

EXPLAIN THE HANDCUFFS

A TIME TRAVEL COMEDY

**by Jeff Carlson**  
**and Zach Triplett**

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*Explain the Handcuffs* was first performed in the Gaslight Theater in Georgetown, Ohio in 2013. The original cast and company is listed below.

Produced by the Gaslight Theater Players

<u>FRANK</u>	<u>David Little</u>
<u>MAUDE</u>	<u>Tiffani Bohman</u>
<u>MELZAR ANTON PLURIDON III</u>	<u>Kelly Bohl</u>
<u>GREG</u>	<u>Lacey Norris</u>
<u>E.C.I.C.O.E. MOLLY PLURIDON</u>	<u>Casey McKenney</u>
<u>GUNTHOG</u>	<u>Ian Wilson</u>
<u>SUSAN</u>	<u>Casey McKenney</u>

Written and Directed by Jeff Carlson and Zach Triplett

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## INTRODUCTION

Set in present-day, this comedy takes place at the home of Frank and Maude, in an unnamed city.

## CHARACTERS

FRANK, a devoted hobby scientist who is ignoring facets of his regular day. His relationship with his wife and real job suffer, but he believes that any minute he will have a breakthrough with his Time Machine. A little frantic and excitable but generally a good man who needs to get his priorities straight.

MAUDE, Frank's wife. Lonely, bitter, but constantly trying to make the situation with her husband better, usually by purchasing something he will notice. She is desperately trying to be the ideal '50s sort of wife but after being brushed off for so long she has had enough. Also, believes her parents named her Maude because they hate her.

MELZAR ANTON PLURIDON III, a future person working as a perimeter guard. He has the mannerisms of Buzz Lightyear, always thinks he is right, and is very proud. Someone you could see saying the phrase "It's just the job."

GREG, a future person also working as a perimeter guard. She is in love with antiques and is super excited that she could be the one to find these newcomers. She is bored with being a perimeter guard but until now nothing has come along. Great sense of humor normally wasted on Melzar, who takes everything literally.

E.C.I.C.O.E. MOLLY PLURIDON, the ruler of the planet, Molly, is sister to Melzar. (How else would he get that job?) Her title stands for "Extreme Captain In Charge Of Everything" because "President" was too formal and there have been way too many "Queens." She walks around looking like a poor imitation of Queen Amidala with a huge headdress that doesn't let her fit through doors. She is a lonely leader with nobody to call the second-in-command and immediately wants this man from the past to be at her side.

GUNTHOG, Molly Pluridon's son and not bright at all. He just wants to please Molly and usually does so by being a footrest.

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Act 1  
Scene 1

*Curtain opens to a modest house setting. Two chairs and a table with a telephone, a few magazines, and a slinky on it are center stage. There is a bookshelf with a gumball machine on it center stage between the basement door and the stairs. Stage right is a door to the kitchen with another small table next to it. On the back wall, stage right, is a door leading down the stairs to the basement. Opposite this door, also on the back wall but stage left, there is a small staircase leading upstairs to the bedrooms. Next to this is a window with a small table underneath it. The front door of the house is also on the back wall stage left of the window. The place has a very home-like feel but you can't help get the feeling somebody is trying a bit too hard.*

*(MAUDE enters through the front door with keys in hand as if she has just unlocked the door. She is carrying a grocery bag, a clothing bag, a purse, and a bag with an interesting-looking vase in it. She is struggling but manages to kick the door shut, walks across the room and exits at the kitchen door. She enters again without the grocery bag.)*

FRANK. *(offstage)* Honey, is that you?

MAUDE. *(panicked)* Just a minute, Frank!

*(She runs to the table under the window and carefully takes the vase out of its bag, placing it on the table. She puts the now-empty bag inside the clothing bag. She then begins desperately trying to find a place to put the clothing bag before FRANK sees. FRANK enters through the basement door as MAUDE desperately throws the bag up the staircase.)*

FRANK. Honey, I'm glad you're home!

MAUDE. *(so happy to finally be getting attention)* You are?! Really?!

FRANK. Yes, Maude. *(approaching her)* Do we have any vegetable oil?

MAUDE. *(sinking a little, but still trying to be the good housewife)* Of course we do. In the kitchen, in the cabinet.

FRANK. Thanks!

*(FRANK, almost running, exits to the kitchen.)*

MAUDE. *(totally let down)* Yeah, don't mention it. *(to herself)* That's okay, Maude, girl. One day he'll wake up and show some appreciation. Can't wait for him to get tired of this time machine nonsense.

FRANK. *(yelling from the other room)* Are you sure? I can't find it.

MAUDE. Not the cabinet by the fridge, Frank. It's the one by the stove.

*(As she speaks, she repositions the vase she just placed and then flops into the stage-right armchair. FRANK enters with vegetable oil, a rolling pin, and a colander. MAUDE immediately shoots up and puts a smile on her face.)*

MAUDE. Did you find it?

FRANK. Yeah, it was right where you said it was, as always.

*(FRANK heads back toward the basement door.)*

MAUDE. So... What's with the vegetable oil? Is your time machine going green or something?

*(MAUDE cracks herself up, snorting with laughter. FRANK doesn't realize she has made a joke.)*

FRANK. *(confused)* No.

MAUDE. Oh c'mon. Time Machine... Going green... Get it?

FRANK. No, Maude, the time machine is all electrical. Didn't I tell you that?

MAUDE. Yes, yes! You told me that. It was just a joke. I make those sometimes.  
To make people laugh.

FRANK. Oh... Oh, I get it.

*(FRANK gives a fake chuckle, then exits to the basement. MAUDE walks over and puts her hand on the basement door for a beat, longing for the husband she used to know, then whips around.)*

MAUDE. *(imitating FRANK)* Yeah, it was right where you said it was, Maude. If it weren't for you, I would have walked off a cliff a long time ago. Oh, and what a lovely vase you have purchased! How long has that been here? Five? Six? Seven months?

*(MAUDE makes an aggravated noise, then slumps back into the stage-right chair for a second before picking up the phone and dialing.)*

MAUDE. *(on the phone)* Hello? Hey, Susan. I know I just left you, but I wanted to call anyway. Thanks for going shopping with me today, by the way. I really enjoyed it. Could you believe we found matching vases?! I know, right? So what did Bill say about your vase? Loved it? *(a little let down)* Really? Goes really well with the flowers he bought you today, huh? Showcasing it on the mantel. Right. Isn't he just the best...

FRANK. *(offstage)* Maude!? I think I'm making a breakthrough!

MAUDE. *(covering the receiver with her hand)* That's great, Frank. When you're done, can you make a breakthrough with the trash can and move it to the curb? It's a bit low-tech but you may be able to manage. *(on the phone again)* Sorry, Susan. Frank again with the "I made a breakthrough!" I'm so tired of this whole time machine business already. I don't understand why he wants to time travel anyway. Men!

FRANK. This is big! Really, really big!

MAUDE. Yeah, that's him screaming from the basement. I really don't know what goes on down there. He's worked on this thing for almost a year and it still looks like a pile of junk on the floor with a pipe plugged into the wall. All I know is our electric bill has gone through the roof!

FRANK. *(offstage)* Oh wow! I think this could be it!

MAUDE. Look, Susan, could I call you right back? I think I need to get my husband under control before he blows our house to the moon. Bye.

*(She hangs up the phone, crosses to the basement door, and knocks)*

MAUDE. Frank! I need to have some words with you!

FRANK. *(offstage)* What? You're shaving nerds with glue?

MAUDE. No, Frank. We need to talk!

FRANK. *(offstage)* Coming!

*(We hear tinkering and tapping from offstage)*

FRANK. *(offstage)* Just a minute!

MAUDE. Now!

*(The tinkering and tapping stops immediately. MAUDE composes herself and waits. FRANK pokes his head through the door and smiles shyly when he sees MAUDE.)*

FRANK. Hi, honey.

MAUDE. Frank, dear, I have something I need to discuss with you.

FRANK. Can it wait just one more...

MAUDE. No.

FRANK. But...

MAUDE. No, Frank.

FRANK. But I'm sooo close!

MAUDE. Now, Frank.

*(FRANK comes completely through the doorway.)*

FRANK. What's the matter? If it's the trash that's the problem, then...

MAUDE. No! The trash isn't the problem.

FRANK. And why are you shaving people?

MAUDE. I'm not. Why don't you just take a night away from the time machine and we'll go out! It'll be like when we first got married.

FRANK. Go out?

MAUDE. Yeah. Some music and dancing? You know, maybe dinner and a movie?

FRANK. *(a little shocked)* You're not making dinner?

MAUDE. I could, I suppose... But that's not the point. I just...

FRANK. Maude, I'm so close to finding the secrets to time travel and THEN...

MAUDE. Exactly. Then what?

FRANK. Then, what? Did you hear me? Unlocking the secrets to time travel? Why does there have to be a "then" anything? That's my dream, here. The coup de tat... Soup du jour...

MAUDE. I believe the saying is coup de grace.

FRANK. I know. I just can't stop thinking about dinner now!

MAUDE. Listen, darling. You've spent all your time working on the stupid time machine. You have forgotten everything and everyone else. What time is it, Frank?

FRANK. I don't know. About six-thirty?

MAUDE. No, it's time to wake up and realize this is just some dream that will never happen. And eventually, my washer will have to be put back together.

