

Variations and Distractions

Scenes from Christopher Durang and David Ives

Variations on the Death of Trotsky

ONE

Trotsky: “The proletariat is right. The proletariat must *always* be right. And the revolution of the proletariat against oppression must go on ...*forever!*”

Mrs. Trotsky: Leon.

Trotsky: “And forever and forever...!”

Mrs. Trotsky: Leon, I was just reading the encyclopedia.

Trotsky: The heading?

Mrs. Trotsky: “Trotsky, Leon.”

Trotsky: Good. It’s about me.

Mrs. Trotsky: Listen to this. “On August 20th, 1940, a Spanish Communist named Ramon Merader smashed a mountain-climber’s axe into Trotsky’s skull in Coyoacan, a suburb of Mexico City. Trotsky died the next day.”

Trotsky: What is the year of that encyclopedia?

Mrs. Trotsky: 2008.

Trotsky: Strange.

Mrs. Trotsky: Yes

Trotsky: But interesting. I *am* Trotsky.

Mrs. Trotsky: Yes, dear.

Trotsky: And this is our house in Coyoacan.

Mrs. Trotsky: Yes.

Trotsky: And we have a Spanish gardener named Ramon –

Mrs. Trotsky: Meracader. Yes.

Trotsky: Hmm... There aren’t any *other* Trotskys living in Coyoacan, are there?

Mrs. Trotsky: I don’t think so. Not under that name.

Trotsky: What is the date today?

Mrs. Trotsky: August 21st, 1940.

Trotsky: Then I’m safe! That article says it happened on the twentieth, which means it would’ve happened yesterday.

Mrs. Trotsky: But Leon...

Trotsky: And I’d be dead today, with a mountain-climber’s axe in my skull!

Mrs. Trotsky: Um – Leon...

Trotsky: Will the capitalist press never get things right?

Mrs. Trotsky: But Leon, isn’t that the handle of a mountain-climber’s axe, sticking out of your skull?

Trotsky: It certainly does look like one... And you know, Ramon was in here yesterday telling me about his mountain-climbing trip. And now that I think of it, he was carrying a mountain-climber’s axe. I can’t remember if he had it when he left the room... Did Ramon report to work.

TWO

Trotsky: “No one is safe. Force must be used. And the revolution of the proletariat against oppression must go on forever and forever...”

Mrs. Trotsky: Leon...

Trotsky: “And forever!”

Mrs. Trotsky: Leon, I was just reading the encyclopedia.

Trotsky: Is it the *Britannica*?

Mrs. Trotsky: Listen to this.

Trotsky: The universe as viewed by the victors.

Mrs. Trotsky: “On August 20th, 1940, a Spanish communist named Ramon Mercader smashed a mountain-climber’s axe into Trotsky’s skull in Coyoacan, a suburb of Mexico City.

Trotsky died the next day.”

Trotsky: Yes? And?

Mrs. Trotsky: I *think* that there’s a mountain-climber’s axe in your own skull right now.

Trotsky: I knew *that*! When I was shaving this morning, I noticed a handle sticking out of the back of my head. For a moment I thought it was an ice pick, so at first I was worried.

Mrs. Trotsky: No, it’s not an ice pick.

Trotsky: Don’t even say the word! You know my recurring nightmare.

Mrs. Trotsky: Yes, dear.

Trotsky: That is why I have forbidden any of the servants to allow ice picks into the house.

Mrs. Trotsky: But Leon...

Trotsky: We’ll do without ice. We’ll drink our liquor neat and our Coca-Cola warm. Who cares if this *is* Coyoacan in August? Hmm. Not a bad song-title, that. “Coyoacan in August.” Or we’ll get ice, but we just won’t pick at it. Ice will be allowed into the house in blocks, but may not be picked or chipped under any circumstances – at least, not with ice picks. Ice – cube trays will also be allowed, if they’ve been invented yet. I’ll be this article doesn’t say anything about an *ice-cube tray* in my skull, does it?

Mrs. Trotsky: No...

Trotsky: Does it?

Mrs. Trotsky: No.

Trotsky: HA! I’ve outsmarted destiny! Which is only a capitalist explanation for the status quo!

Mrs. Trotsky: Leon...

Trotsky: Also – look at this. Do you know what this is?

Mrs. Trotsky: No.

Trotsky: It’s a skull.

