

Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Dramatic Publishing



KURT VONNEGUT, JR.'S

Welcome to the Monkey House

a full-length play by

CHRISTOPHER SERGEL



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalogue and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed anytime it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to:

DRAMATIC PUBLISHING
P. O. Box 129, Woodstock, Illinois 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved. *On all programs this notice should appear:*

"Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois"

©MCMLXX by
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY
© Renewed MCMXCVIII
Based upon the work,
WELCOME TO THE MONKEY HOUSE

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(WELCOME TO THE MONKEY HOUSE)

ISBN 0-87129-575-X

WELCOME TO THE MONKEY HOUSE

A full-length play

For a flexible cast that may vary between
four to ten men, and eight to fourteen women

CHARACTERS

Basic cast

HAZEL BERGERON..... *a confused "average"
woman of the future*
GEORGE BERGERON... *her above-average husband*
HARRISON BERGERON..... *their genius son*
DIANA MOON GLAMPERS..... *the handicapper
general, who makes all equal*
MISS DORIS SAWYER... *director of the drama club*
NEWT..... *the new director*
HARRY NASH..... *the best actor*
HELENE SHAW..... *a new member of drama club*
CATHERINE
SUSANNA
NANCY
MARY] *regular members
of drama club*

Additional roles to be played

by above actors, or by other actors

ARTHUR BAKER..... *professor of sociology*
SUSAN BAKER..... *his wife*
EDIE BAKER..... *their daughter*
FRED BOCKMAN..... *an extraordinary
physicist-astronomer*
MARION BOCKMAN..... *his wife*
LEW HARRISON..... *radio announcer and
public character*
MARGIE..... *waitress*

GEORGE HELMHOLTZ, *high school music teacher*
GRACE HELMHOLTZ..... *his wife*
BERT QUINN.....*restaurant owner*
JIM DONNINI.....*a problem young man*
MRS. CRANE.....*English teacher*

NOTES ON CHARACTERS
AND COSTUMES

GEORGE BERGERON: George is a sensitive man in his mid-thirties living in the year 2081 A. D., a time when the government has enforced strict equality on everyone. Since he is a bit above average, he has been handicapped by the government. While it's in his nature to accept the "law," there's something unreasonable about it against which he's almost able to protest. His clothes are commonplace. (He could also double in the role of Fred and possibly Bert.)

HAZEL BERGERON: A few years younger than her husband George, she's glad to be what is most favored by the society of her time--absolutely average. Her ordinary, easily-confused mind, however, is both kind and loving. Her dress is perhaps a bit dowdy.

HARRISON BERGERON: Their above average son, and later a forceful younger member of the drama club, should be as tall and as handsome as possible. His clothes should suggest a more youthful and stylish attitude than suggested by those worn by the actors playing his parents. (He could, if desired, also double in the role of Lew.)

DIANA MOON GLAMPERS: In the first part she plays the average stolid "Handicapper General" of a future society, who casually but ruthlessly imposes handicaps on anyone exceptional to force them to be equal with everyone else. Her manner and movements are graceless, and perhaps she wears an unattractive leather jacket. Later she is an articulate and eager member of the drama group.

MISS DORIS SAWYER: She is a little older

than the others, and is the acknowledged leader of the drama club. Her authority is respected by the others, as is her ability. Both her dress and manner should suggest that she is the senior member of this group. (If she doubles in a later role, that of Mrs. Crane would be logical.)

NEWT: He is a pleasant man who has been given the job of directing the next group of plays to be staged by the drama club. From a nervous beginning he becomes increasingly more confident and efficient. His manner when addressing the audience is casual and pleasant.

HARRY NASH: This young man is mild and inconspicuous—until he picks up a playbook! Then he becomes exactly what the playwright has described. From his "real life" lack of identity, he becomes heart and soul the character he's playing. It's important for the actor doing this role to be clear always as to level Harry is playing. This is particularly important at the end of "Who Am I This Time" when step-by-step he's becoming "Romeo." His ordinary inexpensive hardware-store-clerk clothes should be such that he can rearrange them to suit the role he assumes. (If he is to double in other major roles, he could play Arther Baker and George Helmholtz.)

