

SEASICK

OR CAST ADRIFT IN THE SEA OF LIFE WITHOUT AN ANCHOR

By **Dan Neidermyer**

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SEASICK or CAST ADRIFT
IN THE SEA OF LIFE WITHOUT AN ANCHOR
By Dan Neidermyer

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(A full length melodrama for six men and fifteen women, plus extras)

CASSANDRA	The cue card girl (1 line)
WINSLOW P. DOWNS, III	Truly, our hero (83 lines)
EMMYMAESUE ANNE SKETCHINGTON	Our heroine whose young life is soon to be fraught with serious trouble (61 lines)
DELLA	Stage crew co-captain (3 lines)
SMYRNA	Another (Non-Speaking)
VIDOR SIMON PERSELLEN	Atrocious villain (63 lines)
ONORA	In Gaelic, her name means “honor.” Too bad she has none, working in cahoots with Vidor (Non-Speaking)
BRUNHILDA	In Norse, her name means “armored fighting woman.” How appropriate for one working hand-in-glove with Vidor (Non-Speaking)
NARRATOR	(3 lines)
TAWANDA SKETCHINGTON	the mother of all grannies (19 lines)
AUNT MARVA	ever-complaining, forever unhappy, like most aunts (19 lines)
AUNT MONA	like sister, like sister (15 lines)
STELLA	crabby, ugly step-sister to our heroine (6 lines)
MARELLA	A carbon copy of her sister Stella. (Must run in the family) (10 lines)

QUEENIE.....	A fool for Vidor's money (27 lines)
ZIGGY.....	Owner of the Diamond Stud Saloon (3 lines)
ELWOOD DIMWOODY.....	Winslow's true-blue college friend (12 lines)
ZELDA.....	Fancies herself a saloon singer (5 lines)
STEW.....	A poker-playing loser (6 lines)
LOU.....	Ditto (3 lines)
DOG.....	The true hero (4 lines)
EXTRAS.....	Stagehands work onstage throughout the entire show, a marvelous part of the show's action

SCENE SYNOPSIS

Scene 1: The Romantic Scene

Scene 2: The Complaining Scene

Scene 3: The Boring Scene

Scene 4: The Very Real Dilemma Scene

• INTERMISSION •

Scene 5: The Plot Thickens Scene

Scene 6: The Hero-To-The-Rescue Scene

Scene 7: The Happy Ending Scene

TIME

The Present

PLACE

A prairie, far and away

SEASICK

SET

The set changes from scene to scene and is actually “put into place” by the STAGEHANDS supervised by DELLA and SMYRNA right before the audience’s eyes. Several aspects of the set prove to be quite fun for the audience. For example, CASSANDRA, the cue card girl, almost always comes onstage before a scene begins or while a scene is being “set” and places a large posterboard on an easel on the front or apron of the stage. The posterboard identifies the time of the scene. These posterboards read as follows:

- 1) ***A SUNNY DAY IN MAY***
- 2) ***A CHILLY NIGHT IN FEBRUARY***
- 3) ***MIDNIGHT IN A BLIZZARD***
- 4) ***LATER***

Also, the “set pieces” and “painted cardboard backdrops” should not be great works of scenic art. Set pieces need only hint the location of the scene. Keep in mind this is a preposterous melodrama, it helps if the set, props, and costumes are somewhat exaggerated.

COSTUMES

As indicated in the script. However, keep in mind much of the fun will come from the exaggerated, colorful costuming.

PROPS

Posterboards

Easel

Several chairs/stools

Ferns or trees (live or artificial)

Small painted backdrop of snow-capped mountains

Fake rock or two (paper-mache or cut out of cardboard)

Long piece of cardboard cut to look like “waves” (or blue fabric)

Pieces of paper simulating set drawings for Della and Smyrna;
drawings are never seen by the audience