Mrs. Trotsky: Well I knew *that*, but –

Trotsky: I bought this skull. I own this skull. So what does that make this?

Together: Trotsky’s skull.

Trotsky: If some Spanish-Communist-posing-as-a-gardener wants to bury anything in my skull, be it a you-know-what or anything else – this will be here as a decoy. He’ll see this skull, recognize it as my skull, bury something in it, and he’ll go his way and I’ll go mine. Is that ingenious?

Mrs. Trotsky: Up to a point.

Trotsky: Fifty more years of Trotsky!

Mrs. Trotsky: I have some very bad news for you, Leon.

Trotsky: a mountain-climber’s axe...? Funny I always thought it was an ice pick.

Mrs. Trotsky: A mountain-climber's axe! *A mountain-climber's axe!* CAN'T I GET THAT THROUGH YOUR SKULL?

Trotsky: Ingenious!

Canker Sores and Other Distractions

Martin: Prunella, it's so good to see you.

Prunella: You too, Martin.

Martin: Prunella, how I've saying your name. Prunella, Prunella, Prunella. Like prunes with vanilla.

Prunella: Martin, Martin. I . . . can't think of anything equivalent to say.

Martin: How long has it been?

Prunella: It's been a long time.

Martin: It's been a long time, hasn't it. Prunella. Prunella. Prunella.

Prunella: Ten years. Ever since the divorce.

Martin: That dreadful day. We had a particularly contentious divorce too, didn't we? Swearing, crying, hurling accusations. I said so many awful things. You said so many awful things. Then you got all our possessions and the house and the kids and the car.

Prunella: I know. We really hated one another back then. As a matter of fact, we've continued hating one another until . . . just yesterday, that chance meeting on the street.

Martin: It's true, Prunella. When I saw you yesterday, the sunlight shimmering on your wig, all of a sudden all the hate and anger fell into perspective, and I thought, I love this woman, I always have loved this woman. I mean, who cares who got what in the settlement – those are only "things."

Prunella: Yes. My things.

Martin: Right, but the point is, Prunella, after 10 years of hating you, suddenly that hate has lifted and in its place is . . . well, it's corny to say it, but in its place is love.

Prunella: I feel the same way, Martin. The kids are grown, the car is broken, the house needs repair. But our love for one another is real.

Martin: Prunella, I know this is crazy, but I think we should get back together. I want us to remarry.

Midge: Hello, my name is Midge, and I will be your waitress for the evening. Let me tell you about our specials, and then take a cocktail order.

Martin: Could you come back in a minute?

Midge: What?

Martin: I'm sorry. Would you come back in a minute. I was in the middle of a thought. Now where was I?

Prunella: Oh, Martin, it's amazing you feel this way because I feel absolutely the same.

Martin: You do?

Prunella: Yes. I haven't felt anything like . . .

Midge: We got duck and chicken and fish, all almondine.

Martin: I'm not ready now.

Midge: My name is Midge, and I'm your waitress.

Martin: My name is Martin, and I'm not ready yet.

Midge: Well, when you're ready you let me know. Okay?

Martin: Yes, Midge.

Midge: I'll be waiting.

Martin: Now what were you saying?

Prunella: I forget.

Martin: Oh I hate it when this happens. Well, let me tell you more about my feelings then. Stop me if you've heard it before. I feel so thoroughly renewed, young, in love... I ... I think I'm developing a canker sore.

Prunella: What?

Martin: Yes, right on my inner cheek. Ow, it hurts when I put my tongue on it.

Prunella: Don't put your tongue on it then.

Martin: I have to. It hurts.

Prunella: When did you get it, darling?

Martin: I don't know, I don't know, it just happened.

Prunella: Darling, I'm sorry.

Midge: Did you all order drinks?

Martin: No we didn't.

Midge: Well somebody did. I wonder who it was. No...no...no...

Prunella: Go on, dear, I'm listening.

Martin: I was saying I feel so alive, so renewed...damn it, Prunella, this canker sore is just hurting, it's sitting in my mouth and it's hurting me.

Prunella: Maybe you could drink something. Is there any drink you could recommend that makes a canker sore feel better?

Midge: Grapefruit juice.

Martin: Better, not worse!

Midge: I'm not sure if we have grapefruit juice. We have Mimosas, but somebody said the orange juice tasted like grapefruit juice. I'll go check.