HELENE SHAW: She should be a beautiful girl on whom life has played a trick, with the result that she's lonely and withdrawn. Her emergence as she assumes a role in a play should be as progressive and as dramatic as is Harry's. Her clothes are quiet but attractive. She should also have a suggestion of costume that can go on and off quickly.

CATHERINE, SUSANNA, NANCY, and MARY: They are all attractive and talented members of the drama club. They all wear pretty and quite modern casual clothes. Their various attitudes are indicated in the play. (If roles are doubled, these girls

can also play the roles of Susan, Edie, Marion, Margie, and Grace.)

ARTHUR BAKER: Arthur is a sociology professor who is accidentally involved in an incredible experience. As he begins telling about it in his testimony to the F. C. C., his manner is matter-of-fact, but as he continues, he is obviously more and more involved. In his reactions to "Euphio," as with the others, it is important for the actor always to be aware as to precisely the extent of the effect at all times. The effects are progressive, and neither Arthur nor any of the others should climax prematurely in their reactions. Actually, Arthur is a deeply concerned man. His dress is mature.

SUSAN BAKER: She is Arthur's wife and when we first see her she is already under the influence of "Euphio." Her dress should be appropriate for a professor's wife. Incidentally, with her, and with the other participants in this piece, it's not only important to show the progressive stages of "Euphio," but when it is gone, the reversion to normalcy should be quick and emphatic.

EDIE BAKER: The young daughter and member of a girls' softball team, she is also susceptible to "Euphio." She should wear some portion of her softball team uniform.

FRED BOCKMAN: This extraordinary physicist astronomer is the discoverer of "Euphio." When the chance to profit by his discovery is first revealed, he quite reasonably has no objection. However, when he begins to understand the full effects of that discovery, his attitude changes. His clothes, while casual, should not suggest an absent-minded-professor. His level of reaction should be paced carefully.

MARION BOCKMAN: Fred's wife reacts very much as does Arthur's wife Susan. Being left at home a great deal by her preoccupied husband, she

has developed a proud and protective feeling about her possessions. The undercurrent of this feeling should be clear so that the reversal that takes place with "Euphio" is obvious. She dresses attractively.

LEW HARRISON: The town's only radio announcer, disk jockey, and so forth, he is something of a character. His clothes and his manner should be loud and aggressive.

MARGIE: She is a waitress in a small restaurant, just starting work the first thing in the morning when we see her. Hence, she is still a bit unfocused. She should have a waitress uniform of some sort.

GEORGE HELMHOLTZ: A high school music teacher, George is convinced that his dream of a perfect high school band is the best dream any man could possibly have. He is a kind and gentle man who wants to be useful, but when driven by events, he finds a surprising strength.

GRACE HELMHOLTZ: She doesn't take her husband George too seriously, though she is both pleased and embarrassed by his public affection for her. She is dressed for a trip when we see her.

BERT QUINN: He is a lonely, unhappy man who has trouble eating, sleeping, or enjoying himself. (He's well described by Newt early in "The Kid Nobody Could Handle.") Late in this piece there is a moment when he suddenly has a hope about the boy Jim. While this should not be overplayed, he should take a moment with it, so that with Newt's help, it will register with the audience.

JIM DONNINI: This is the "Kid Nobody Could Handle." He's been treated badly by life and his response is to retreat into blank nothingness, his eyes, as suggested, as expressionless as oysters. His other response is to strike back. His progression from sullen retreat to a first sudden hope for the future is marked and sincere. He should wear

clothes that proclaim his rebellion, the most important part of which is a pair of shiny boots, if possible with a jingling chain on them. (NOTE: Since these boots have to be pulled off on stage, they should be large enough to come off easily.)

MRS. CRANE: She is an understandably upset and concerned high school English teacher.

PROPERTIES

GENERAL: Act One: Several chairs, small table, stand with hooded light and script on it; couch, easy chair or bench; additional living room furniture as desired. Act Two: Small table with checked tablecloth, two chairs, table and chair (from Act One), parking meter, locker, small podium, waste basket, musical instrument cases (optional).

GEORGE BERGERON: Hearing aid device in ear, weight bag padlocked around neck.

HAZEL: Remote control for television set.

DIANA: Double-barreled shotgun, two shotgun shells.

MISS SAWYER: Script, small radio-like box with whip antenna.

HELENE: Pencil and pad, playbook, handkerchief, rose, book with ribbon marker in it.