Two fans, any size
Piece of cardboard cut to look like a power dam or a piece of cardboard printed
with the words "Power Dam"
Bucket of water (or confetti)
Piece of cardboard cut to look like a shark fin
Rocking chair
Small throw rug
Hassock
Cardboard house interior
Knitting supplies
Wristwatch
Stuffed animal
Empty picture frame
Several flashlights
Bucket of snow (cut from white construction paper)
Oversized diamond ring
Old piece of lumber
Candle or flashlight for Emmymaesue
Telephone
Three step ladders (any size)
Piece of cardboard cut to look like the moon
Beach or lawn chair
Cardboard painted window frame
Travel poster of a Caribbean island pasted inside the window frame
Glass of lemonade (or water)
Two small hand fans (made from paper)
Tin can tied around dog's neck
Several card tables
Several folding chairs
Deck of cards
Platform on which Zelda sings
Cardboard bar for the Diamond Stud Saloon
Small rope
Two sets of railroad tracks cut from cardboard

SEASICK

Occasionally, a STAGEHAND rushes onstage carrying a sign that urges a response from the audience. These signs read as follows:

- 1) **“SAY IT! SAY IT!”**
- 2) **“OH, NO!”**
- 3) **APPLAUSE**
- 4) **RESCUE K-9**

MUSIC

For a bigger laugh, WINSLOW might attempt to sing a song, ballad, or chorus reminiscent of the 1890's vaudeville tunes. Such tunes (public domain) are readily available in most libraries in collections of early Americana, vaudeville and gay '90's tunes, etc. This will add hilarity to the entire show. Truth is he cannot sing, but he rates A+++ for his sincerity in trying to be a serenading troubadour. Music is completely optional.

ADDITIONAL ACTS

The director may wish to use additional acts in keeping with the fun of an 1890's vaudeville show. You could stage ACT ONE with talent readily available such as singers, dancers, gymnasts, animal acts, or clowns. **Seasick** could then be ACT TWO and ACT THREE so your evening of entertainment would look as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| ACT ONE: | Variety and Talent Show |
| ACT TWO: | Scenes 1 - 4 of “Seasick” |
| ACT THREE: | Scenes 5 - 7 of “Seasick” |

The use of additional talent is the director's decision. **Seasick** is written to be an entire show in itself (with an intermission following Scene 4).

ABOUT MELODRAMAS

During the 1890's and on into the early part of the 1900's, melodramas were grand and high entertainment at the town's local theatre or stagehall. Most vaudeville shows traveled a well-known circuit, playing town after town, returning year after year to the same towns and theaters and people looked forward with much eager anticipation to the return of the vaudeville show with its always-tragic melo-drama. Back then, a traveling vaudeville show always had ACT ONE featuring a variety of acts (singers, dancers, talking dogs) and ACT TWO was a full hour of melodrama.

The plot was always the same: a fiendish villain conspiring to throw a beautiful heroine into deep distress unless, of course, the heroine agreed to marry the villain. (Thus the phrase: "No, no, a thousand times no!") And always to the rescue was a hero who though quite handsome was truly the lunkhead: long on pecs, short on gray matter.

The dialogue was always silly. In fact, audiences expected such and came to the show prepared to "throw in" a bit of their own. In many melodramas, the heroine always ended up tied to the railroad tracks or to a log that was about to go over the river's falls or into the power dam's churning motor blades. (Even the first silent movies copied this hilariously exaggerated storyline!)

But always, just at the last moment, the hero saves the day! And so it is with **Seasick** in this uproarious hiss-the villain, cheer-on the-hero, and hope-for-the-best heroine melodrama!

SCENE 1

At Rise:

CASSANDRA walks onstage carrying a large posterboard which she places on an easel. She turns and cutely smiles to the audience. Hopefully, the audience applauds. If not, with the slightest movement of her right hand, CASSANDRA gives them a subtle hint to do so. Accepting the applause, most pleased, she cutely smiles again to the audience and exits.

The posterboard reads: A SUNNY DAY IN MAY

Scene Set-up:

The lights brighten as WINSLOW, our hero, and EMMYMAESUE, our heroine whose young life is soon to be fraught with serious trouble, enter. Each carries a chair or stool. They place the chairs three feet apart and sit down gazing most intently into each other's eyes.