Prunella: Don't forget your pad.

Martin: I don't want grapefruit juice, Midge.

Midge: I'll check.

Martin: I'm becoming very sorry we've come to this restraint.

Prunella: Now, Martin, don't let it ruin this evening for us.

Martin: Are you telling me what to do already?

Prunella: It's just a suggestion, don't be angry.

Martin: I'm not angry. I'm just coping with a canker sore.

Prunella: More like a "cranker" sore.

Martin: What?

Prunella: Canker and cranky sound alike. I was just noticing.

Martin: Canker and cranky. They don't sound particularly alike.

Prunella: "Anker" and "anky." Well they're more alike then, say, "canker" and ... "geranium."

Martin: This is becoming a stupid conversation.

Prunella: Well, I'm sorry I brought it up.

Martin: This really hurts.

Prunella: Don't keep feeling it then.

Martin: It's hard not to.

Prunella: So you think we should get married again.

Martin: What? Oh, yes. I do.

Midge: Did I leave my pad here? I don't know how you expect me to remember anything if I lose my pad.

Martin: We don't expect anything from you. Except service.

Midge: Well, that's expecting something.

Prunella: Martin, we're getting distracted, and letting petty things interrupt our wonderful reconciliation. Let's not do that. Oh, oh, oh.

Martin: What is it?

Prunella: Something in my eye. Oh dear. Oh my, it stings dreadfully. Oh my. Ow. Ow.

Martin: I don't understand. Something just flew into your eye?

Prunella: Well, I'm not making it up. Ow ow ow. Oh dear. Ow

Martin: I believe it hurts. It just seems peculiar to have to be vocal about it.

Prunella: Ow.

Martin: Seems unnecessary.

Prunella: Don't try to control my pain. It's my pain.

Midge: Here's your grapefruit juice.

Prunella: Ow, ow.

Martin: I didn't order grapefruit juice.

Midge: Well, I wrote it down.

Martin: I don't care what you wrote down, I don't want it.

Midge: Do you want a mimosa?

Prunella: Ow, ow. Do you have an eye cup?

Midge: What?

Prunella: To rinse my eye.

Midge: I can get a shot glass.

Prunella: Yes. Please. O wow.

Martin: Well, my canker sore hurts too. Ow. Especially when I touch it. Ow ow.

Prunella: It's not a contest, Martin.

Martin: You always get this way when there are difficulties.

Midge: Here's the shot glass.

Martin: I don't want to get married again. It was stupid idea. Life is nothing but pain and misery, it's stupid to have even thought about trying to look for something to work out.

Prunella: Martin, you're overreacting. Eventually I'll get the thing out of my eye, and eventually your canker sore will leave.

Martin: It doesn't matter, something else awful will happen.

Prunella: Well, fine. I'm remembering what being married to you was like.

Midge: Oh, he's right. You get your hopes up and something awful happens. I got a call last week from representatives of Ed McMahon and they said I won a million dollars. And then I thought, I'm going to quit my job as a waitress. But I misheard them. They said I might win a million dollars, if I agreed to subscribe to some magazine. So I ordered TV Guide for thirty-six weeks. And then last night my apartment got robbed, and I don't have a TV anymore. But I'm going to get TV Guide for thirty-six weeks.

Martin: Well that's too bad. I wonder if you could not talk to us so much this evening.

Midge: What?

Prunella: Martin...

Martin: Well, I didn't realize when I came in here that this was one of those talky-chatty restaurants.

Midge: What?

Martin: I would like to have a conversation with my ex-wife, but with you I would like to say hello and good-bye, and here's my order please.

Midge: Oh, you'd like to order now. He's difficult to understand.

Martin: I am not difficult to understand. I would like some politeness and decorum with the people whose work it is to serve me.

Prunella: Just the check, please.

Midge: What?

Prunella: Martin, I remembered why I divorced you. You're really horrible. You should be in therapy.

Midge: I'd love to be in therapy, but I can't afford it.

Martin: Where's the manager? I want this woman fired.

Prunella: Just bring him the check. I'm going to go to a fast food restaurant.

Martin: Where's the manager, please?

Midge: I don't know if we have a manager. You want to see the cook?

Martin: Oh, forget it, forget it. Life is hopeless. You've ruined my remarriage.