NEWT: Telephone bill, script.

HARRY: Several leaf rakes, playbook, opened bottle of Coke.

MARY: Clipboard.

LEW: Two lavalier microphones, script, notebook and pen.

ARTHUR: Telephone, flashlight on key chain.

FRED: Telephone, newspaper, the "eupho," lighted lantern, head bandage, screw driver.

EDIE: Softball.

MARION: Bag of groceries, tray of sandwiches.

BERT: Plate of food, cup of coffee, toothpick.

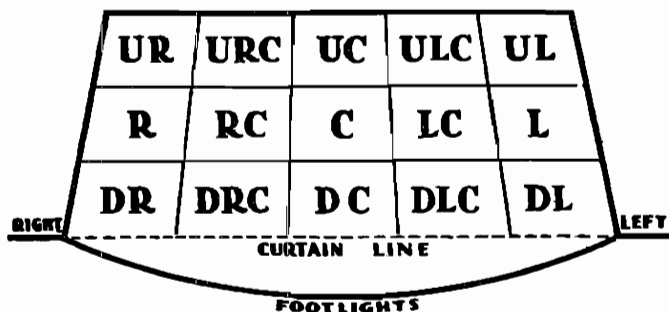
MARGIE: Silex full of coffee, tray of food.

GEORGE HELMHOLTZ: Car steering wheel, money, baton, lighted flashlight, trumpet with velvet cover on it.

GRACE. Overnight bag.

JIM: Mop, leather jacket, cigarettes and matches in pocket of leather jacket, bottle containing liquid, trumpet.

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: UR for *up right*, RC for *right center*, DLC for *down left center*, etc. A territory designated on the stage refers to a general area, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

ACT ONE

AS THE HOUSELIGHTS DIM the audience can hear an assortment of unrelated sound effects.

A pinpoint spot picks out the face of GEORGE BERGERON, a sensitive man in his mid-thirties. At the moment, his expression seems strong with determination. He takes a breath to say something important, but he's stopped by an almost unbearably loud crash of thunder.

GEORGE winces at the sound. As it diminishes, he looks toward the audience, and as he's about to speak, he's interrupted by the blast of a horn.

Wincing again, but determined to continue, he takes another breath. A bell is struck. He tries to ignore it, but the bell is struck harder. He shakes his head to clear it, still determined to proceed, but the bell is struck so loud it staggers him.

GEORGE is defeated. He bows his head with the pain of the sound, which is now dying away. As he looks up again, the determination has gone out of him. He shakes his head at his own foolishness.

GEORGE (meekly; with a wry smile). Gave me a

whole series that time. (Being fair. Conceding.) Brought it on myself--I was starting to think again. I was thinking about my son, Harrison. My son is 'way above normal--in fact a genius. (Beginning to find his thread again.) And I was thinking that instead of putting him in jail for being above average, they should allow him to----

(He is stopped by a sudden loud burst of machine gun fire, the sound of each shot battering his brain. Defeated again, he has difficulty collecting himself.)

GEORGE. Excuse me. I can't remember what I was saying. Oh, yes----(Takes a hearing aid device from his ear.) This is my handicap radio. (Half proud.) I'm required to wear it at all times. It's tuned to a government transmitter, and every little while they transmit some sharp noise. (Approving.) Makes us all more equal. Anyone with above average intelligence has to wear a handicap radio. The loud noises keep you from taking unfair advantage of your brains. (He puts device back in his ear.) And the government's perfectly right. (He pauses, but there's no sound. Encouraged, he continues.) In this year of two thousand and eighty-one, the government has finally done it. We're not only equal before God and the law, we're equal every which way. Nobody smarter than anybody else. Nobody better looking. Nobody stronger or quicker. All this equality is due to the 211th, 212th and 213th amendments to the Constitution, and to the unceasing vigilance of the United States Handicapper General. (There's a warning "bing" and he adds quickly.)

And every right-thinking citizen approves.
Thank heaven for Diana Moon Glampers. She's
our Handicapper General. An average woman,
too--just like my wife there.

(Light has come up on HAZEL BERGERON, George's
wife and a little younger than he. She's seated
in a chair ULC, facing DRC.)

HAZEL (turning to call). George--George.

GEORGE (turning his face part way toward her).