As WINSLOW and EMMYMAESUE are carrying on their chairs, DELLA and SMYRNA direct a crew of brightly-dressed STAGEHANDS. The STAGEHANDS are carrying such items as potted ferns/trees (live or artificial), a fake rock or two, and a painted background of snow-capped mountains on stage. These set pieces are placed behind WINSLOW and EMMYMAESUE who continue to gaze into each other's eyes. DELLA and SMYRNA consult their set drawings constantly, making absolutely certain the STAGEHANDS are positioning every set piece correctly. From time to time, some pieces must be moved: like a potted tree that was placed "behind" the painted backdrop, etc.

DELLA and SMYRNA finally approve the scene set-up and rush offstage, grab another set piece and run back onstage with a long piece of cardboard cut and painted to look like "waves." DELLA and SMYRNA crouch down several feet in front of WINSLOW and EMMYMAESUE and pull the cardboard waves back and forth, back and forth, ever so slowly, simulating the waves of a gently flowing stream.

The STAGEHANDS hurry offstage as WINSLOW, wildly dressed, plaids and clashing stripes capped off with both a greased straight-up cowlick and a colorful bowtie, grabs an imaginary oar and begins rowing, smoothly. In truth, WINSLOW is indeed a swashbuckling, debonair hunk (though his head cavity carries around a lot of empty space and most often, he can be quite the nerd). But not today!

Musical Opening (Optional):

WINSLOW, as he rows, serenades his sweetheart with a love song or romantic ballad of the 1890's vaudeville type. "Serenades" is a most kind word for what WINSLOW actually does. He butchers the song. Unable to reach the high notes, he cranes his head and neck upward (as if that will help!), then screeches out a note or two. At the other end of the melodic spectrum, unable to hit the low notes, he sinks his head and neck downward in an attempt to reach down to get those lower notes, which he doesn't. **Note:** Regardless of the song, most every note for WINSLOW is high or low. But then again, it's not the quality of the song or ballad, but rather the sincerity of the troubadour that counts. And for that, WINSLOW rates an A+++! WINSLOW keeps "rowing" as he troubadours, EMMYMAESUE is totally enthralled.

THE ROMANTIC SCENE

Note: The "waves" continue flowing throughout this scene.

WINSLOW: Someday, my love -

EMMYMAESUE: (*Sighing.*) Yes.

WINSLOW: Someday, my love, even should I search the whole wide world over I might, and I emphasize "I might" find something more beautiful than you, but I feel certain, yes, I know in my heart, that day will never, never, ever come.

EMMYMAESUE: (*Sighing again.*) Oh, Winslow, you say the nicest things.

WINSLOW: Truly, truly, Emmymaesue, how could I have been so fortunate, so lucky, to have met you, you, my love, during my very first day at Bertie Tillstrom Middle School?

EMMYMAESUE: (*Sighing.*) And I the same!

WINSLOW: I remember that fateful day so well.

EMMYMAESUE: And I too!

WINSLOW: The day that changed the course of my whole entire and up to that point rather miserable, lonely life.

EMMYMAESUE: *(Sighing.)* And mine!

WINSLOW: The day that gave me a whole new perspective on life. A reason to get up in the morning. A purpose to live each day to the fullest. As if each day were my last!

Suddenly, from behind or through one of the potted ferns: a black-caped head peers out:

VIDOR: *(With a sneer.)* And today will be. If I have my way.

Having uttered such vileness, the HEAD disappears behind the fern. Not hearing this last most contemptible remark (thank goodness!), WINSLOW continues waxing most eloquently.

WINSLOW: How well I remember that day, my first day in middle school.

EMMYMAESUE: *(Sighing, ever so sweetly.)* And I too . . . that first day!

WINSLOW: I felt like such a . . . such a *(Turns to the audience and asks.)* Can I say it?

A STAGEHAND rushes onstage, holding up a sign which says: "SAY IT! SAY IT!" and urges the audience to shout back to WINSLOW "SAY IT! SAY IT!" The STAGEHAND promptly exits.

WINSLOW: *(Acceding to the audience's wishes.)* Dork.

EMMYMAESUE: *(Sighing sweetly, but truthfully.)* You were.