Midge: Yeah, yeah. Big deal.

Variations on the Death of Trotsky

THREE

Trotsky: But this man is a gardener.

Mrs. Trotsky: Yes.

Trotsky: At least he's been posing as a gardener.

Mrs. Trotsky: Yes.

Trotsky: Doesn't that make him a member of the proletariat?

Mrs. Trotsky: I'd say so.

Trotsky: Then what's he doing smashing a mountain-climber's axe into my skull?

Mrs. Trotsky: I don't know. Have you been oppressing him?

Trotsky: Why would Ramon have done this to me?

Mrs. Trotsky: Maybe he's a literalist.

Trotsky: A what?

Mrs. Trotsky: A literalist. Maybe Ramon ran into Manuel yesterday. You know – Manuel? The head gardener?

Trotsky: I know who Manuel is.

Mrs. Trotsky: I know you know who Manuel is.

Trotsky: One of these days, Mrs. Trotsky...Bang! Zoom!

Mrs. Trotsky: Maybe Ramon asked him, "Will Mr. Trotsky have time to look at the nasturtiums today?" And maybe Manuel said, "I don't know – axe Mr. Trotsky." Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha

Trotsky: Very funny.

Mrs. Trotsky: Or maybe he just wanted to pick your brain! HOO HOO HEE HEE HAA HAA!

Trotsky: Stop it! Stop it!

Mrs. Trotsky: HA HA HA HA HA!

For Whom the Southern Belle Tolls

Amanda: Rise and shine! Rise and shine! Lawrence, honey, come out here and let me have a look at you! Lawrence, honey, you look lovely.

Lawrence: No, I don't mama. I have a pimple on the back of my neck.

Amanda: Don't say the word "pimple," honey, it's common. Now your brother Tom is bringing home a girl from the warehouse for you to meet, and I want you to make a good impression, honey.

Lawrence: It upsets my stomach to meet people, mama.

Amanda: Oh, Lawrence honey, you're so sensitive it makes me want to hit you.

Lawrence: I don't need to meet people, mama. I'm happy just by myself, playing with my collection of glass cocktail stirrers.

Amanda: Lawrence, you are a caution. Only retarded people and alcoholics are interested in glass cocktail stirrers.

Lawrence: Each one of them has a special name, mama. This one is called Stringbean because it's long and thin. And this one is called Stringbean because it's long and thin. And this one is called Blue because it's blue.

Amanda: All my children have such imagination, why was I so blessed? Oh, Lawrence honey, how are you going to get on in the world if you just stay home all day, year after year, playing with your collection of glass cocktail stirrers?

Lawrence: I don't like the world mama. I like it here in this room.

Amanda: I know you do, Lawrence honey, that's part of your charm. Some days. But, honey, what about making a living?

Lawrence: I can't work mama. I'm crippled.

Amanda: There is nothing wrong with your leg, Lawrence honey, all the doctors have told you that. This limping thing is an affection.

Lawrence: I only know how I feel, mama.

Amanda: Oh if only I had connections in the Mafia, I'd have someone come and break both your legs.

Lawrence: Don't try to make me laugh, mama. You know I have asthma.

Amanda: Your asthma, your leg, your eczema. You're just a mess, Lawrence!

Lawrence: I have scabs from the itching, mama.

Amanda: That was a joke, Lawrence.

Lawrence: Don't try to make me laugh, mama. My asthma.

Amanda: Your brother Tom says she's a lovely girl with a nice personality. And where else does he meet girls except the few who work at the warehouse? He only seems to meet men at the movies. Your brother goes to the movies entirely too much. I must speak to him about it.

Lawrence: It's unfeminine for a girl to work at a warehouse.

Amanda: Now Lawrence – if you can't go out the door without getting an upset stomach or an attack of vertigo, then we have got to find some nice girl who's willing to support you. Otherwise, how am I ever going to get you out of this house and off my hands?

Lawrence: Why do you want to be rid of me, mama?

Amanda: I suppose it's unmotherly of me, dear, but you really get on my nerves. Limping around the apartment, pretending to have asthma. If only some nice girl would marry you and I knew you were taken care of, then I'd feel free to start to live again. I'd join Parents

Without Partners, I'd go to dinner dances, I'd have a life again. Rather than just watch you mope about this stupid apartment. I'm not bitter, dear, it's just that I hate my life.

