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**American Association of
Community Theatre AACT
NewPlayFest Winning Plays:
Volume 5 (2022)**

Escaping the Labyrinth by
THOMAS HISCHAK

Unpacking Mother by
KAREN SCHAEFFER

MLM Is for Murder (or, Your Side Hustle Is Killing Us) by
JOHN BAVOSO

The Café Mocha Murders by
DEANNA STRASSE

Of Men and Cars by
JIM GEOGHAN

Launch Day (Love Stories From the Year 2108) by
MICHAEL HIGGINS

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(AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY THEATRE AACT
NEWPLAYFEST WINNING PLAYS: VOLUME 5 [2022])

ISBN: 978-1-61959-279-7

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Escaping the Labyrinth

By
THOMAS HISCHAK

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(ESCAPING THE LABYRINTH)

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Escaping the Labyrinth received its premier production at Des Moines Community Playhouse on Oct. 15, 2021.

CAST:

BUD SCHLIEMANN Nick Cornelison
HERMAN Tyler Robinson
DEE Jillian Traskos
MANOS Don Rothweiler
JULIAN..... Clifton Antoine
PAULA.....Shelby Dale
DR. VALENCY Ken Reams
HESTER..... Dottie Flener
SARGE.....Madison Ray
OLD BUDJim Meade

PRODUCTION:

Director Katy Merriman
Scenic Design.....Nicholas Amundson
Costume Design.....Jessica Van Essen
Lighting Design Chris Hanian
Composer/Sound Design Mark Toeppen
Properties Designer.....Allyson Braum
Stage Manager Jenna Darsee
Assistant Stage Manager.....Sam Amadeo
Assistant Director.....Toni K. Farris
Assistant Properties Designer Eileen M. Diaz
Dramaturg Kathy Pingel

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“Escaping the Labyrinth was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by Des Moines Community Playhouse in Des Moines, Iowa.”

Escaping the Labyrinth

CHARACTERS

BUD SCHLIEMANN: ages from 25 to 45 years old throughout the play; an American grad student, a professor, then a scholar.

HERMAN: late 30s; a cultured Greek man.

DEE: 30s; a no-nonsense American waitress.

MANOS: 70s; an exuberant Greek restaurateur.

JULIAN: 30s; a dashing European airline pilot.

PAULA: early 30s; a sensitive British airline stewardess.

DR. VALENCY: late 70s; a philosophic college professor.

HESTER: 30s; a smart prostitute.

SARGE: 40s; an American military officer.

OLD BUD: 83 years old.

PLACES AND TIMES

Scene 1: Delphi, Greece, 1951.

Scene 2: Dayton, Ohio, 1958.

Scene 3: Dayton, Ohio, 1958.

Scene 4: London, England, 1961.

Scene 5: St. Louis, Missouri, 1964.

Scene 6: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1966.

Scene 7: Syracuse, New York, 1971.

Scene 8: Delphi, Greece, 2009.

PRODUCTION NOTES

SETTING: The play takes place over a period of 58 years, from 1951 to 2009. The different locations can be suggested by a few furniture pieces as described at the beginning of each scene. Lighting or projections can also help establish each locale.

CASTING: The casting is flexible, using 1 to 3 women and 3 to 7 men. For a smaller cast, the following roles may be doubled:

HERMAN, JULIAN and SARGE

DEE, PAULA and HESTER

MANOS, DR. VALENCY and OLD BUD

“Myths which are believed in tend to become true.”

—George Orwell

Escaping the Labyrinth

Scene 1

(A hillside cafe in Delphi, Greece. Late summer, 1951. There are two small tables with chairs. The audience cannot see the spectacular view that those sitting at the tables can. At one table sits BUD SCHLIEMANN, an eager and excitable young American who is twenty-five years old. He is a tourist and has the guidebook and camera to prove it.)

At another table sits HERMAN, clearly a native Greek who is in his late thirties and speaks impeccable English, but there is still the trace of an accent. He is drinking wine and looking out over the valley. BUD drinks a Coke out of a bottle and also soaks up the scenery. A pause, then BUD speaks aloud to no one in particular.)

BUD. This is the best! The very best!

HERMAN. What's that, young man?

BUD *(excited)*. Delphi! The best there is! I've been all over Greece for the past three weeks. But this is the best! The very best!

HERMAN. I see.

BUD. The Acropolis was terrific. And so was Mycenae. And Olympia! But up here ... looking out over this valley ... with the Temple of Apollo down there and—well, it's just the absolute very best!