FRANK. Look, Maude, I'm so close. You don't believe I can do this, do you?!

MAUDE. Of course you could, over time, but not with our resources! I mean, think of the amount of colanders, vegetable oil, and dryer sheets you would need to go BACK in time!

*(FRANK begins to chuckle and MAUDE chuckles with him.)*

FRANK. You're right! What was I thinking?

MAUDE. Look, I tried to break it to you easy...

FRANK. Going back in time... What a stupid idea!

MAUDE. You're not stupid, but I wish that...

FRANK. Going back in time is too hard. I need to go forward!

*(FRANK falls back into his obsession.)*

MAUDE. Wait. That's not what I meant.

FRANK. The FUTURE is where I should be trying to go!

MAUDE. But, wait... I...

FRANK. The physics were all wrong to go back! How could I be so dumb? With only minor calibrations...

MAUDE. Is this your way of trying to get out of taking the trash down?!

FRANK. *(suddenly full of energy again)* Do we have a thermometer?

*(FRANK runs into the kitchen before MAUDE has a chance to answer him.)*

FRANK. What was I thinking?!

MAUDE. Oh brother.

FRANK. Maude! Just another example of how you are my muse, my inspiration, my... my...

MAUDE. Soup du jour?

FRANK. No time for food now, dear! I'm hot on the trail.

MAUDE. On the trail to what? The mad house?

FRANK. Scientific greatness!!

*(FRANK exits.)*

MAUDE. *(to herself)* Yeah, that's what I figured. You've done it now, Maude, old girl. Of course you would have to fall for the science nerd with aspirations of conquering time and space. Who has no idea what he is doing. That tired old story.

*(There is a knock at the door. MAUDE answers it and SUSAN enters swiftly, like this is her home-away-from-home. She begins looking the place over.)*

MAUDE. Hi, Susan. Nice to *(SUSAN brushes past her.)* see you today, again. Did you lose something?

SUSAN. Oh, I think I left some of my things in your bag after I dropped you off.

MAUDE. Oh, really? I didn't find anything of yours.

SUSAN. Well, you know how forgetful I am!

MAUDE. Well, you could have just called and I would bring it over to you.

SUSAN. Yeah. It's no problem for me. I just thought I'd come over and see for myself.

MAUDE. You know, maybe what I need is a little more time out of the house, anyway.

SUSAN. Even after that little shopping spree we went on? Girl, spending money cures all.

MAUDE. Yeah, I know. It's just... *(lying)* Well, I feel bad about you having to come over here, is all.

SUSAN. Nonsense! I just live next door.

*(SUSAN finally spots the bag still sitting on the stairs and goes to it.)*

SUSAN. Ah-ha! Didn't even make it out of the living room, huh?

*(SUSAN pulls lingerie from the bag and holds it out in front of her.)*

SUSAN. I think Bill would mind if I let you keep this one! Not that he will be looking at it for very long.

MAUDE. It would just go to waste here, anyway. Frank is too wrapped up in his inventing to notice such a thing!

SUSAN. You don't say. Well, I'm sure it can't be all bad, can it?

MAUDE. Let's just say that doesn't look comfortable to just sit around the house in and watch reruns in.

SUSAN. Aww. I'm sorry to hear that, Maude. I know you've been trying real hard lately.

MAUDE. Well, here, for example. When he first started this "little project" eight months ago, I started to see a change in him. Slight, at first, and then gradually becoming overwhelming.

SUSAN. Don't tell me. You're married to a time-travelling werewolf?!

MAUDE. Very funny, Susan. Well, anyway, I started to accumulate things to test what he remembered about the living room.

SUSAN. Hoarding to save a marriage...

MAUDE. Just about. I changed everything apart from tearing down the walls and adding a spa! He has not said one word.

SUSAN. You know, come to think of it now, I don't think I've seen him in almost five months, and I live just next door.

MAUDE. That's exactly my point.

SUSAN. Has he changed much? Forget the werewolf. Does he look like the mountain man or Doctor Frankenstein?

MAUDE. Somewhat, but he took care of that by first inventing an all-in-one self-groomer!

SUSAN. Really? So why aren't you guys living easy off that invention?

MAUDE. Because of his obsession with this time machine!

SUSAN. That's a bummer! You should be loaded! Who wouldn't want an all-in-one self-groomer?

MAUDE. Well, it was too much of a liability. If the person using it was not Frank's dimensions exactly, they might have ended up with a few less layers of skin. Frank is a bit wary of it now, too, after a few run-ins. He just decided to keep the beard as a precaution.

SUSAN. Got it! Remind me not to preorder that for Bill for Christmas. So what is he not noticing?

MAUDE. His job, for one. He has used so many sick days, his coworkers sent me a

“Sorry for your loss” card.

SUSAN. You’re kidding, right?

MAUDE. Oh, it gets better. Next came all the flower arrangements. You know how many calls I had to make to get them to believe he was alive!

SUSAN. Talk about being dead to the world!

MAUDE. And how many flower arrangements I killed! I’m horrible with plants. Can’t keep them alive.!

SUSAN. But yet you keep buying vases?

MAUDE. Well, okay...

*(MAUDE walks briskly to the table under the window and picks up the vase.)*

MAUDE. What about this vase, anyway?

SUSAN. Honey, you just bought that today. It’s been in this house less than twenty minutes. You can’t expect him to notice that right away.

MAUDE. You are missing the point.

SUSAN. Maybe he just didn’t want to make you feel bad because he knows how bad you are with keeping flowers.

MAUDE. No, the point is that he could notice it, but chances are that he won’t for another eight months.

SUSAN. Maude, girlfriend, did it ever cross your mind that you may be forgetting one small detail about this whole situation?

MAUDE. I’m listening.

SUSAN. Well, there is this teensy, weensy fact that... Frank is a man. They are not well-known for noticing new vases, shoes, hairdos, blouses, or, well, much of anything.

MAUDE. Oh, believe me. I’m well aware of that. You would figure that he would notice this vase here. *(points to vase)* Right HERE. This being a special vase and all.

SUSAN. *(examining the vase)* Doesn’t look so special to me. Looks just like mine.

MAUDE. That vase is taking the place where his mother’s ashes USED to be.

SUSAN. Eww! Why’d you replace his mother’s ashes? I’m pretty sure they don’t go bad!

MAUDE. I didn’t replace the ashes! The urn fell off the table during one of Frank’s experiments.

SUSAN. Poor Frank! How did he take that?

MAUDE. Surprisingly well! I told him about it and he didn’t pay any attention! He said “Earn? Did I gain interest on something?” and went right back to work.

SUSAN. Okay, I’m starting to see your point.

MAUDE. And this.

*(MAUDE rushes to STAGE RIGHT and grabs the gumball machine.)*

MAUDE. I thought maybe something way out in left field might be able to break his concentration!

SUSAN. And?

MAUDE. Not a wink! He was unfazed.

SUSAN. But everyone loves gumballs.

MAUDE. Nothing.

SUSAN. *(shaking her head)* For shame, Frank!

MAUDE. Oh... Oh, and this!

*(MAUDE crosses quickly to the bookshelf, with mounting frustration.)*

MAUDE. I took all our books and recovered them all in sleeves that say “Time Machine Manual,” as a joke.

SUSAN. Oh, I just thought those were for real. I wondered why that one had a recipe for lemon chicken in it.

MAUDE. Nope. All fake. They are collecting dust. Untouched!

SUSAN. Okay, so I get it...

MAUDE. Oh... *(reaching the climax of her frustration)* Oh, and then ME! *(realizing she has just given up what is really at the core of her rant, and pitying herself)* Then me.

SUSAN. Oh dear.

*(SUSAN goes to MAUDE and comforts her.)*

MAUDE. I’m just tired of being overlooked. I put on make-up and shove myself into dresses all the time to look wonderful for him and then I get brushed past like I’m nothing. A ghost! Something has got to change!

SUSAN. I’m sure it will, dear. It will. You and Frank are perfect for each other. Like a TV couple.

MAUDE. Were. We were like that.

SUSAN. Just give it some time. This obsession of his will be over soon. Then you’ll have the Frank back that you married.

MAUDE. Now it’s just a distant memory. He’s so distant. I can’t stand it!

SUSAN. Do you think maybe this is a sign, you know, that maybe it’s time to move on?

MAUDE. What kind of wife would I be if I gave up on him now? Besides, I couldn’t see myself without him. I just want him to wake up.

SUSAN. If you need me to go down there and knock some sense into him, you know where to reach me.

MAUDE. Thanks, hon. That means a lot.

SUSAN. You keep your chin up. Things will get better. Anything is possible in the future.

MAUDE. Please don't mention the future, but I hope you're right.

SUSAN. Well, I better get back over to my house before Bill comes looking for me. Good luck with Frank... He is some piece of work.

*(SUSAN walks to the front door and opens it.)*

MAUDE. Shopping same time next week!

SUSAN. Of course! You have to add to your collection of urns. I mean, vases.

MAUDE. Maybe that would get his attention since he only has one dead mother... that I know of.

SUSAN. Maude, honey, once he finally wakes up from his inventive nightmare, he's gonna feel like he's in the land of Oz.

*(SUSAN laughs and exits. MAUDE closes the door behind her.)*

MAUDE. Yeah, she's laughing about it, but the bad thing is that it's true.