Lawrence: I understand, mama.

Amanda: Do you, dear? Oh, you're cute. Oh, listen, I think I hear them.

Tom: Mother, I forgot my key.

Lawrence: I'll be in the other room.

Amanda: I want you to let them in, Lawrence.

Lawrence: Oh, I couldn't, mama. She'd see I limp.

Amanda: Then don't limp, damn it.

Tom: Mother, are you there?

Amanda: Just a minute, Tom, honey. Now, Lawrence, you march over to that door or I'm going to break all your swizzle sticks.

Lawrence: Mama, I can't!

Amanda: Lawrence, you are a grown boy. Now you answer that door like any normal person.

Lawrence: I can't.

Tom: Mother, I'm going to break the door down in a minute.

Amanda: Just be patient, Tom. Now you're causing a scene, Lawrence. I want you to answer that door.

Lawrence: My eczema itches.

Amanda: I'll itch it for you in a second, Lawrence.

Tom: Alright, I'm breaking it down. Why must we go through this every night??? You know stupid won't open the door, so why don't you let him alone about it? My kid brother has a thing about answering doors. He thinks people will notice his limp and his asthma and his eczema.

Lawrence: Excuse me. I think I hear someone calling me in the other room. Coming!

Amanda: Now see what you've done. He's probably going to refuse to come to the table due to your insensitivity. Oh, was any woman as cursed as I? With one son who's too sensitive and another one who's this big lox. I'm sorry, how rude of me. I'm Amanda Wingvally. You must be Virginia Bennett from the warehouse.

Ginny: CALL ME GINNY OR GIN! BUT JUST DON'T CALL ME "LATE FOR DINNER"!!!

Amanda: Oh, how amusing. Why is she shouting? Is she deaf?

Ginny: You're asking why I am speaking loudly. It's so that I can be heard! I am taking a course in public speaking, and so far we've covered organizing your thoughts and speaking good and loud so the people in the back of the room can hear you.

Amanda: Public speaking. How impressive. You must be interested in improving yourself.

Ginny: What?

Amanda: YOU MUST BE INTERESTED IN IMPROVING YOURSELF.

Ginny: YES I AM!

Tom: When's dinner? I want to get this over with fast if everyone's going to shout all evening.

Ginny: What?

Amanda: Dinner is almost ready.

Ginny: Who's Freddy?

Amanda: Oh, Lord, no, dear. DINNER IS READY.

Ginny: Oh good. I'm as hungry as a bear!

Amanda: You must be very popular at the warehouse, Ginny.

Ginny: No popsicle for me, ma'am, although I will take you up on some gin.

Amanda: What?

Ginny: I WOULD LIKE SOME GIN.

Amanda: Well, fine. I think I'd like to get drunk too. Tom, why don't you go and make two Southern ladies some nice summer gin and tonics? And see if sister would like a lemonade.

Tom: Sister?

Amanda: I'm sorry, did I say sister? I meant brother.

Tom: Hey stupid, you wanna lemonade?

Amanda: Tom's so amusing. He calls Lawrence stupid. Speaking of Lawrence, let me go check on the supper and see if I can convince him to come out here and make conversation with you.

Ginny: No, thank you, ma'am, I'll just have the gin.

Amanda: What?

Ginny: What?

Amanda: Never mind. I'll be back. Or with luck I won't.

Ginny: They must drink a lot here.

Tom: Here's some gin for Ginny.

Ginny: What?

Tom: Here's your poison.

Ginny: No, thanks, I'll just wait here.

Tom: Have you ever thought that your hearing is being affected by all that loud machinery at the warehouse?

Ginny: Scenery? You mean, like trees? Yeah, I like trees.

Tom: I like trees too.

Amanda: Now you get out of that bed this minute, Lawrence Wingvalley, or I'm going to give that overbearing girl your entire collection of glass gobbledygook – is that clear? I believe Lawrence would like to visit with you, Ginny.

Ginny: Tom brought me my drink already, thank you, Mrs. Wingvalley.

Amanda: You know, dear, a hearing aid isn't really all that expensive, you might look into that.

Ginny: No, if I have the gin, I don't really want any gator aid. Never liked the stuff anyway. But you feel free.

Amanda: Thank you, dear. I will. Come, Tom, come to the kitchen and help me prepare the supper. And we'll let the two young people converse.

