODY except for FLUKE and VROONT begins to panic. FLUKE and VROONT, though, are alarmed for a completely different reason.)

ALLISON: *(crossing hurriedly to ROBBIE)* Oh, Robbie! Did you hear that!? We're gonna die! Tell me it isn't so!

ROBBIE: *(without a whole lot of conviction)* It isn't so!

ALLISON: I don't want to die! *(pause; near tears, if SHE can keep from laughing)* And I don't want to die without you!

(THEY stare at each other for an uncertain moment and then embrace. Awwwww.)

ROBBIE: *(after a moment, pulls away enough to talk to her, but doesn't let her go; after HE spits out her hair that he got in his mouth)* Oh, Allison! I should have never let you go.

ALLISON: And you should have never gone.

ROBBIE: I swear, on my Daddy's grave...

ROBERTSON: Excuse me?

ROBBIE: *(ignoring him)* I swear that I will never, ever go away ever again.

ALLISON: 'Till death do us part.

(THEY kiss. It really needs to be a fairly stupid kiss. You know, foot in the air... that sort of thing. And it doesn't need to be that long. Afterwards, THEY return to their embrace.)

LANGLEY: *(crossing to FLUKE and VROONT; anxious, but trying to cover)* Look. We're sorry. Heck, I wasn't really gonna beat on your spaceship. And me and the boys, we was just kiddin' when we grabbed you. Weren't we, boys?

(THEY frantically nod in agreement.)

Now, be a sport and turn your little bomb off.

(EVERYONE frantically nods once again. FLUKE looks at them ALL and then pushes the button. The flashing and beeping both abruptly stop.)

FLUKE: *(resigned)* It is not a bomb.

VROONT: *(also upset)* It is much worse.

FLUKE: Much worse, indeed.

LANGLEY: Worse than a bomb?

FLUKE: Oh. You have no idea.

VROONT: No idea whatsoever.

FLUKE: It is our boss.

LANGLEY: That little box is your boss?

FLUKE: No. This box is a Proximity Detector. It goes off whenever our boss is within a quarter of a parsec.

VROONT: It comes in very handy.

LANGLEY: *(with renewed appreciation)* I'd say. That would come in right handy. Where could a feller get one of those?

FLUKE: Ours are standard issue.

VROONT: But you might try E-bay.

FLUKE: *(to VROONT)* Oh, this is not good.

VROONT: Not good at all. The Vice President will be here any minute.

FLUKE: And then she will know that we have not been successful.

VROONT: Not successful at all.

DOLLY: Oh, you boys shouldn't be so hard on yourselves. Why, you've claimed the planet as your own and made plans to annihilate the entire human race. And it's not even noon yet. Why, where I come from, we'd call that a pretty good day at the office.

FLUKE: Where you come from is a much nicer place than where we come from.

VROONT: Yes. Much nicer.

DOLLY: Oh, don't you worry... now who did you say was comin'?

VROONT: The Vice President.

DOLLY: Well, whenever that mean ol' Vice President gets here, I'll put in a good word for you boys. We all will, won't we?



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