*(MAUDE relaxes into the stage-right chair. FRANK enters from the kitchen with a thermometer in his mouth and an iron. He is walking determinedly back to the basement.)*

MAUDE. *(looking up at FRANK)* Oh, you just missed Susan!

FRANK. Oh... Jij ru el er dat I sald hee yo?

MAUDE. Excuse me?

FRANK. Jij ru el er dat I sald hee yo?

MAUDE. Take the thermometer out of your mouth.

*(FRANK removes the thermometer from his mouth.)*

FRANK. Did you tell her that I said hello?

MAUDE. I thought about it but...

*(FRANK looks as though he is doing calculations in his head.)*

MAUDE. ...but instead I told her I was leaving you for the pool boy.

FRANK. Really? You don't say.

MAUDE. Yeah. The only problem is, we don't have a pool.

FRANK. That's nice. Make sure the chlorine is righ... Wait, dear, we don't have a pool.

MAUDE. I know, dear. I know. Maybe that will be my next purchase... See if you notice it.

*(FRANK replaces the thermometer in his mouth and begins to walk toward the basement.)*

MAUDE. Honey, that's a rectal thermometer!

*(FRANK looks down at the thermometer for a second, frightened, then decides it's a joke.)*

FRANK. Aaaaah!

*(FRANK removes the thermometer from his mouth and looks down at it for a second, frightened. He then decides it's a joke.)*

FRANK. You almost got me there! Rectal thermometer... Ha!

*(FRANK puts the thermometer back into his mouth as he exits to the basement, laughing.)*

MAUDE. I guess the damage is already done. He'll never know I wasn't joking.

*(MAUDE takes a magazine from the telephone table and flips through a few pages. She quickly gets bored, picks up the phone again, and dials.)*

MAUDE. *(into the phone)* Hi, Susan. Yeah, it's me again. I just thought I would let you know that Frank told me he is about to test run the time machine in a minute, so you might want to keep watch over here in case I can't get to the phone to call the fire department. You know where I keep my will. *(chuckles)* Yeah, thanks.

*(MAUDE hangs up the phone and exits to upstairs carrying the clothes bag, all the while mumbling frustrated comments, imitating FRANK.)*

MAUDE. *(offstage)* After a few quick calculations in the kitchen over my Kool-Aid and Lunchable... Oh... I'll be doing a test run of my pile of junk... *(trails off)*

FRANK. *(offstage)* THIS IS IT, MAUDE! I'M FIRING IT UP!

MAUDE. *(offstage)* WHAT?! I CAN'T HEAR YOU!

*(The lights flicker and rumbles sound all around the room. The set shakes and MAUDE stumbles down the stairs, clueless, looking all over. She does not know what is going on.)*

MAUDE. FRANK! IT'S AN EARTHQUAKE! QUICK, HIDE UNDER THE PILE OF CLOTHES THAT YOU CALL THE TIME MACHINE—IT WILL SAVE YOU!

*(She braces herself on the stairs and suddenly all the shaking, rumbling, and flickering stops.)*

MAUDE. Oh...

*(MAUDE regains her composure, then yells to FRANK as she makes her way to the basement door.)*

MAUDE. Frank! Frank! Are you okay?! Are you hurt?

FRANK. *(offstage)* I DID IT!!!

*(FRANK barrels through the door and falls down, but he is very excited when he gets up.)*

MAUDE. Frank, honey, are you okay? I think we just had an earthquake.

FRANK. Maude! It turns on! My calculations are correct and it turns on... It will work! I did it!

MAUDE. What turns on? You did what?

FRANK. The time machine, silly!

MAUDE. *(very confused and a little excited)* You sent something into the future?

*(FRANK realizes his celebration is a little premature.)*

FRANK. Well, no. Not exactly. But it turned on!

MAUDE. Well, so does the microwave, but it still leaves things cold in the middle!

FRANK. You should just be happy for me. At least we didn't blow up!

MAUDE. At least?!

FRANK. Yeah, at least. And the emergency generator kicked on, too. Everything is going to plan!

MAUDE. What plan, Frank? Did you plan an earthquake?

FRANK. Maude, just wait. I'll show you how right I am. It's time for the real test!

MAUDE. I.Q. or ink blot? 'Cause you're out of your mind!

FRANK. Just you wait, honey! I'm going down there and I'm testing it on... myself! Of course, human testing could be dangerous. Is your mother busy? (Regains confidence) No, Frank, you built it. You know it will work. I'm going to test on myself.

MAUDE. Frank, you can't just test it on yourself.

FRANK. Why can't I Maude? You keep telling me I can't do things! Why can't I?

MAUDE. Normal scientists test this stuff with rats or trained monkeys or something.

FRANK. Do I look like a zoo? Where am I supposed to get trained monkeys?

MAUDE. They can't be too hard to find. I married one!

FRANK. Human testing begins today. I can and I will. Uh-huh. Yep. I'm going down there and going to the future!

*(FRANK gets a dream-like look in his eyes as he tries to contain his excitement.)*

MAUDE. *(sarcastically)* So was it the vegetable oil that did the trick or the dryer sheets?

FRANK. To the future.

MAUDE. So just how far are you intending to go, anyway, buster?

FRANK. Oh, not too far, I'd hope. Can't leave you here waiting forever!

MAUDE. Oh, by all means! Take as long as you want! I've only waited for you for almost nine months. Might as well finish up the year!

FRANK. You know, that's not a bad idea at all. It's only three months. Long enough for a test... I was only going to go for a few minutes. That's it. Honey, I'll see you in three months!

*(FRANK runs over to MAUDE and hugs her, then scurries to the basement door and exits before MAUDE can say anything.)*

FRANK. *(offstage)* Or should I say you'll see ME in three months?

*(MAUDE is speechless for a moment.)*

MAUDE. But...

*(Now frustrated as everything clicks in her head, MAUDE makes an aggravated huff and stomps over to the arm chair. She sits again, picks up the phone, and dials.)*

MAUDE. Hello? Yeah, Susan, it's me. Yes, I felt the earthquake, too. It was just Frank and his stupid time machine. No, no fire. He's just gone too far this time. I just can't wait until his little test fails.

FRANK. *(offstage)* Maude, baby, this is it! Promise you'll wait for me! Just a few more adjustments, and...

MAUDE. He says that he is going to go three months into the future! He probably won't even realize that it didn't work... Wait... What? What do you mean 'play along'? Oh, I get it! So when he comes up here and doesn't know if it worked or not, I just act like it did! Oh, that's priceless.

FRANK. *(offstage)* Eureka! Here we go!

MAUDE. Maybe then he would take notice of a few things around here, or maybe even take a little interest in me. I know, right?

*(Suddenly the lights flicker and the set shakes again, as before, only this time, MAUDE sits very calmly, waiting for it to be over so she can continue talking. Then it stops.)*

MAUDE. *(into the phone)* You still there? Susan? Hello, Susan?! *(hangs up the phone)* Well, I guess the time machine knocked out the phone lines. Ha.

*(FRANK bursts through the basement door, slightly singed and dirty, but with the biggest smile on his face that he can muster. There are dryer sheets stuck to his clothes.)*

FRANK. *(looking around)* Maude!!

*(MAUDE sees him and has to keep herself from laughing. She stands and walks around the back of the chair to greet him.)*

MAUDE. Honey!!

FRANK. I did it. I did IT! I DID IT!! *(composes himself)* This is the future, right?

*(MAUDE contemplates her response, then decides to play along.)*

MAUDE. YEEEEAH! Of course it is, you big goof! Can't you tell by looking at this place? Boy, have I missed you, big guy!

FRANK. This is amazing! The breakthrough of a lifetime.

MAUDE. It sure is. How do you like the changes to the house?

FRANK. This place looks amazing. Must have had to keep yourself really busy with my absence.

MAUDE. *(still playing along, just to be mean)* Yeah, it was almost too much to bear. Luckily, I had all this housework and all my womanly duties to tide me over.

FRANK. You didn't get that pool you were talking about, did you?

MAUDE. Only the pool boy. *(holding back laughter)* So, how was the time travel? Was it a bumpy ride?

FRANK. You know what? It was kind of anti-climactic.

MAUDE. You don't say. Why don't you sit down and I'll go pour us a drink in the

kitchen?

*(She exits to the kitchen and laughs heartily offstage. FRANK dusts himself off and looks at a few of the items in the house that he had missed. He then walks over to the bookshelf and sees all the "Time Machine Manuals.")*

FRANK. Honey, why do we have so many books that say "Time Machine Manual"?

*(MAUDE enters with two glasses.)*

MAUDE. Oh. Those. Well... *(thinking quickly)* Um, after you left, another scientist said that he had invented a Time Machine and published those manuals. I thought you would like them when you got back so I got the whole set!

FRANK. Another scientist?! Well, there goes my great discovery!

MAUDE. Don't worry, honey. Everyone would want your time machine much more, anyway.

*(FRANK and MAUDE sit in the chairs, Frank stage-left and MAUDE stage-right.)*

FRANK. Yeah? Why is that?

MAUDE. Well, your time machine is tested successfully. It's all electrical, too. I mean, with these gas prices nowadays...

*(FRANK is unphased.)*

MAUDE. Plus, his blew up.

FRANK. *(shocked)* Blew up?

MAUDE. *(offering one of the glasses)* Drink?