Yes, Hazel?

HAZEL (apologetic). I was going to ask you some-
thing about our son, but now I can't remember
what it was.

GEORGE (factually, with a slight shrug). Harrison
is in jail.

HAZEL (struggling with a thought). Why couldn't
he just wear a handicap radio--same as you?

GEORGE (patiently). I'm just a little above average.
Harrison's a genius. Society has to protect it-
self.

HAZEL (agreeing without reservation). Of course.
Would you come back and watch television with
me?

GEORGE (crossing to stand behind her chair). The
ballerinas still on?

HAZEL (nodding). It was a real pretty dance, that
dance they just did.

GEORGE (affectionately putting his hands on her
shoulders). We'll watch the next one.

HAZEL (reaching back to put a hand over one of
his; pleased). Thank you, George. (The sound
of ballet music is heard, at a low level, com-
ing from off R [a recording].)

GEORGE (as they're watching DRC). What made
you mention Harrison?

HAZEL (struggling). Maybe there was some announcement over the television----(Dismissing the idea.) But that's not possible. (With humorous chagrin.) Can't seem to remember anything. Certainly no need for me to wear a handicap radio.

GEORGE (giving her shoulders a little squeeze).
Be glad you're average.

HAZEL (pleased). You're always complimenting. (Nodding toward imaginary television screen at DRC.) That dance--it's nice. (The ballet music is a little louder, and also a little wrong. [This can be done by lightly thumbing the record as it's played to make the speed slightly off.])

GEORGE (glancing at television non-committally and then looking back to the audience). The ballerinas aren't really very good--no better than anyone else would be. They're burdened with weights--like these. (Indicates bag hanging from his neck.) Only heavier. And their faces are masked. (This is interesting.) The reason for that--it's so no one seeing a free and graceful gesture or a beautiful face will feel like something the cat drug in.

HAZEL. Wonder why that ballerina wears such an ugly mask.

GEORGE (looking back at imaginary television).
Probably because she's very beautiful.

HAZEL. What, George?

GEORGE (half to himself). I get this notion sometimes--I mean, maybe dancers shouldn't be handicapped. Maybe dancers should be able to----(He is cut short by a loud crash. HAZEL has looked up in time to see him wincing with the pain of the sound.)

HAZEL. That must've been a doozy.

GEORGE (catching a breath). Sounded like someone hitting a milk bottle with a ball peen hammer.

HAZEL. I'd think it would be real interesting hearing all the different sounds.

GEORGE (noncommittal). Um.

HAZEL. Only, if I was Handicapper General--if I was Diana Moon Glampers, I'd have chimes coming over your handicap radio on Sunday. Just chimes. Kind of in honor of religion.

GEORGE (gently). If it was just chimes, I could think.

HAZEL. Well--maybe make 'em real loud. I think I'd make a good handicapper general.

GEORGE. Good as anybody else.

HAZEL (agreeing). Who knows better'n I do what normal is?

GEORGE (wryly). Be grateful.

HAZEL (regarding him with concern). You look tired. Why don't you stretch out on the sofa, so's you can rest your handicap bag on the pillows.

GEORGE (hefting the canvas bag that's padlocked around his neck). Not so heavy.

HAZEL. Rest the bag for a little. I don't care if you're not equal to me for a while.

GEORGE (still considering bag). I don't notice it any more. It's just part of me.

HAZEL. But you've been tired lately--kind of wore out.

GEORGE. My mind keeps wandering and then--pow.

HAZEL. If there was just some way we could make a little hole in the bottom of the bag, and take out a few of them lead balls.

GEORGE. Two years in prison and two thousand dollars fine for every ball I took out. I don't

call that a bargain.

HAZEL. If you could just take a few out when you come home from work. I mean--you don't compete with anybody here. You just set a-round.

GEORGE (sincerely). If I tried to get away with it, then other people'd get away with it--and pretty soon we'd be right back in the dark ages again with everybody competing against everybody else. Pretty soon we'd be back to all that inequality.

HAZEL (concerned). Oh, dear.

GEORGE. You wouldn't like that, would you? (A siren is beginning to sound in George's head.)

HAZEL. I'd hate it.

GEORGE (trying to talk over growing effect of siren). There you are. The minute people start cheating on laws, what do you think happens to society? (But the effect of the siren is too great and GEORGE is in pain.)