Tom: I hope this dinner won't take long, mother. I don't want to get to the movies late.

Amanda: Oh shut up about the movies.

Ginny: HI.

Lawrence: Hi...I'd gone to bed.

Ginny: I never eat bread. It's too fattening. I have to watch my figure if I want to get ahead in the world. Why are you wearing that nightshirt?

Lawrence: I'd gone to bed. I wasn't feeling well. My leg hurts, and I have a headache, and I have palpitations of the heart.

Ginny: I don't know. Hum a few bars, and I'll see.

Lawrence: Maybe you want to see my collection of glass cocktail stirrers. I call this one Stringbean, because it's long and thin.

Ginny: Thank you.

Lawrence: They're not for use. They're a collection.

Ginny: Well I guess I stirred it enough.

Lawrence: They're my favorite thing in the world. I call this one Q-tip, because I realized it looks like a Q-tip, except it's made out of glass and doesn't have little cotton swabs at the end of it. Q-tip.

Ginny: Really?

Lawrence: No!!!! Don't put it in your ear. Now it's disgusting.

Ginny: Well, I didn't think it was a Q-tip, but that's what you said it was.

Lawrence: I call it that. I think I'm going to throw it out now. And I call this one Henry Kissinger, because he wears glasses and it's made of glass.

Ginny: Uh huh.

Lawrence: No! They're just for looking, not for stirring. Mama, she's making a mess of my collection.

Amanda: Oh shut up about your collection, honey, you're probably driving the poor girl bananas.

Ginny: No bananas, thank you! My nutritionist says I should avoid potassium. You know what I take your trouble to be, Lawrence?

Lawrence: Mama says I'm retarded.

Ginny: I know you're tired, I figured that's why you put on the nightshirt, but this won't take long. I judge you to be lacking in self-confidence. Am I right?

Lawrence: Well, I am afraid of people and things, and I have a lot of ailments.

Ginny: But that makes you special, Lawrence.

Lawrence: What does?

Ginny: I don't know. Whatever you just said. And that's why you should present yourself with more confidence. Throw back our shoulders, and say, "HI! HOW YA DOIN'?" Now you try it.

Lawrence: Hello. How are you?

Ginny: I don't know, it's about 8:30, but this won't take long and then you can go to bed. Alright now try it. "HI! HOW YA DOIN'?"

Lawrence: HI. HOW YA DOIN'?

Ginny: Good, Lawrence. That's much better. Again. HI! HOW YA DOIN'?

Lawrence: HI! HOW YA DOIN'?

Amanda: Oh God I feel sorry for their children. Is this the only girl who works at the warehouse, Tom?

Ginny: HI, MRS. WINGVALLEY. YOUR SON LAWRENCE AND I ARE GETTING ON JUST FINE, AREN'T WE, LAWRENCE?

Amanda: Please, no need to shout, I'm not deaf, even if you are.

Ginny: What?

Amanda: I'm glad you like Lawrence.

Ginny: What?

Amanda: I'M GLAD YOU LIKE LAWRENCE.

Ginny: What?

Amanda: WHY DON'T YOU MARRY LAWRENCE?

Ginny: Oh.

Lawrence: Oh, mama.

Ginny: Oh dear, I see. So that's why Shakespeare asked me here.

Amanda: Shakespear?

Tom: The first day of work she asked me my name, and I said Tom Wingvalley, and she thought I said Shakespeare.

Ginny: Oh dear. Mrs. Wingvalley, if I had a young brother as nice as and as special as Lawrence is, I'd invite girls from the warehouse home to meet him too.

Amanda: I'm sure I don't know what you mean.

Ginny: And you're probably hoping I'll say that I'll call again.

Amanda: Really, we haven't even had supper yet. Tom, shouldn't you be checkin' on the roast pigs feet?

Tom: I guess so. If anything interesting happens, call me.

Ginny: But I'm afraid I won't be calling on Lawrence again.

Lawrence: This is so embarrassing. I told you I wanted to stay in my room.

Amanda: Hush up, Lawrence.

Ginny: But, Lawrence, I don't want you to think that I won't be calling because I don't like you. I do like you.

Lawrence: You do?

Ginny: Sure. I like everybody. But I got two time clocks to punch, Mrs. Wingvalley. One at the warehouse, and one at night.