HERMAN *(smiling)*. Yes. It is very, very nice.

BUD *(stands)*. Delphi ... ! The center of the Greek universe! The sacred home of the oracle! The destination of those seeking the ancient truths! The mystical city gazing up to the gods! Unspoiled and as majestic and intoxicating as it was over two thousand years ago!

HERMAN *(wryly)*. Do you, by any chance, make your living writing travel brochures?

BUD. What? *(Laughs.)* No. I'm just excited, I guess. But I *am* a writer. Well, I plan to be one. Right now I'm working on my dissertation. But that doesn't count. One day, I am going to write books—real books—about Greece! Not travel books. No siree! Books about ancient Greece! Its history! Its people! Its art! Its ... *(Searching.)* its ...

HERMAN. Its gods?

BUD. Yes! The ancient Greek gods! Still alive in art, in stories, in architecture, in ... (*Searching.*) in ...

HERMAN. In life?

BUD. Yes! I suppose, in a manner of speaking, in life.

HERMAN. You are quite an enthusiastic young man.

BUD. When it comes to the ancient Greeks, I am out of control!
(*Laughs.*)

HERMAN (*smiling again*). How refreshing.

BUD (*goes to HERMAN with his hand extended*). Bud Schliemann!
Glad to know you!

HERMAN (*rises and extends his hand, which BUD shakes vigorously*). You're American ...

BUD. How'd you know?

HERMAN. Well ...

BUD. Was it the camera? My clothes? This English guide book?

HERMAN. It was your handshake, actually. A very American handshake.

BUD. Guilty! I've been here three weeks and can't get enough of the place!

HERMAN. Did you say Schliemann? Are you related to the famous—?

BUD. No. No relation to Heinrich. A different branch of the family, I guess. But I sure would have liked to have been with old Schliemann when he dug up Troy!

HERMAN. Before your time, I'm afraid.

BUD. Yeah. Way before my time. There are lots of Schliemanns all over Cincinnati. That's where I'm from.

HERMAN. Oh ...

BUD. Most of them are Jewish. The Schliemanns in Cincinnati, that is. But my family isn't. And neither was Heinrich.

HERMAN. That's all right. Some of my best friends are not Jewish.

BUD. I'm what you might call a fallen-away Lutheran.

HERMAN. Of course. Do you plan to stay in Greece much longer?

BUD. Wish I could. But I gotta leave on Saturday for the States. I've got to work on my dissertation, and I'm teaching two undergrad classes starting in September. Ancient history.

HERMAN. Right up your alley, as they say. You seem so young to be teaching at a university. How old are you?

BUD (*bursts out in laughter*). I love it! The way you people always do that!

HERMAN (*confused*). I beg your pardon?

BUD (*still laughing*). You Greeks are so blunt! I mean, direct. “How old are you?” It’s perfect!

HERMAN. I didn’t mean to offend—

BUD. Not at all. It’s so ... Greek! The cabbie who drove me up here asked me how much money I earn in the States! Can you believe that? And the guy at the hotel last week asked me what kind of car I drove back home! I love it!

HERMAN. I suppose we are a curious people ...

BUD. I’m afraid I disappointed both of those guys. Grad assistants make lousy money, and I drive an old 1941 Chevy that’s held together with chicken wire. (*They both laugh.*) Twenty-five!

HERMAN. What’s that?

BUD. I’m twenty-five! Quarter of a century. What do you think of that?

HERMAN. Twenty-five is a good age to be.

BUD. But I won’t be twenty-five forever.

HERMAN. Probably not ...

BUD. Once I finish my doctorate and get some years of teaching behind me, I am going to write some of the gosh-darnedest books you ever read about ancient Greece! (*Laughs.*)

HERMAN (*laughs kindly*). I believe you will, Mr. Schliemann. Or Dr. Schliemann, I should say.

BUD. Not yet! And call me Bud. I didn’t catch your name.

HERMAN. You can call me Herman.

BUD. A German name! Well, Mr. Herman—

HERMAN. Just Herman. That will suffice.

BUD. Well, just Herman, if you don’t mind my being a little Greek myself, how old are you?

HERMAN (*after a beat*). Two thousand three hundred and fifty-seven years old. Give or take a decade. There were no birth certificates back then. (*Awkward pause.*) Just kidding. (*They both laugh.*)

BUD. I was going to say—you sure don’t look it! (*Both laugh again.*)

HERMAN. Thank you! (*More laughter.*)

BUD. You Greeks sure are a riot! Sometimes I look at people in the street or on the bus, and I say to myself, that could be the great, great, great, great grandson of Agamemnon!