FRANK. *(takes the glass)* You know, maybe we should get rid of these books.

MAUDE. Now hold on, Frank. I paid good money for those time machine manuals. And I have it on good authority that there is a superb lemon chicken recipe in that one over there.

FRANK. It's just... the blowing up thing. I guess time travel CAN be dangerous.

MAUDE. You took the words right out of my mouth! Cheers!

*(Both drink.)*

MAUDE. So tell me, what was it like?

FRANK. Well, like I said before, it was almost like nothing happened.

MAUDE. Oh, is that so?

FRANK. Yeah. I flipped the switch and the whole house started shaking and lights flickered and then nothing.

MAUDE. Nothing? I wouldn't call travelling three months into the future "nothing"!

FRANK. You know, we still have the same pile of laundry in the basement? (*to himself*) So much for your womanly duties.

MAUDE. Well, it's all your clothes. No real point in washing them, right? I mean, I was so sad that you were gone, I couldn't even look at your clothes any more.

FRANK. I guess that makes sense, but what I want to know is what happened here while I was gone.

MAUDE. Nothing, really.

FRANK. I mean, I hope that society hasn't passed me by. Everything seems so advanced in the future. I'm not sure I'll be able to catch up.

MAUDE. Honey, it's only been three months. Do you like what I've done with the place?

FRANK. Yeah, it looks really fantastic. Are there any changes anywhere else in the house?

MAUDE. All over! Would you like a little tour?

FRANK. Sure. I want to know everything. Thanks, Maude.

*(Both stand.)*

MAUDE. Well, where would you like to start?

FRANK. Well, I gotta drop off my glass in the kitchen, so why don't we start there?

MAUDE. I was hoping you would say that!

*(MAUDE grabs FRANK's hand and pulls him into the kitchen, both of them giggling. It seems like they are rediscovering their relationship. After a moment, the front door swings open. MELZAR enters, followed by GREG. Both are holding futuristic-looking guns, covered head-to-toe in something like haz-mat protective equipment. MELZAR swings his gun wildly, trying to see if anyone is in the house, and then does a military roll over to the staircase. He makes his way around the room as if it were a war zone and everyone would be against him. GREG walks in like it were any other room in any other house. Her gun is to her side and she is confident that MELZAR is an idiot. GREG walks right up to the gumball machine and gets a gumball out.)*

MELZAR. Agent Two, what are you doing?!

GREG. (*very excited*) Agent One, did you see this? I've only ever seen these in books.

*(GREG tries to put the gumball in her mouth under the suit hat. MELZAR sees her and runs over quickly.)*

MELZAR. IT'S A TRAP!

*(MELZAR smacks the gumball out of GREG's hand.)*

GREG. *(annoyed)* Thanks so much, Agent One. Who knows what I'd be enjoying if it weren't for your presence?

MELZAR. Stay on your toes, Agent Two. Who knows how stable these antiques are? It could give at any second. I wonder if this place has a dungeon!

GREG. Are you serious? This may be old, but it's not that old. I mean, it appears to be well-maintained. No dust, even.

*(GREG continues to look over the place like a kid in a candy store.)*

MELZAR. Look, I don't trust anything made of wood. So.... primitive!

GREG. I love this stuff. Did you call back to base and let them know we arrived?

MELZAR. Good idea!

*(MELZAR stands straight and puts a finger up to his temple. A phone rings twice. We hear a voice on the other end. It is muffled like adults in Peanuts cartoons.)*

MELZAR. This is Agent 1 and 2 reporting from the wasteland. We.... Oh... Oh yeah very funny. Yes just like Thing 1 and Thing 2 from that ancient children's literature we discovered years ago. *(chuckles)* We have come across an antique of sorts.

*(Again, we hear the muffled voice.)*

MELZAR. In the wasteland, of all places.

*(Muffled voice.)*

MELZAR. Large. Very large. I don't know how we could have missed it.

*(Muffled voice.)*

MELZAR. Yes. We will send a scan of the area shortly. Oh, and how are the kids? Billy made his first nuclear reactor! Blew up his first laboratory? I'm so proud, they grow up so fast. Over.

GREG. Wow, Agent 1. How did you become such a good suck up?

MELZAR. It's called trying. Why don't you do it sometime?!

GREG. Whatever, loser.

MELZAR. Underachiever!

GREG. Kiss Ass!

MELZAR. *(flustered)* You.... You...

GREG. Let's just look the rest of this place over shall we? We can fight later. I want to see what other cool things this place has to offer.

MELZAR. Fine. I'll lead.

*(MELZAR heads to the basement door; again acting as if he is in the middle of a war, making sure to check every angle. GREG follows loosely, still completely in awe and without protecting herself.)*

GREG. *(oozing sarcasm)* Lead away! You're my hero!

*(As they exit, MAUDE and FRANK rush out of the kitchen, giggling.)*

MAUDE. And then the monkey says "You should see the banana!"

*(MAUDE continues to laugh and begins wiping tears out of her eyes, obviously thankful that she played along.)*

FRANK. *(laughing)* How long have you known that joke?

MAUDE. A while now. Susan told it to me on one of our shopping trips a little ways back.

FRANK. Before I finished the time machine?

MAUDE. *(Let down because he brought up the time machine)* Yeah. It's a good one, huh?

FRANK. Yeah. Why didn't you tell me that before?

*(BOTH are beginning to reach the end of their giggling.)*

MAUDE. Well, Frank, you were a little preoccupied with the time machine.

FRANK. Too preoccupied to hear a joke?

MAUDE. I couldn't get through to you. If I had told you that, you would have said "Hmm... a banana could help with the time machine!" And I wouldn't see you again for hours.

FRANK. Oh.... Yeah, I guess so.

*(A look of realization dawns on FRANK's face as he begins to see everything he has been missing. He crosses to her, apologetically.)*

FRANK. Look, Maude, I realize I may have been a little carried away but...

MAUDE. A little! *(laughing hard)* That's like saying Hulk Hogan just got a little carried away with ripping his shirt.

FRANK. *(serious)* Woah, hold on there Maude! The hulk *had* to rip his shirt. Think of all the little Hulkamaniacs! He was a real American, fighting for the rights of every man! You think the Ultimate Warrior or Macho Man cared about them? No.

MAUDE. Okay, well maybe that was a bad example. Let's not get into a debate over wrestling.

FRANK. Oh, it's no debate. Hulk Hogan was, hands down, the best wrestler ever!

MAUDE. I'm just happy that you didn't blow the whole house to God-knows-where with all your tinkering!

FRANK. *(under his breath)* Well, I guess I should have ruled out nuclear power earlier... Hmm.

MAUDE. What was that?

FRANK. Nothing! Why don't we just go and see what other things you've done to the house?

MAUDE. Deal. Upstairs?

*(MAUDE motions toward the stairs with her head.)*

FRANK. Took the words right out of my mouth.  
MAUDE. You're right. You do have a small vocabulary. (*chuckles*)  
FRANK. What?!  
MAUDE. Just kidding. I missed you.

(*FRANK and MAUDE half-jog up the stairs, just missing the door to the basement as it swings open. MELZAR runs in swinging his gun around.*)

MELZAR. I swear I heard voices!

(*GREG walks calmly into the room and gently closes the basement door.*)

GREG. You probably don't want to say that too loud. Someone may think you're crazier than I do.  
MELZAR. Excuse me?  
GREG. Nothing. What did you make of it down there?  
MELZAR. Well, as a dungeon, I think it was a little small and a bit primitive...  
GREG. Agent 1, for the seventh time, it's not a dungeon.  
MELZAR. No I'm pretty sure that's where the ancient family would keep their captives.  
GREG. Captives? Of what?  
MELZAR. War criminals?  
GREG. Melzar, I'm telling you, houses like this—in this era—would have referred to them as “basements” or “cellars.”  
MELZAR. Then explain these handcuffs I found.

(*MELZAR removes a pair of pink fuzzy handcuffs and throws them onto the arm of the stage-right chair.*)

MELZAR. How do you explain those!?  
GREG. I have no idea, but I didn't see any cages!  
MELZAR. But where would their children sleep?  
GREG. I'm so glad you aren't a parent.  
MELZAR. What's that supposed to mean?  
GREG. Nevermind. I did see an antique washer and dryer, though. I took a three-dimensional scan of them. Want to see?  
MELZAR. I saw them, too. No dust on them. I can't believe people used to use water to wash their clothes. Disgusting!  
GREG. Look, Agent 1, I don't know how to say this but we still use water to wash our clothes...  
MELZAR. (*laughing*) Yeah, right. Good one.  
GREG. The crew back at the base has been talking about it. They elected me to talk to you. This is sort of a clothes washing intervention.  
MELZAR. Get outta here! Wait? Are you saying I smell? Good or bad?

(*GREG wanders over toward the bookshelf.*)

GREG. Well, we've been noticing this pungent odor that shows up when you do... (*noticing book titles*) Wait... Agent 1, look at the titles on this literature!  
MELZAR. It's not important.  
GREG. How do you know it's not important? You haven't even looked yet!

MELZAR. I was talking about my smell. It's scientifically proven that women love smelly men. Something about pheromones or hormones or saxophones or something. Can't argue the facts!  
GREG. Well, I'm a woman and I would like to disagree with your "facts."  
MELZAR. Sssh! We can talk about me later. I've got a hunch... What we're looking for is through that door.