Amanda: At night? You have a second job? That is ambitious.

Ginny: Not a second job, ma'am. Betty.

Amanda: Pardon?

Ginny: Now who's deaf, eh what? Betty. I'm involved with a girl named Betty. We've been going together for about a year. We're saving money so that we can buy a farmhouse and a tractor together. So you can see why I can't visit your son, though I wish I could. No hard feelings, Lawrence. You're a good kid.

Lawrence: I want you to keep this. It's my very favorite one. I call it Thermometer because it looks like a thermometer.

Ginny: You want me to have this?

Lawrence: Yes, as a souvenir.

Ginny: Well, there's not need to call me a queer. To hell with you and your stupid swizzle sticks.

Lawrence: You've broken it!

Ginny: What?

Lawrence: You've broken it. **YOU'VE BROKEN IT!**

Ginny: So I've broken it. Big deal. You have twenty more of them here.

Amanda: Well, I'm so sorry you have to be going.

Ginny: What?

Amanda: Hadn't you better be going?

Ginny: What?

Amanda: **GO AWAY!**

Ginny: Well, I guess I can tell when I'm not wanted. I guess I'll go now.

Amanda: You and Betty must come over some evening. Preferably when we're out.

Ginny: Uh huh. So long, Shakespeare. See you at the warehouse. So long, Lawrence. I hope your rash gets better.

Lawrence: You broke thermometer.

Ginny: What?

Lawrence: **YOU BROKE THERMOMETER!**

Ginny: Well, what was a thermometer doing in with the swizzle sticks anyway?

Lawrence: Its name was Thermometer, you nitwit!
Amanda: Let it go Lawrence. There'll be other swizzle sticks. Good bye, Virginia.
Ginny: I sure am hungry. Any chance I might be able to take a sandwich with me?
Amanda: Certainly you can shake hands with me, if that will make you happy.
Ginny: I said I'm hungry.
Amanda: Really dear. What part of Hungry are you from?
Ginny: Oh never mind. I guess I'll go.
Amanda: That's right. You have two time clocks. It must be getting near time to when you punch in Betty.
Ginny: Well, so long, everybody! I had a nice time.

Variations on the Death of Trotsky

FOUR

Trotsky: Call Ramon in here.
Mrs. Trotsky: Ramon!
Trotsky: You'd better get him quickly. I have a mountain-climber's axe in my skull.
Mrs. Trotsky: Ramon! Come quickly!
Trotsky: Good morning, Ramon.
Ramon: Good morning, senior.
Trotsky: Have a seat, please. You see? We have very good employer-employee relations here.
Ramon, did you bury this mountain-climber's axe in my skull?
Ramon: I did not bury it, senior. I smashed it into your skull.
Trotsky: Excuse me?
Ramon: You see? You can still see the handle.
Mrs. Trotsky: It's true, Leon. The axe is not entirely out of sight.
Ramon: So we cannot say "buried," we can only say "smashed," or perhaps "jammed" –
Trotsky: All right, all right. But why did you do this?
Ramon: I think I read about it in an encyclopedia.
Trotsky: The power of the printed word.
Ramon: I wanted to use an ice pick, but there weren't any around the house.
Trotsky: But why? Do you realize who I am? Do you realize that you smashed this axe into the skull of a major historical figure? I helped run the Russian Revolution! I fought Stalin! I was a major political theorist! Why did you do this? Was it a political disaffection? Anti-counterrevolutionary backlash?
Ramon: Actually – it was love, senior.
Mrs. Trotsky: It's true, Leon. I'm only sorry you had to find out about it this way.
Trotsky: No.
Mrs. Trotsky: Yes.
Trotsky: No
Ramon: Si
Trotsky: Oh God! What a fool I've been!

Medea

Chorus: So pitiful, so pitiful our shame and lamentation. No more shall I move the shifting pace of the shuttle at the looms of Ida.

Chorus member #3: Looms of Ida.

Chorus: O woe, o woe, o woe, we are so upset we speak in unison, so pitiful, so wretched, so doomed, women who run with wolves, women who love too much, whitewater rapids, how did she turn \$1000 into \$100,000? Oh woe, oh woe, o woe. Wooga, wooga, wooga.

Medea: Come, flame of the sky, pierce through my head! What do I, Medea, gain from living any longer? Oh I hate living! I want to end my life, leave it behind, and die.