HERMAN. I think you'll need to add a few dozen more "greats" in there, Bud.

BUD. Yeah. Everything here is so old! (*Sits and looks out.*)

HERMAN. Absolutely ancient, you might say. (*Sits at his table.*)

BUD. Sure. Just sitting here, looking down onto this valley, I feel like I was back in those days. Look ... no telephone poles or highways or billboards ...

HERMAN. Yes. I was thinking that very same thing earlier. If one could rebuild Apollo's temple down there, this view would be just like it was.

BUD. You know, Herman, I've studied all those ancient folks. Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians ... and they're all great. But I've got a soft spot in my heart for Greece.

HERMAN. How kind.

BUD. I really got into everything Greek when I was a teenager. I even read *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* before I ever had to study Homer in school. And I made a model of the Parthenon out of sugar cubes! Can you believe that? And the goddesses! Oh, those Greek goddesses! I had a real crush on Artemis. I think it was the picture in Bullfinch's *Mythology*!

HERMAN (*more to himself*). Artemis ... a beauty indeed ...

BUD. Diana ... to the Romans.

HERMAN. Yes ...

BUD. And here's a funny thing, Herman. You had these half-man/half-lion gods in Egypt and half-man/half-monster ones in Mesopotamia. But in Greece, the gods looked just like ... well, us. Now isn't that interesting?

HERMAN. Indeed it is.

BUD. I wonder why that is.

HERMAN. There is a theory about that.

BUD. There is?

HERMAN. Just a theory. I suppose the early Greeks woke up one day and decided they needed to create some gods to ... to

explain certain phenomena. They looked around them and they saw rocks and olive trees and goats and ... whatever. Not very godlike models, to be sure. Then one of them looked at his reflection in a pool of water and saw the perfect image of a god: man. Simple, really.

BUD. That's a theory?

HERMAN. More an old wives' tale, I suspect.

BUD. It sure explains those good-looking statues of the gods. They almost seem real.

HERMAN. They were real. Perhaps they still are.

BUD. Yeah. Forever alive in art and stories and ... whatever.

HERMAN. Whatever. (*Pause.*) Bud, what do you think happened to those gods when the Greek empire collapsed?

BUD. That's easy. They were all turned into Roman gods. Just changed the names.

HERMAN. Very good. And when the Roman civilization fell? When Christianity took over?

BUD. You mean when no one believed in them any more?

HERMAN. Yes.

BUD. I guess they just ceased to exist. After all, the gods had been made up by men. When people stopped believing in them, the gods just ... disappeared.

HERMAN. Would you like to hear a theory about that?

BUD. Another old wives' tale?

HERMAN. No, this is a theory. An actual theory.

BUD. Shoot.

HERMAN (*getting very serious*). What if the gods one day found out that no one believed in them and yet they continued to exist. They saw their temples destroyed or turned into churches. Their feast days were changed to Christian holy days. Their statues abandoned and neglected until the Renaissance when they were considered highly desirable ... but only as art. What happened to those ancient gods?

BUD. They died?

HERMAN. The gods are immortal. They can't die.

BUD (*trying to make light of it*). Then, according to your theory, they still exist. They're still here!

HERMAN (*still serious*). Not here. Everywhere. They are nomads roaming the globe looking for some place where they are still believed. Of course there is no such place. People study the ancient Greek gods and write about them. But no one actually believes in them. Instead the gods see their images in museums all over the world. Nothing but ... scrapbooks of their past. (*Awkward silence.*)

BUD (*uncomfortable*). That's one hell of a theory, Herman.

HERMAN (*lightens up*). I thought you'd like it.

BUD. And this place is so ... so mystical that one can almost believe it.

HERMAN. Delphi has that kind of power.

BUD (*practically*). But when you see those buses over there and all those souvenir shops around the corner and the cute little hotels and ... you know what I mean?

HERMAN. Yes. It's 1951. Not ancient times. No question about it.

BUD (*rises*). Herman ... ? (*Goes over to him.*)

HERMAN. Yes, Bud?

BUD (*sincerely*). How old are you really?

HERMAN. It's not important. You are twenty-five and have, I'll wager, a long and prosperous future in store. I, on the other hand, have a long and interesting past.