*(MELZAR points to the kitchen.)*

GREG. But if you'll just listen to me, you would know that...  
MELZAR. Unimportant! Now get over here while the real work is done.

*(MELZAR begins working his way to the kitchen door.)*

MELZAR. 'Cause that's what men do! And we're real men, right?

*(GREG crosses behind MELZAR and smacks him on the shoulder.)*

GREG. Do you listen to anything I say?  
MELZAR. Whoa, whoa, whoa, missy! I've got a loaded weapon, here. *(Waving his gun around dangerously)* You can't just rush up behind someone like that and hit them when they have a weapon. You're putting us all at risk.

GREG. Will you just listen...  
MELZAR. Listen? That's not in my job description. After all, which one of us is Agent 1 and which is Agent 2?

GREG. So you're going to play that card?  
MELZAR. Agent 1 equals "give orders." Agent 2 equals "listens and does what Agent 1 says."

GREG. Are you done with your little power trip, here?  
MELZAR. I guess you just don't care you were putting our lives on the line. I guess you don't care to make safety your first priority, Miss I-Leap-Before-I-Look, but I'm just not that way. I like my head still attached to my neck and not blown off!!

GREG. *(faking apologetic)* You are absolutely right Agent 1. Absolutely right. I don't think sometimes, you know, with my tiny-ass, woman brain.

MELZAR. You're a woman?

GREG. Hmph! What was I thinking? Oh, and speaking of safety, your safety is still on, Mr. Agent 1, sir, just as a side note.

*(GREG exits to the kitchen.)*

GREG. *(offstage)* Jackass!

*(After a beat, MELZAR checks his gun, takes the safety off, and composes himself. He then exits to the kitchen.)*

MELZAR. Wait up.

*(MAUDE and FRANK enter cautiously from upstairs.)*

MAUDE. I'm telling you, Frank, I just heard voices down here.  
FRANK. Have there been many break-ins since I've been away?

MAUDE. Away from what? *(pauses a few seconds)* Oh... No.  
FRANK. I figured it would only be a matter of time before the street gangs take over.  
MAUDE. Well, don't worry. There aren't any... street gangs. The house was completely fine while you were gone for three months.  
*(intentionally changing the subject)* Maybe they were waiting for you to get back!  
FRANK. You're right! They're after the time machine!

*(MAUDE suddenly remembers that there is someone in her house. She sneaks over to the kitchen door and listens.)*

MAUDE. I hear voices! Two, maybe more. Call the police!

*(FRANK runs to the telephone and picks it up.)*

FRANK. There's no dial tone!

*(FRANK slumps into the stage-right chair without noticing the handcuffs, but is obviously uncomfortable. He reaches under himself, pulls out the handcuffs, and looks disgusted.)*

FRANK. These people are sick!

*(MAUDE sees the handcuffs and gets a guilty look on her face.)*

MAUDE. Yeah... Yeah, sick people. Them. How dare... they.

*(FRANK stands suddenly and drops the handcuffs back into the chair.)*

FRANK. We need to arm ourselves! Did you happen to learn karate while I was gone?

MAUDE. So we're arming ourselves with karate?

FRANK. Maybe... Upstairs!

*(FRANK exits upstairs. MAUDE runs for the armchair and picks up the handcuffs. She puts them in her pocket with a guilty look on her face before exiting up the stairs after FRANK.)*

MAUDE. Wait for me Frank!

*(GREG enters and looks around.)*

GREG. Did you hear that, Agent 1?

*(MELZAR enters, holding a sandwich.)*

MELZAR. I can't believe none of this food is bad! It's amazing.

*(MELZAR takes a bite of his sandwich.)*

MELZAR. *(with his mouth full)* Whoever is responsible for this really went to some drastic lengths to be authentic.

(GREG turns to MELZAR and sees his sandwich. She crosses to him, looking back and forth between his face and the sandwich.)

GREG. IT'S A TRAP!! (*sarcastically*) What happened to that?  
MELZAR. That was before I knew they had mustard. You know how long it's been since I've had mustard?  
GREG. (*shrugging*) Does any of this really matter?  
MELZAR. YES! It's been, like, three days since I've had mustard. You know that's part of my favorite food group.  
GREG. Oh, if only I didn't swear that there were other people in this house, I would love to hear what you think the food groups actually are.  
MELZAR. (*with his mouth full*) Mooah, I know muh phood groooooops.  
GREG. (*pointing to the kitchen*) You go and throw that thing away immediately! I don't think your sister would approve of you eating on the job, huh?  
MELZAR. No, no... You can't tell her. We're a team! You don't rat out your team!  
GREG. Watch me!

(GREG starts to put her hand to her temple. MELZAR panics.)

MELZAR. (*pointing back and forth between himself and GREG*) Same. Team.  
GREG. I would sell you out in a heartbeat!  
MELZAR. Alright! I'll throw it away! Why do you have to drag my family into it all the time?  
GREG. Well, I wouldn't have to if you would just listen to me. Plus, it's too easy.  
MELZAR. (*pointing back and forth between himself and GREG again*) So there's no this?  
GREG. You should have never told me your sister was THE E.C.I.C.O.E. You have a lot to lose and she can make that happen.  
MELZAR. I am really starting to hate you.  
GREG. I thought we were teammates. You can't hate your team.  
MELZAR. Well I can't go back to polishing jet packs again. I burned off my eyebrows last time.  
GREG. Well just go throw away that sandwich.  
MELZAR. Okay. Alright.

(MELZAR secretly takes another bite of his sandwich and exits to the kitchen.)

GREG. Hey, I saw that!

(GREG follows MELZAR through the kitchen door.)

GREG. (*as she exits*) Spit that out!

(FRANK and MAUDE come down the stairs again, ready for battle. FRANK is carrying an umbrella. MAUDE follows closely, swinging a purse like nunchucks.)

FRANK. Quick! Hide.  
MAUDE. Frank, this isn't a birthday party!

(FRANK turns to face MAUDE.)

FRANK. I know it's not a birthday party but the element of surprise is important in these situations.  
MAUDE. You were listening when I said I did not learn karate, right?  
FRANK. Well you did a horrible job in preparing for the street gangs, now didn't you, Maude?

*(MELZAR and GREG enter from the kitchen and see FRANK and MAUDE.)*

MELZAR and GREG. AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!  
FRANK and MAUDE. AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!  
MELZAR and GREG. AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!  
FRANK and MAUDE. AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!  
MELZAR. AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!  
GREG. SSSSTOOOOPPPPPPPP!

*(MELZAR stops screaming. FRANK and MAUDE stare at her.)*

GREG. WE HAVE GUNS!

*(MELZAR and GREG start getting their guns ready.)*

FRANK and MAUDE. AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

*(FRANK and MAUDE jump behind the stage-right arm chair.)*

FRANK. See? I told you we needed the element of surprise!  
MAUDE. What do you mean? They were just as surprised as us!  
MELZAR. *(authoritatively)* Identify yourselves immediately!  
FRANK. *(confused)* You want us to identify ourselves?  
MAUDE. Frank, get these people out of our house!  
GREG. *(putting the pieces together)* Now just hold on a minute...  
You people live here! And you don't know us!  
MAUDE. You people have to be the worst mustard thieves I've ever seen. That guy's got the loot all over his face, there.  
FRANK. Just take the sandwiches and go. Tell your street gang leader we don't want any trouble.  
MELZAR. *(points to mustard on face)* This? I was... uh... just borrowing it. I could go for another sandwich, though.  
FRANK. Who are you two trying to be anyways? The bright jumpsuits are a bit much! And fuzzy handcuffs?! Get a real job!  
MAUDE. And don't you know our neighbors have all the expensive things?!  
GREG. Agent 1, put your gun down!  
MELZAR. But, but, but...  
GREG. I'll tell your sister! I swear I will!  
MELZAR. You heard him. I can have all the sandwiches. So you don't have to mention that whole thing with the food and...  
GREG. Put down the gun.  
MELZAR. *(giving up)* I NEVER get to use my gun. Bully!  
GREG. *(motioning for FRANK and MAUDE)* You two, come out from over there. We're not going to hurt you. Are we, Agent 1?

MELZAR. (defeated) No, I guess.  
GREG. I have some questions for you about your house.  
MAUDE. (Staying put) It's not for sale, and if that's what this is about I think a real estate agent is the way to go.  
FRANK. Don't talk down to them, Maude. They are going to kill us!  
MAUDE. Oh that's reassuring, Frank! Now I have to be nice to the blood-thirsty street gang before they murder us...  
(sarcastic) Oh please, nice, polite, street hooligans, kill me outside so my blood doesn't accidentally get on your clothes!  
GREG. We're not going to kill you. I'm putting my gun down.

(MELZAR puts his gun on the stage-left arm chair.)

GREG. And I would like to have a few words with you. Do you know what year it is?  
MAUDE. Of course we do. There is a calendar on the wall, right there on the wall next to you! Check for yourself!

(GREG crosses to the wall and looks at the calendar.)

GREG. Agent 1... Get over here. Now!  
MELZAR. What's up? That woman brain need help reading the calendar?

(GREG motions to the calendar. MELZAR looks and gets an astounded look on his face.)

MELZAR. Are you kidding me!?  
GREG. (aside to MELZAR) These people think they are in the world three hundred years ago! Before the revolution! Before the new government!