HAZEL. Reckon it'd fall all apart. (Siren sound stops.)

GEORGE (shaking his head to clear it from the after effects of the siren; blankly). What would?

HAZEL. Society. (Uncertainly.) Wasn't that what you just said?

GEORGE (helplessly). Who knows? (Voice off R is heard, interrupting the bad ballet music.)

ANNOUNCER (speaking slowly and in an unpleasant nasal voice). Ladies and gentlemen, your attention. Your attention, please.

HAZEL (looking DRC). The announcer again.

GEORGE (muttering). Can hardly make out what he says. (Being fair.) 'Course it wouldn't be right if announcers had better voices than the rest of us.

ANNOUNCER. Attention. Since many of you may not have understood my announcement, I better repeat it.

HAZEL (struggling to remember). I heard it, the first time. It's about----

ANNOUNCER. Harrison Bergeron, age fourteen, has just escaped from jail where he was held on suspicion of plotting to overthrow the government.

GEORGE. Our son.

HAZEL (pleased at remembering). I told you he was mentioned over the television.

ANNOUNCER. This boy is a genius, an athlete, is under-handicapped, and should be regarded as extremely dangerous.

HAZEL (admiring). There's his picture.

GEORGE. How can you tell? Diana Moon Glampers has him so handicapped, he looks like a clanking clown.

ANNOUNCER (continuing). If you see this boy, do not--I repeat, do not--try to reason with him. Before we continue with the dancing, let me urge anyone having information about this---- (He is cut short by sudden cries and shouts, also coming [apparently] from over the television. HAZEL comes part way out of her chair and GEORGE leans forward, incredulous, both staring at the imaginary television screen. A strong young voice takes over from the nasal announcer.)

VOICE. Stand back--all of you--out of my way!

GEORGE (hushed). My God--that must be----

HAZEL (catching a breath). Is it? Is it our----

GEORGE. Harrison!

VOICE. I want you to see! I want everyone to see!

HAZEL. But it couldn't really----(A riveting sound begins at a low in George's head.)

GEORGE (fighting back against the sound). But it is! (In spite of pain, recognition makes him happy.) It's our son!

HARRISON'S VOICE (powerful). I'm an important individual--do you hear? Even as I stand before you in this government studio for the preservation of mediocrity, wearing these hobbling handicaps--I am an Emperor!

HAZEL (worried and confused). What's he saying? (The riveting sound is getting louder.)

GEORGE (struggling against noise, straining to keep his ability to comprehend). I'm trying to understand----

HARRISON'S VOICE. Watch me throw off these handicaps! Watch me become what I can become!

HAZEL (horrified). He's taking off his weights! George--look what he's doing!

GEORGE (straining desperately against riveting sound). I'll see him become--I--will--see--him--become----(He bends head with pain. Riveting stops.)

HARRISON'S VOICE (with passion; dominating other sounds). Don't be slaves to the Handicapper General! Throw off your handicaps--be what you can! (His voice changes.) Ballerina--you show them, too. Take off that ridiculous mask.

HAZEL (gasping). She's doing it!

GEORGE (squinting at screen, as he's recovering from pain). I told you she'd be beautiful.

HARRISON'S VOICE. And your handicap weights. (Encouraging.) As easy as that. Ballerina--you can be an Empress!

GEORGE. I will see----(Hit by a loud horn. It's getting harder to maintain comprehension.)
I--will----

HAZEL (scandalized by what she's seeing). A

ballerina without handicaps!

HARRISON'S VOICE. Beautiful Empress--shall we show the meaning of the word dance? Musicians--take off your handicaps. Let's have music!

(The music begins louder than before, but still slightly off. Play recording unevenly.)

HARRISON'S VOICE. No, no. All handicaps. Now--play, play your best, play and I'll make you barons and dukes and earls!

(The music shifts to the right tempo and comes up louder.)

HARRISON'S VOICE. Yes--that's it! Ballerina, now we'll dance.

HAZEL (even more scandalized). Can't imagine what Diana Moon Glampers--what she'll say to this!