BUD (*paces nervously*). What's your real name?

HERMAN. I was born Hermes. But then under the Romans—

BUD. Mercury!

HERMAN. Yes. I prefer Hermes. Now I go by Herman. It causes less bother in writing checks and signing papers and so on.

BUD (*wary*). Uh huh ... and where have you been all these ... centuries?

HERMAN (*remembering fondly*). Everywhere. I spent some of the Dark Ages in Mexico. It was Renaissance time in Chichen Itza. I dabbled there in politics for awhile. When Europe was having its Renaissance, I spent some years in China. Plenty of gods there but not my kind of deities. It seemed like half of them were dragons. I spent your Western Age of Reason in South Africa. Import export. Very interesting. Some time later I worked as a physician in Scotland. In 1912, I was on the *Titanic*. Second class. As you may have guessed, I did not perish. During the Roaring

Twenties I was in Paris. They treated dance instructors very well back then. During this latest world war, I was a resistance fighter in Poland. I believe I was the only one to survive. Recently I've been selling real estate in Argentina. Mostly seaside homes.

BUD (*cautiously*). And now you're here.

HERMAN. Yes. Call it nostalgia, but I am back here.

BUD (*carefully*). Where are the others? The other ... deities?

HERMAN. I can hardly keep track. We're not very good at staying in touch. I know Zeus just got a job as an airline pilot working out of London. Those new transcontinental flights, you know.

BUD. Why would he do that?

HERMAN. For the stewardesses, of course. He hasn't changed a bit. I hear Ares is fighting in Korea. You can imagine what kind of mischief he is up to over there. You mentioned Artemis. Or Diana, if you prefer. I was told she works at a Greek restaurant in Dayton, Ohio. Daphne was modeling in San Francisco, the last I knew of her. A while back Poseidon was a chiropractor in Tokyo but I'm not sure where he is now. No one ever stays in one place very long.

BUD (*suspiciously*). How come?

HERMAN. Think about it, Bud. We don't die. It means we don't age physically. If we stick around one place too long, people start to notice.

BUD. Oh ...

HERMAN. I'd say the usual stay is ten years. After that, mortals start to get suspicious.

BUD (*suddenly upset*). Either you are crazy or I am!

HERMAN. Bud, we're both as sane as can be. (*He has an idea.*) But I will be the raving lunatic if that makes you more comfortable.

BUD (*still uncomfortable*). Why are you saying these things to me?

HERMAN. With your interest in the ancient past, I ... I ... thought you might believe me. My mistake. I apologize. (*Rises.*) Perhaps I better move along.

BUD (*testy*). I suppose you are going to fly off to Pago Pago or something. I thought Mercury or Hermes had wings on his feet.

HERMAN. Poetic license taken by poets and artists over time. I arrived here by bus. A package tour out of Athens. I think our next stop is Corinth. (*A beat.*) But you know something, Bud?

BUD. What?

HERMAN. I'm so tired. Perhaps I'll just stay here.

BUD. For ten years.

HERMAN (*thinks about it*). Not that long. I've been considering it for many years and coming back to Delphi has convinced me.

BUD. Of what?

HERMAN. Bud, there is something about ancient Greece that is not in any book.

BUD. Such as ... ?

HERMAN. The gods are immortal—

BUD. I knew that—

HERMAN. Only as long as they wish to be immortal. We are given the option to die and join all the mortals in the underworld if we so desire. All it takes is two coins to pay the ferryman Charon, and we can take a one-way cruise down the River Styx.

BUD. Why would anyone want to do that?

HERMAN. Weariness. Centuries of being forsaken. Not to mention the wear and tear from constant travel. Like any mortal, we sometimes just want a long, long rest.

BUD. A kind of divine suicide, I suppose.

HERMAN. Yes. One might call it that.

BUD (*belligerent*). You are one confused fellow, Herman! And you are confusing the hell out of me!

HERMAN. I'm sorry. I'm just kidding. (*Forced laugh.*) It was a metaphor. I thought you'd understand. I'm really Herman Papadakis, I'm thirty-seven years old, and I have pancreatic cancer. Inoperable. The doctors give me three months to live but I want the easy way out. (*Pause.*) Does that sound better?

BUD (*softening*). Herman ... I didn't mean anything ...

HERMAN (*fishes in his pocket*). Ah. Two coins. (*Looks closely at them.*) Minted in 1946 but Charon won't mind.

BUD. Are you really ... ill?