(During the next 12 lines MAUDE and FRANK are both trying to talk the other into grabbing GREG's gun from the arm chair but MELZAR keeps turning around and catching them)

MELZAR. Before 6D movies!  
GREG. Yes!  
MELZAR. So they are nuts?  
GREG. Look at this place. It's not just a really good re-creation.  
MELZAR. You mean recreation? Like having fun?  
GREG. No, idiot. I mean, we patrol this area all the time and don't you think we would have noticed a 21st century house just sitting in the middle of nowhere!  
MELZAR. Oh, I was going to say. I'm not having fun. Well I was. When I was eating the sandwich. But we all know who put a stop to that!  
GREG. Do you know what this means?  
MELZAR. Do you really expect me to? Wait. (visibly thinking) Oh my god!  
GREG. About time.  
MELZAR. How is that possible!? You mean that sandwich is three hundred years old?  
GREG. (shaking her head) I don't know. (motioning toward FRANK and MAUDE) Let's find out.

(GREG and MELZAR make their way to the stage-left armchair.)

FRANK. Are you going to kill us now?!  
GREG. We weren't going to kill you before!

MAUDE. Really?  
MELZAR. Well, she wasn't but, to be honest, I was. But no hard feelings.  
FRANK. WHAT?!  
GREG. Don't mind him; he's an idiot.  
MELZAR. It's true. Not the idiot thing, the killing part.  
FRANK. Does it make any difference if I said my wife was a blackbelt in karate?  
MELZAR. Let me think... No.

*(FRANK gets up and helps MAUDE up. They brush each other off, still trying to determine GREG's and MELZAR's intentions. There is an uncomfortable silence for a second.)*

GREG. Ok... I'm just going to come out and say this, 'cause there is no real way of saying it right without sounding silly... What if I were to tell you that somehow the year you think it is right, was not exactly right?  
MAUDE. Not right?  
GREG. Well, in fact, it is very, very wrong.  
FRANK. Just how wrong are we talking? Like, my computer needs updated, kind of wrong?  
MELZAR. *(to GREG)* What's a compooper?  
GREG. Oh! *(excited because she knows the answer)* It's this ancient form of electronics that stored files, made programs, and downloaded pornography!  
MELZAR. You don't say...  
FRANK. What?! I go three months into the future and computers don't exist anymore? I've got to sell my stock in Apple!  
MELZAR. *(lifting his gun)* Agent 2, this guy is a nutcase. He thinks he can go into the future and then he starts talking about FRUIT! Let's just kill them and get it over with.

*(FRANK and MAUDE watch the next few lines like they're at a ping-pong match.)*

GREG. Put that gun down! You're going to hurt yourself... again.  
MELZAR. Give me a break! I was drunk that time! *(He laughs. This is clearly a common excuse)*  
GREG. It was ten in the morning and you woke up to celebrate Arbor Day with a bang! We don't even have trees around anymore!  
MELZAR. Well excuse me for celebrating a universal holiday!  
GREG. Universal? And are you 7? There are only two other planets that have supported tree life in the Universe and they are completely covered with water and FROZEN! Next time say global!  
MELZAR. I'm universally awesome. I'll call it what I want.  
GREG. Put the gun away!  
MELZAR. *(like a defiant child)* Fine!

*(MELZAR puts his gun down. The second GREG turns away from him, he starts making faces and acting like he wants to hit her. She almost catches him once, but doesn't. GREG then returns her attention to FRANK and MAUDE.)*

GREG. Well... I... So... This is gonna be... I don't know.

*(GREG looks over, sees the calendar, and gets an idea. She crosses to the wall, takes the*

*calendar down, and brings it back to FRANK and MAUDE.)*

GREG. *(displaying the calendar to them)* Ok, so this is the month and date you think it is right?  
FRANK. Well, actually that was the month I left but I've been gone for three months! Right Maude!  
MAUDE. *(starting to get a little squeamish)* Um... Well...  
FRANK. Come on Maude, just tell them about it. Tomorrow, I'll be all over the news with it anyway.

*(MELZAR picks his gun up.)*

MELZAR. On the news for what? Fruit! This guy is crazy! I'm calling the command post!

*(MELZAR puts a finger to his temple. GREG smacks his hand away. We hear a muffled "Your call cannot be completed as dialed; please check the number and try again," followed by a dial tone)*

MAUDE. Did you hear that? Is our phone off the hook?  
FRANK. *(visibly worried)* I don't think it was coming from the phone Maude.  
GREG. Why, exactly, would you be so sure about being on the news?  
FRANK. Well, not to toot my own horn, but *(motions as though pulling the cord for a train horn)* I have just successfully built and tested my Time Machine!  
GREG. I knew it! *(really giddy)* I knew you were from the past, really.  
MELZAR. *(imitating FRANK's train horn motion)* What is tooting?  
FRANK. It means I did a good job... but for you it might mean something different...  
GREG. Ignore him. So why did you go three hundred hundred years into the future, anyway?  
MAUDE. *(finally figuring out that GREG is serious)* Oh, no... three hundred years?!  
FRANK. That's impossible! I've only used it once and it only took ME three months into the future. That would make Maude here over three hundred years old! I don't think she'd look so young if that were the ca...

*(Suddenly understanding that MAUDE lied to him, FRANK whirls around to face her.)*

FRANK. YOU LIED TO ME! But, why?  
MAUDE. Why? Really? I just wanted some attention from you and I didn't want to have to tattoo "Time Machine" across my forehead and lay on the basement floor to get it! And believe me, I thought about it.  
FRANK. All you had to do was talk to me and...  
MAUDE. Talk to you? Good luck with that! Unless I have knobs, doo-dads, and can plug into the wall, I won't get the time of day!  
FRANK. OH here we go again! You know *(to MELZAR and GREG)*, scientists just discovered a new species of dinosaur. They nicknamed it Maude. It's called a Nag-asaurus.  
MELZAR. *(whispering to GREG)* Not much has changed in three hundred years, huh?  
GREG. It seems that way. So do we say something here or break this up or

what?

*(MELZAR shrugs.)*

FRANK. Wait, it just occurred to me. This is... was a residential area. When we appeared from the past, we didn't land on somebody, did we? Is that why you're in our house?

*(MELZAR and GREG both laugh at the question.)*

MELZAR. This is no residential area! This is the wasteland. Has been for over a hundred years.

GREG. Agent 1 is correct. We patrol this area all day every day. This house is the first thing I've ever seen out here in years.

MELZAR. There's not even a squirrel out here and those little bastards are everywhere!

*(FRANK wants to have a problem with what is going on, but gradually gives in to his true reaction, happiness.)*

FRANK. Well, we have to get... There's no way... Well, I suppose if I...  
*(laughs)* This is fantastic!

MAUDE. Fantastic? Frank! We are in a place we know nothing about, our families are gone, our jobs are gone, and don't get me started on how many payments we've missed on the house!

FRANK. That's the beauty of it! It's a time machine. I work out the kinks in it and we are back home right where we left off! Why not enjoy it while we are here?

MAUDE. But why didn't it just take you! Why am I here too?

FRANK. I must have put the perimeter wrong on the machine and instead of taking just the time machine, it took the whole damn house!

MAUDE. So... You can get us back right?

FRANK. *(under his breath)* Yes, and then I can transport my mother-in-law to this wasteland instead!

MAUDE. What was that Frank?

FRANK. Oh nothing. Of course I can get us back. I actually have a return program on it that will bring us right back to our time down to the second.

MAUDE. How can you be so sure it works?

MELZAR. *(joking)* Because it's worked so well already, right? *(laughs)*

GREG. Ignore him, he really is a jerk.

FRANK. No, see, it's fool proof. I have a place holder that stays at the starting point as a reference and takes you right back when you need it to. It's like this slinky here.

*(FRANK picks up the slinky from the table and begins to stretch it out a bit.)*

FRANK. This point right here is our present time. And when I pull the other end out, that's the time we ended up in. If I activate the return mechanism...

*(FRANK lets go of one end of the slinky and watches it snap back.)*

MAUDE. Hallelujah! *(to MELZAR and GREG)* Um, no offense.

GREG. We understand.  
MELZAR. We do? 'Cause I was a little offended by that. (pointing at the slinky)  
GREG. You're also an idiot.  
MELZAR. Right.  
FRANK. Well, that's quite a load off my shoulders. I thought you guys were going to kill us for sure.

*(GREG laughs. MELZAR looks at FRANK for a second and fakes a laugh.)*

FRANK. Oh, and look at us still being rude. We haven't even introduced ourselves.

*(FRANK attempts to shake hands MELZAR and GREG while introducing himself, but they do not reciprocate.)*

FRANK. My name is Frank. I'm a part time scientist and soon-to-be Nobel prize winner for my time machine and I live here!  
MAUDE. *(following FRANK's lead)* And I'm Maude, probably because my parents hate me and wanted me to have no friends. I'm Frank's wife, soon-to-be back in her own time and welcome to our house.  
MELZAR. *(without even trying to shake hands)* Are you guys ready for this?

*(MELZAR strikes a superhero pose. High reverb as he states his name.)*

MELZAR. My name is MELZAR! ANTON! PLURIDON! THE THIRD!  
Son of Melzar Anton Pluridon the Second! I am a Security Officer for Sector G79P! WELCOME TO OUR PLANET!  
GREG. Planet?  
MELZAR. I mean... time.  
MAUDE. Wow.