Chorus: But tell us how you're really feeling.

Medea: My husband Jason – the Argonaut – has left me for another woman. Debbie.

Chorus: Dreaded Debbie, dreaded Debbie. Debutante from hell.

Medea: She is the daughter of King Creon, who owns a diner on 55th Street and Jamaica Avenue. Fie on her! And the House of Creon! And the four brothers of the Acropolis. I am banished from my husband's bed, and from the country. A bad predicament all around. Today three of my enemies I will strike down dead: Debbie and Debbie's father, and my husband.

Chorus: Speaking of your husband, here he comes.

Jason: Hello, Medea.

Medea: Hello, Jason.

Jason: I hear you've been banished to China.

Medea: Very large, China.

Jason: And Japan?

Medea: Very small, Japan. And Debbie?

Jason: She's very striking.

Medea: Some women should be struck regularly like gongs.

Jason: Medea, even though thou art banished by Creon to foreign shores, the two innocent children of our loins, Lyle and Eric, should remain with me. I will enroll them at the Dalton School. And there they will flourish as citizens of Corinth under the watchful eye of Zeus and his lovely and talented wife Hera.

Medea: Fine, walk on me some more! I was born unlucky and a woman.

Chorus: Men are from Mars, women are from Venus.

Jason: Well, whatever. I call the gods to witness that I have done my best to help you and the children.

Medea: Go! You have spent too long out here. You are consumed with craving for your newly won bride, Debbie. Go, enjoy Debbie!

Medea: O woe, o woe. I am in pain for I know what I must do. Debbie, kill for sure.

Chorus: Debbie's done, ding dong, Debbie's done. Done deal, Debbie dead, dopey Debbie, Debbie dead.

Medea: But also my sons. Never shall their father see them again. I shall kill my children. How do you like that????

Chorus: Aaaaaagghghghghghgghhhh! O smart women, foolish choices. Stop the insanity! Stop the insanity! You can eat one slice of cheese, or sixteen baked potatoes! Make up your mind.

Medea: Why is there so little *Trojan Women* in this, and so much of me?

Chorus: We don't know *The Trojan Woman* as well as we know *Medea*. Medea, we just met a girl named Medea. And suddenly that name will never be the same.

Medea: Brin my children hither.

Chorus: O miserable mother, to destroy your own increase, murder the babes of your body. The number you have reached is not in service at this time. Call 777-FILM.

Medea: I want to kill my children. I want to sleep with my brother. I want to pluck out the eyes of my father. I want to blow up the Parthenon. I need a creative outlet for all this anger.

Messenger: A messenger am I. Caesar is dead.

Chorus: Caesar is dead. How interesting. Who is Caesar?

Messenger: I am sorry. Wrong play. Lady Teazle wishes you to know that Lady Windermere and Lady Bracknell are inviting you and Lady The-Scottish-Play to tea with her cousin Ernest, if he's not visiting Mr. Bunberry.

Medea: Mr. Bunberry? I do not need a messenger. I need a *deus ex machina*.

Angel: Oh Medea, O Medea. I am a deus ex machina. In a bigger production, I would come down from the sky in an angel's outfit, but just use your imagination. Theatre is greatly about imagination, is it not. I am an angel. I I I I I I I , yi yi yi. I I I I am the Bird of Great Tragedy. Do not kill our children. Do not sleep with your brother. Rein in your rage, and thank Zeus. I come with glad tidings. Debbie is no more a threat. She's been cast in a series. She has a running part on *Desperate Housewives*.

Chorus: *Desperate Housewives!*

Angel: Jason will return to you. He sees the error of his ways. He has been lobotomized.

Chorus: O fortunate woman, to whom Zeus has awarded a docile husband.

Medea: O, *deus ex machina*, o, Angel, o, Hecuba, oh, looms of Ida.

Chorus: Ida Ida Ida Ida.

Medea: I am eternally grateful to you.

Chorus: The things we thought would happen, do not happen. The unexpected, God makes possible. The camptown races sing a song, do da, do da.

Chorus and Medea: Medea's happy the whole day long, oh the do da day! Things will be just fine, no need to kill her children, Medea's feeling happy now, oh the do da... Oh the do da, Zeus and Buddha, they're as nice as Dionysus, oh the do da work it through da, oh the do da, do da, do da day!