HERMAN (*sitting*). I would love another glass of wine, but it is obvious that waiter in there is never coming back out here. (*Pulls out paper money.*) Would you do me a favor, Bud? Would you go in there and buy me another? (*Holds out a bill, but BUD doesn't move.*) Just tell him I want the same. It's a wonderful white from the Southern Peloponnese. (*Pause.*) Please?

BUD. OK ... *(Takes bill.)* But I think maybe you've had enough vino already.

HERMAN. Indulge me. *(As BUD exits.)* Thank you! *(A pause, then he rises and looks out at the view.)* Thank you for those centuries of prayers and sacrifices and festivals in my name. Thank you for taking me with you to Rome for similar adorations. And thank you for admiring my image in museums all these years since. Thank you ... thank you. *(Sits, exhausted.)* Why did I tell that young man all that? What was I thinking? That he'd believe me? One last believer before I go? Ridiculous ...

(HERMAN gently faints away. As he does, his hand opens and the two coins fall to the floor noisily. BUD re-enters with a glass of wine and his other hand full of coins.)

BUD. I still can't believe how inexpensive everything is in Greece. That was a lot of money for just one glass of wine! Here's your change—*(Stops when he sees HERMAN unconscious.)* Herman? Are you all right? *(Goes to him and touches his arm.)* Herman! Should I call a doctor? *(Puts the wine glass on the table and shakes HERMAN a bit and in doing so drops the coins that are in his hand and they land on the floor.)* Your change! Herman! *(Frightened.)* Hermes! Mercury! Whoever you are—!

HERMAN *(awakes quickly)*. What? *(Pause.)*

BUD *(breathes a sigh of relief)*. Oh, you're OK. *(Bends down and starts to pick up all the coins from the floor.)* Your change ...

HERMAN. Thank you so much. But I'll only need two coins for the ferryman. *(BUD stands and gives him two coins.)* And thanks for the wine. *(Drinks it in one long gulp.)* Well! *(Rises.)* Which way to the River Styx? *(Blackout.)*

Scene 2

(Greek music is heard and then the recorded voice of an American radio DJ.)

RADIO DJ. That was Danny and the Juniors with "At the Hop," number five on the charts this week and climbing, climbing up to rock and roll heaven. This is WDAY Dayton, number ninety-three on your dial and number one in the hearts of the greater

Miami River Valley. This portion of our broadcast day is brought to you by Pulowski Chevrolet where they are having a big sale on all their remaining 1958 models. This is your time to save, save, save! Speaking of time, the clock says eight-forty-seven, and the forecast says partly cloudy skies expected through the night and temperatures in the upper sixties. But tomorrow ... I don't want to say it but I have to ... rain expected tomorrow and I just want to cry, cry, cry, with Paul Anka and his number three song on the charts, "Lonely Boy."

(Greek dance music plays and is heard under the beginning of the scene. Lights rise on a Greek restaurant. It is spring of 1958. The same two tables now have tablecloths and dishes on them. The restaurant is empty except for BUD who is sitting at one of the tables and finishing his meal. He is eight years older and somewhat less energetic but still enthusiastic. He wears the conservative garb of a college professor: jacket, sweater vest, bow tie, etc.

In a moment, the waitress, DEE, enters. She is in her thirties. She has dark hair and classic features, but her posture and bearing are very common. She goes to one of the empty tables and picks up the dishes and such, piling them with experienced movement. BUD stares at her with undisguised rapture. She starts to exit with the plates, but his voice stops her.)

BUD. Just about closing time?

DEE *(brusquely)*. Ten more minutes.

BUD. I'm sorry if I'm keeping you here late.

DEE. Not yet. Ten minutes.

BUD. I guess I got here just in time.

DEE. Ten minutes. *(Exits to the kitchen with dishes.)*

(BUD finishes eating, wipes his mouth with his napkin, fusses with his bow tie, takes a comb out and combs back his hair. He quickly hides the comb as DEE re-enters and goes to the other empty table and begins to pile up dishes.)

BUD. I'm sorry I arrived so late tonight. I had an evening seminar.

DEE. Come early. Come late. We stay open till nine.

BUD. I'll bet you're wondering why I've come here five nights in a row.

DEE. No.

BUD. Especially since Monday was the first time I ever came here.

DEE. Maybe you like Greek food. I don't know. *(Continues piling dishes.)*

BUD. I've only been in Dayton since Monday. I'm here for the week.

DEE. Lucky you.