*(MAUDE grabs FRANK's shoulder. BOTH are clearly impressed.)*

MAUDE. Melzar! That's so futuristic and cool.  
FRANK. I know. Why are there not more Melzars around?  
GREG. Well, if you listened closely, there are at least three, cause he's *(strikes a superhero pose to mock MELZAR)* THE THIRD!  
MELZAR. That's not funny.  
MAUDE. *(giggling)* Actually that was a pretty good impersonation. And what about you dear, *(excited)* what kind of cool futuristic name do you have?  
GREG. My name is Greg.  
FRANK. Your name is Greg? Just Greg?  
GREG. Just Greg. Nice to meet you.  
MAUDE. But wait. Why just Greg?

*(GREG rolls her eyes. She has answered this a hundred times.)*

GREG. Well, my parents wanted to name me something biblical.  
FRANK. Biblical?  
MAUDE. Oh honey, but there's no Greg in the Bible!  
GREG. I know. I said they WANTED to. For some reason, "Greg" struck them as a better name.

MELZAR. It's some kind of name! Manly, and...strong! Just like Agent 2, here!

GREG. (*glaring at MELZAR*) Really?

MAUDE. Greg it is. Fine. You know, I always loved that name. Right Frank?

FRANK. (*without hesitation*) Oh yeah, always. And Maude, haven't I always said I wished there were more Gregs in the world?

MAUDE. Always does. I think we actually coined it as his phrase... You know, he'd come in the room and say "I wished there were more Gregs in the world," and he'd have everyone in stitches.

(*MAUDE forces a laugh. FRANK follows suit. After a beat, they realize they are the only ones laughing and they stop.*)

MAUDE. Um, well, anyway, (*extending her hand for a handshake*) it's a pleasure to meet you.

(*GREG excitedly grabs MAUDE's hand and shakes it furiously.*)

GREG. Oh no, the pleasure is all mine. I mean, I don't mean to sound weird, but I collect things from your time. I love your vintage things and your ancient look.

MAUDE. Why would that be weird?

GREG. Check this out!

(*GREG starts taking off the suit she is wearing to expose her shirt underneath.*)

GREG. I bought this the other day from an antique store. It's a reissue, but it's still one hundred years old! Look!

(*GREG opens the suit to reveal a [Hannah Montana/Britney Spears/any other pop starlet] T-shirt, except that it's an old lady in a wheelchair with a blond wig on.*)

MAUDE. Oh, well. Ok that might be slightly weird.

FRANK. Is that who I think it is? (*completely dumbfounded*) That pop star from our time?

GREG. Uh-huh. Our studies show that she was the single most popular person of your time and the most influential. This shirt was from her "All I Have Is Skin, Bones, and Prune Juice" tour of 2092!

MELZAR. Greg, I doubt that these people want to hear about stuff that happened in their own time. I know I don't.

FRANK. I would love to know more about *this* time, though.

MAUDE. Yeah, I've got so many questions! Like what are gas prices like now?!

GREG. Climbing!

FRANK. Or how many states are there in this time?

MELZAR. States?

MAUDE. Where do you buy your clothes?

GREG. These are provided to us through work. I think the color is flattering.

FRANK. Or who is the president now?

(*MELZAR quickly picks up his gun and points it at FRANK. FRANK puts his hands up.*)

MELZAR. You do not dare say that word again and soil the name of our leader!

FRANK. What did I do?

GREG. Agent 1, put that gun down! He doesn't know any better!

FRANK. Any better than what? Are you telling me we don't have a President anymore?

MELZAR. I just told you not to say that! Are you hard of hearing or something?

GREG. Melzar! Put down the gun!

MELZAR. No, Agent 2. Proper protocol entails that I kill him right now. Dead.

MAUDE. Dead?! No, please don't. He had no idea. It won't happen again.

FRANK. So you have to kill someone all because they say **that** word?

GREG. That's right. And anyone who soils the name of the E.C.I.C.O.E. is to be punished severely.

MELZAR. Okay, so now that we have that established, I'm just going to shoot him.

GREG. Melzar, stop. Just let it slide for this one time.

MELZAR. Okay, but you know if the E.C.I.C.O.E. finds out about this, I will be done for.

MAUDE. What is that you just said? E.I.E.I.O... something, something?

GREG. E.C.I.C.O.E. It stands for "Extreme Captain In Charge of Everything." And she rules the whole world. Your house is literally a few miles outside the city where she resides. It's basically the equivalent of the White House from your time.

FRANK. Well, what do you call it?

MELZAR. The White House...

*(EVERYONE looks confused and aggravated until MELZAR continues.)*

MELZAR. ...and Center Office For Families.... Um... Ethnicities, Religions, and Things of that Nature that are Equally Important. That's the W.H.A.C.O.F.F....(Loses track)

FRANK. Look, we get it. What happened to us having a Pres... I mean, leader that used to be called by that one name?

MELZAR. *(kind of giddy, to GREG)* Can I tell them? Please, please, please, please, please!?

GREG. Of course you can! *(to FRANK and MAUDE)* You guys are going to love this. Both of you should take a seat. He does this speech for children at grade school assemblies across the globe to tell of his family's part in history.

FRANK. *(hesitating)* Um... Okay.

*(FRANK and MAUDE sit in the armchairs. GREG leans on one of the armchairs from behind. MELZAR crosses to downstage center.)*

MELZAR. *(with growing emotion)* What I have to tell you now is a series of some serious and tragic events. This starts one hundred years ago. It was a happy time in history for humanity, until one day a sudden outbreak of a much stronger strain of mad cow disease began to spread like wildfire across one country to the next.

FRANK. Mad cow disease?

GREG. Well, they called it "Enraged Cow Disease." But, please don't interrupt.

MELZAR. As I was saying, it spread like wildfire. Overseas! Global decimation of the bovine kind! The heads of all the major countries around the world had an emergency meeting and decided that to save us, they would have to match tragedy with tragedy. So they devised a plan. The annihilation of all cows! It was known as Project Well Done.

MAUDE. This has turned into an episode of The Twilight Zone.  
FRANK. Yeah, is this where I start to panic and scream “NO COWS?” like a madman?

MELZAR. Hey, you two, shut it up, would ya? I don’t ask you to tell a story and then interrupt you constantly, do I?

GREG. He has a point.

MELZAR. Anyways! The aftermath was catastrophic. While in that historic meeting, they had decided that the death of the cows would just mean the extra production of other products such as goat and gerbil milk and other various meat, but they forgot about one thing... Macaroni.

MAUDE. Oh, you’ve gotta be kidding me.

MELZAR. See, as the 21st century went on, people became more and more adapted to watching cooking shows for great lengths of time, as opposed to actually doing any cooking, themselves. Studies have shown that those people were fascinated by the shiny pots and sound of cooking onions. Cooking became phased out and mankind had lost hope. Then, something happened! A study was released that declared macaroni and cheese to be the healthiest food for every meal, it being a dairy, protein, and starch, it was heavily embraced.

GREG. And it was available for a device called a microwave!

FRANK. You don’t say?

MELZAR. Oh, I do say! Everyone ate it three times a day. It was a staple in the diets of all the world. Then, once all the cows were gone, all was lost. The macaroni companies couldn’t keep up with the demand for their product after the cow massacre because there were just not enough goats and gerbils and other milk-producing animals to support it. Not to mention, with their customers being so faithful, the changing taste of the cheese put them off.

MAUDE. This is ridiculous! Who milks a gerbil?

FRANK. Very small farmers?(Milking motion with hands)

MELZAR. The macaroni companies were forced to shut down, sending the populous into an uproar. The obese people, calling themselves OBs, began looting and pillaging cheese.

FRANK. Oh, come on. Really? Obese people pillaging cheese?

GREG. You two interrupt a hundred times more than those school children.

MELZAR. Here I was thinking I was doing you two a favor and all I get is (*mocking*) “This is ridiculous.” And “You’ve got to be kidding me.” And “Obese people, wah wah wah.”

MAUDE. Okay. We’re sorry. Please, Mr. Melzar, sir. Please enlighten us on our country’s rich and creamy history.

*(CUE dramatic music, swelling in slowly and continuing to grow through the remainder of MELZAR’s monologue.)*

MELZAR. To continue. Where was I? Oh, well the OBs took to picketing. They signed petitions and submitted them to no avail. They were

making a big impact and the skinny people didn't understand. The Skinnies, as they liked to be called, thought the OB people should just move on but this only made matters worse. Neither side was willing to back down and it caused a global meltdown. It was war! Brother against brother, father against son, plump against physically able to run a mile without stopping for a water break. It was insanity.

FRANK. Yes. Yes I believe it is insane.

*(MAUDE slaps FRANK on his shoulder.)*

MAUDE. Frank!

MELZAR. Governments lost all control. They couldn't decide on the right course of action. Some wanted martial law instituted. Some wanted to let them settle it themselves. Arguments raged for months until one day, a man devised a plan of attack that would restore peace to the people. That man was Melzar Anton Pluridon the first! My grandfather. To be able to restore peace they had to give him complete control over the planet and his plan was perfect. It restored order, increased productivity, and made the world a better place! Command was passed down through the family ever since!

MAUDE. What? Like, Caesar? Why did control never go back to the other leaders?