(As the beautiful ballet music soars, DIANA MOON GLAMPERS, a stout, matter-of-fact woman, clomps on L with an open double-barreled shotgun over her arm. If desired, she may be wearing a jacket, on the back of which is lettered "Handicapper General." Unhurried and methodical, she is crossing the stage well down front from the oblivious GEORGE and HAZEL. As she crosses, she puts two shells into the shotgun and clicks it shut as she goes off R.)

HAZEL (meanwhile; staring at imaginary television). Would you look at the two of them!

GEORGE. They're--dancing! And it's----(There is a screech of brakes in his head, which shuts

his eyes.)

HAZEL (impressed). Never saw anyone go so high before.

GEORGE (squinting at the screen again). Joy-- and grace.

HAZEL. What, George?

GEORGE (in spite of pain, he smiles at his own attempt at joke). Not only breaking--law of government, but law--of--gravity.

HAZEL. Some jumps. (Music is climaxing.)

GEORGE (his eyes reduced to slits, but still watching, rapt). Like--like two young deer--dancing on the moon!

HAZEL (turning to him; bewildered). What was that, George?

GEORGE (exultant). Don't you see? What our son-- what the girl--what they can be! What they-- what all of us----(There's a terrible whistle. He cries out in pain and falls on the floor, face down, his hands over the back of his head. HAZEL kneels beside him.)

HAZEL. George--that must've been a real bad one. Anything--anything I can do? (Without looking up, GEORGE shakes his head.) Never anything----(She's interrupted by a loud woman's voice coming over the television.)

WOMAN'S VOICE. Stop this dancing! Stop it! (HAZEL is looking back to the television screen. There are two loud shots. HAZEL gasps.)

HAZEL (hushed). She killed them!

WOMAN'S VOICE. The rest of you dancers--musicians, too--you have ten seconds to get your handicaps back on.

HAZEL (dropping her voice to a horrified whisper). She killed them both! (As she stares at imaginary television set, she becomes less sure of

herself.) Or was it just some part of the program? (Feeling her way back into chair, still staring at imaginary set.) Some sort of--of show.

(The bad music has begun again, at a low level. And DIANA MOON GLAMPERS clomps in R, as matter of fact as before, taking two spent shells from her open shotgun as she continues on across and goes off L.)

HAZEL (meanwhile; not taking eyes off imaginary set). But the two bodies? The girl--and my son----They were beautiful. (Shakes head.) I get confused. (Looking back to her husband.) George?

GEORGE (beginning to get himself up). Yes, Hazel?

HAZEL (she lifts remote control device, and snaps off television; the music stops). You all right?

GEORGE (quiet now; subdued; without memory). Sure--fine. (Casually brushing himself and adjusting clothes. Noticing.) You turned off the television.

HAZEL (trying to remember). You missed--you missed----

GEORGE (prompting her as she hesitates; obviously he's done this before). Missed what, Hazel?

HAZEL (uncertainly). Well, I'm not really sure.

GEORGE (reassuring). Don't worry about it.

(Noticing.) You been crying?

HAZEL. Crying? (Realizing. Nods.) Yup.

GEORGE. What about?

HAZEL. I forget. Something real sad on television.

GEORGE. What was it?

HAZEL. It's all kind of mixed up in my mind.

(Holds up remote control device.) It was too sad. I turned it off.

GEORGE. Good for you. (Putting hands on her shoulders, affectionately). Forget sad things.

HAZEL (putting hand over his, and smiling up at him). I always do.

GEORGE. That's my girl.

HAZEL. The noise that knocked you over. I could tell that one was a doozy.

GEORGE. You can say that again. (She smiles, and repeats it, knowing this little family joke will please him.)

HAZEL. I could tell that one was a doozy. (They hold their position for moment, then they both expel the breath they've been holding, and they relax. As they do, the curtain rises, revealing a stage that is bare except for a few props and some bits of scenery that will be used later.)

Most of the cast is revealed as the curtain rises, sitting in an irregular semi-circle UC. They are all comfortable and relaxed. The number of people revealed is optional, depending on whether the same people will double in various roles or whether a different actor will play each role. If desired, extras may be used here.

At rise, they are all looking at the two players downstage who have just performed the roles of GEORGE and HAZEL Bergeron. (For the sake of simplicity, we'll continue to refer to these two players as George and Hazel, Diana Moon Glampers as Diana and the young man who was the offstage voice of the son, as Harrison.)