BUD. A conference. At the university. A whole week.

DEE. Then I better warn you. We're closed on Sundays. You'll have to eat somewhere else.

BUD. Thanks. I hear this is the best Greek restaurant in town.

DEE. It's the only Greek restaurant in town.

BUD. That makes it the best, I suppose.

DEE. I suppose. *(Exits to kitchen with dishes.)*

(BUD rises, pulls out his wallet, and starts counting bills. MANOS, the proprietor of the restaurant, enters from the kitchen. He is in his seventies and has a Greek accent that is as thick as his mustache. He wears a dirty apron and is wiping his hands on a dirty dish towel.)

MANOS *(surprised to see him)*. Professor! You are here again! How wonderful!

BUD. I guess I just couldn't stay away from your excellent cooking.

MANOS. You are too kind. How many days is it you come here?

BUD. Five. Every night since Monday.

MANOS. You like the Greek food?

BUD. Of course—

MANOS. You know, this is the best Greek restaurant in Dayton!

BUD. I heard that—

MANOS. Good food. Good prices. And a good location. Very close to the university.

BUD. Yes. I can walk here from my room—

MANOS. Maybe you come back tomorrow? The special is stuffed cabbage rolls. I make them myself from—how you say—from scratch.

BUD. That sounds delicious.

MANOS (*looking at BUD's table*). You ate it all! That I like to see.

BUD. Your food takes me back to Greece.

MANOS. You have been to my country?

BUD. Yes! But it was years ago. When I was a graduate student. I loved it there!

MANOS. Me, I too love Greece. But very difficult to live there.

So after the war, my brother and me both come to America. We want to go to Chicago where I had an uncle. But we only get as far as Dayton. So here we stay and here we are today.

BUD. Maybe someday you will get to visit Greece again.

MANOS. Maybe. Hard to say. Maybe I go back to my country when it is time to die. That would be nice. (*Collects plates from BUD's table.*) Did you eat some baklava?

BUD. I'm afraid it's closing time—

MANOS. I am Manos, the owner, and I say when it is time to close.

First you have some baklava. Sit! (*Carries dishes to kitchen.*)

BUD. If it's no bother—

MANOS (*shouts into kitchen*). Dee! Baklava! (*To BUD.*) The baklava I make myself. Old family recipe. Delicious!

BUD. Yes. I had some last night.

MANOS. Then you know. (*Shouts into kitchen.*) Dee! You hear me?

DEE (*entering*). No reason to shout.

MANOS. Some baklava for the professor!

DEE. OK. (*Exits.*)

MANOS. Take your time and enjoy!

(*BUD sits.*)

MANOS (*cont'd*). And I hope to see you again many many times, Professor!

BUD. Oh, I'm afraid that won't be possible.

MANOS. What are you telling Manos?

BUD. I'm only in Dayton for the week. A conference at the university. I return home on Sunday.

MANOS. That is too bad. I like you.

(DEE enters with a piece of baklava on a plate and puts it down before BUD.)

MANOS *(cont'd)*. Did you hear that, Dee? The professor is leaving us.

BUD *(to DEE)*. Thank you. *(Starts eating the baklava.)*

MANOS. And where is home, Professor?

BUD. St. Louis.

MANOS. They have Greek restaurant in St. Louis?

BUD. Not as good as this!

MANOS. You hear, Dee? The professor is a nice man. So polite.

DEE. Time to close.

MANOS. You lock the front door but let the professor enjoy his baklava.

(DEE exits.)

MANOS *(cont'd)*. No rush, Professor. Maybe see you tomorrow for cabbage rolls?

BUD. I wouldn't dream of missing it.

MANOS. I make special just for you.

(MANOS exits as DEE re-enters. She goes to BUD's table and writes on her order pad, then puts the check on his table. BUD is eating very slowly and staring at DEE.)

BUD. Thank you ... Dee.

(He eats, and she waits.)

BUD *(cont'd)*. Dee ... What is that short for? Dolores? Delilah? Danielle? Delia?

DEE. It's short for Dee. That's my name.

BUD. Pleased to know you, Dee. My name is Bud. Bud Schliemann.

DEE. Manos calls you "Professor."

BUD. Actually, I am only an associate professor. But someday—

DEE. Someday you'll be a big professor in St. Louis where the Greek restaurants are not so good. I heard. *(Starts toward the kitchen.)*

BUD. Or is it short for ... Diana?

(DEE stops. A pause.)