MELZAR. Because our Great Leader is capable of ruling all fairly!

*(MELZAR stands heroically, somewhat out of breath and waiting for applause. Instead, FRANK and MAUDE stare blank-faced, not knowing what to make of the situation.)*

MAUDE. *(after a beat)* Macaroni.

MELZAR. Yes, it was my favorite subject in school, knowing my family was so involved.

FRANK. Macaroni... was... a... subject?

GREG. Yeah, crazy huh?

MAUDE. Macaroni was that important?

MELZAR. Well, who's to say? It's a delicacy now. I've only had a taste of it my entire life.

FRANK. Wow! I mean, we've gotta have, like, a hundred boxes of the stuff in the kitchen.

*(Almost without thinking, MELZAR grabs his gun and holds it toward FRANK. FRANK holds up his hands.)*

MELZAR. DON'T YOU LIE TO ME!

GREG. Melzar put that away!

MELZAR. I have to have it. I need it. Where is it!?

MAUDE. In the cabinet in the kitchen!

MELZAR. *(shuffling his feet)* If I find out that you're lying...

FRANK. You'll shoot us, yes I know.

MELZAR. Okay. So long as we understand each other. No offense, but if you can't tell I really want to shoot you two.

MAUDE. How are we not supposed to take offense to that?

FRANK. In order to preserve the peace, how about I go in there and help you out?

*(MELZAR lowers his gun.)*

MELZAR.            Sounds good, Ancient Man!

*(FRANK gets up. He and MELZAR begin making their way toward the kitchen.)*

MAUDE.            Ancient Man? Are you a superhero now Frank?

*(MAUDE chuckles, even though she is the only one.)*

FRANK.            *(to MAUDE)* Are you, ya know, going to be okay by yourself?

MAUDE.            Of course I will. Greg is going to keep me company!

FRANK.            Alright. I guess it could be worse.

*(FRANK motions with his head toward the kitchen where MELZAR is. He chuckles, then exits to kitchen. GREG sits in the now-empty chair next to MAUDE.)*

GREG.            I love your old house!

MAUDE.            Thanks, I actually remodeled a bit lately.

GREG.            Ah, yes, it looks less like three hundred years old and more like...  
290 years ago. You must do good work. Did Frank help?

MAUDE.            In a matter of speaking, yes. You could say he was the inspiration I  
needed to drive myself crazy enough to fix it up.

GREG.            That's nice.

MAUDE.            That's code for "he didn't help and I was doing it to try and get his  
attention."

GREG.            He hasn't been giving you attention?

MAUDE.            He has today, now that he thought that he went to the future and  
everything, but before it was like I was water or air.

GREG.            I don't follow you. Water or air?

MAUDE.            Yeah, something you just expect to be there until the lack of it kills  
you.

GREG.            You're going to kill Frank?!

MAUDE.            No! It's just a figure of speech. I'll just say it in plain English:  
Frank has been too busy working on the time machine that he has  
not spent any time with me. He is neglecting many things in his  
everyday life. I remodeled to try and grab his attention, but to no  
avail. I miss my husband.

GREG.            That's so sad! You know, now we have laws that state a man must  
spend so much time with his wife.

MAUDE.            You're kidding me!

GREG.            I'm serious. I think that is why the divorce rate is so high.

MAUDE.            Excuse me?

GREG.            Oh nothing.

MAUDE.            Oh, ok. Well, that Melzar is a piece of work.

GREG.            Yeah, thorn in my side, really.

MAUDE.            Why don't you get a different partner?

GREG.            I'm trying to ride his coattails actually. See, he is the brother of our  
leader, the E.C.I.C.O.E. So he will get fast tracked to management  
if he doesn't screw up.

MAUDE.            Seems like that might be a big IF...

GREG.            Yeah. But IF he gets promoted, I get promoted.

MAUDE.            That's a little dastardly and deceptive of you. Good work.

GREG. Sometimes I even amaze myself!

*(FRANK and MELZAR enter from the kitchen. MELZAR is shoveling macaroni into his mouth, making every kind of sound to show he is enjoying the cheese.)*

MAUDE. Back so soon boys?

FRANK. Maybe not for long the way he is eating. Luckily, we have the microwaveable kind. I don't know if he could've waited long enough for the water to boil the other way.

GREG. You didn't bring any for me?

MELZAR. *(with his mouth full of food)* Sorry.

FRANK. Honey, do you know anything about these?

*(FRANK shows another pair of fuzzy handcuffs.)*

FRANK. They were in the cabinet next to the macaroni and cheese...

MAUDE. NO! No... Not really. Never seen them before. Maybe they're Melzar's?

FRANK. No. I already asked and he says they aren't. I think he said something about maybe belonging in a dungeon?...

MAUDE. Well maybe you misunderstood with all that food he's shoving into his mouth.

GREG. No, probably not. He's pretty determined that he's going to find a dungeon in your house. I'm afraid those handcuffs aren't part of our government provided agent's uniform, so there's no way they belong to either of us.

FRANK. Oh... Okay.

*(FRANK pulls three more pairs of handcuffs from his pocket and holds them up.)*

FRANK. Then I guess I won't ask about the ones from the dishwasher, refrigerator, or silverware drawer, either.

MAUDE. *(looking very embarrassed)* No. I'd say not. So... Melzar, how is the mac and cheese.

MELZAR. It's like a carnival in my mouth. This truly would be the nectar of the gods if it was liquid! Can you make it liquid?

FRANK. Well maybe after we go back to our time, we'll stock up on it and bring you some more.

GREG. *(excited)* You would do that for us?! I mean from the looks of it there won't be any left in your kitchen by the time Melzar is done feasting.

MELZAR. *(mouth full)* I can't help it. It's soooo good!

MAUDE. Of course we would help you. We're friends now right? It's what we do.

*(A phone rings. MAUDE looks at the phone on the table for a beat, then picks it up.)*

MAUDE. *(confused)* This phone still doesn't have a dial tone. Where is that ringing coming from?

MELZAR. Oh sorry, that's me. Forgot to put it on vibrate.

*(MELZAR tugs on his ear, then shakes, as if vibrating.)*

MELZAR. Ahhhh... vibrate mode.

FRANK. Uh, Melzar, you look like you're enjoying that a bit much.  
MELZAR. Huh? Oh. Sorry.  
GREG. We all have receivers planted into our brains to receive calls. I strongly suggest going with Veriprint T&T if your thinking about getting one. More service even on Mars.

*(MELZAR puts his hand to his temple.)*

MELZAR. Hello... I mean, Agent One here. Well, hello, home base. *(to GREG)* Oh, Agent 2, I'm going to conference you in

*(MELZAR smacks himself. Again, we hear a phone ringing. This time, GREG puts her hand to her temple to answer.)*

GREG. Hello, Base. How is everyone today?  
FRANK. You would think in the future they'd make a phone service that didn't involve smacking yourself in the head...  
MELZAR. Say again? Oh yes, that's good. *(pause)* What do you mean, "Why didn't we check in?"  
GREG. Well, base, we were a bit distracted. *(pause)* Well, we actually found something. *(pause)* Yes, in the wasteland. *(pause)* No, it's not a rock.  
MELZAR. We found people! *(pause)* No they're not dead. At least, I don't think. Let me check. *(to FRANK and MAUDE)* You guys aren't dead are you, or the living dead? Bill is on the line and he has nightmares about zombies.  
MAUDE. Not that I know of. I don't think zombies talk, anyway.  
MELZAR. Good point!  
GREG. What's that, HQ? Oh well, yes, we have found two people. Husband and wife. And you're never going to believe this, they are from the past!  
MELZAR. *(after a beat)* What's so funny? *(pause)* No, we're not joking! They made it here in a time machine! *(long pause)* They're still laughing at us!  
GREG. HQ... Of course you can transfer us to someone with more experience. Yes, we'll hold.

*(Boring music plays for a few seconds as GREG and MELZAR are kind of bouncing to the beat. When the music stops, GREG and MELZAR stand at very stiff attention, obviously afraid of the person who is now on the other end of the line.)*

MELZAR. Hello... Molly!  
GREG. Umm.... Congratulations, Ms. Pluridon, for your fifth successful year as the E.C.I.C.O.E. and hope for many more. *(pause)* I'm sorry I just never thought I would ever talk to you. *(pause)* Oookay, yes, I will *stop* talking now...  
MELZAR. Well, Sis, what exactly brings us to you attention? *(pause)* Yes, that is what we told him. They are from the past and they used a time machine to get here. *(pause)* You want us to what?  
GREG. Ms. Pluridon, I don't think that's such a good idea. *(pause)* No, I'm not questioning you. Just in my opinion... *(pause)* Yes, I know my opinion doesn't matter. *(pause)* I just thought I would put forth ideas so I can help. *(pause)* Yes, I will *stop* thinking...  
MELZAR. Don't worry, I have this under control. *(pause)* Why is *that* what

you're worried about? *(pause)* Okay. I will try not to screw this up. *(pause)* We copy. Over.

*(MELZAR and GREG remove their hands from their temples.)*

MAUDE. Well that didn't sound good. Are you in trouble?  
GREG. No, you are.  
FRANK. What?!

*(MELZAR lifts his gun.)*

MELZAR. You are hereby put under arrest until further notice, by the order of Molly Pluridon!

*(Curtain closes.)*