WINSLOW: *(Not hearing her last remark, wistfully.)* That first day in middle school, I felt so . . . so *(Again turns to the audience, asking.)* Should I say it?

A STAGEHAND rushes onstage, holding up the sign which says: "SAY IT! SAY IT!" Then, following the audience response, promptly exits.

WINSLOW: *(Acceding to the audience's wishes.)* Short.

EMMYMAESUE: *(Sighing sweetly, but truthfully.)* You were.

WINSLOW: I looked around at everyone else. Everyone else who seemed so tall, so rugged, so perfect in every way, and so ready to face this big middle school world - and those were the girls - and I found myself cowering, saying, "What am I doing here?" But, ah, funny me. Of course I knew what I was "doing here." The state of *(Insert your state: Kansas, Pennsylvania, etc.)* demanded my presence at Bertie Tillstrom Middle School for the next 180 days. Ah, but such difficulties show what men are.

Again, gaping from behind a potted fern or tree, the HEAD snarls:

VIDOR: I am about to be his worst difficulty. That'll show Emmymaesue what he ISN'T.

Not having heard this last remark, gazing ever so deeply into WINSLOW's eyes, completely lovestruck:

EMMYMAESUE: *(Sighing.)* How true. How true.

WINSLOW: Suddenly, while I was standing in the hallway at Bertie Tillstrom Middle School totally overwhelmed, I was quite abruptly and most unexpectedly blown away! Almost swept completely off my feet! But wait! Not "almost!" I was!

EMMYMAESUE: *(Suddenly concerned.)* By what, my handsome, noble hunk?! What completely swept you off your feet?

And yet a third time, the HEAD pops through the fern:

VIDOR: The tiniest breeze, the slightest draft, a mere puff *(He puckers his cheeks and blows slightly.)* would sweep that pinhead off his flat feet. And soon, very soon, I will be that "tiniest breeze, that slightest draft, that mere puff! that sweeps away that over-grown piece of fluff from MY GIRL!

The HEAD now steps through the potted fern and slinks soundlessly toward the rowing couple. Not having heard that dreadful foreshadowing of things to come, EMMYMAESUE asks again, ever so graciously:

EMMYMAESUE: What completely swept you off your feet?

WINSLOW: You. You came rushing down the stairwell and rounded the corner, so intent upon not being late for PE class, when wham! your World Cultures book slammed right into my stomach. It fell. I reached down to pick up that fallen book, and in the very next moment, my eyes met yours and I too fell -

EMMYMAESUE: And I.

WINSLOW: Our eyes locked. My heart pounded so loud I was sure the whole entire world could hear. "What hath my eyes beheld?" I shouted inside myself. "Mama mia! Mama mia!" myself answered myself back. A vision of true loveliness such as I had never seen. Not on TV, video, CD-rom, DVD, and certainly never in real life. That I had lived to see such beauty, such gorgeous pulchritude right before my very own eyes. I had to know who you were.

EMMYMAESUE: (*Sighing, with grand interest.*) And I you.

WINSLOW: (*Answering her most directly.*) Winslow P. Downs, III.

EMMYMAESUE: (*Answering him most directly.*) Emmymaesue Anne Sketchington.

WINSLOW: Suddenly, my blood was racing! My heart pounding! My eyes popping! I could not contain myself. I wanted to shout lovely beautiful words! To sing joyous, melodic notes! To jump up and touch the sky! To write poetry! To do anything that would proclaim, "Oh, happy day! that I have found you, a vision of loveliness! You have but to speak, but to ask, your every wish shall be my entire life's burning desire! I am but yours to command!"

EMMYMAESUE: (*Asking ever so graciously.*) Could we turn around and head back for shore, I think I'm getting a bit seasick.

WINSLOW: Ah, but of course.

Suddenly, making his dastardly presence known from the "shoreline."

VIDOR: Never! You will not reach the shore!

WINSLOW: What?!

VIDOR motions to two of his grungy accomplices now lurking behind the potted ferns. Both ONORA and BRUNHILDA climb through the ferns carrying electric fans.

VIDOR: Never, never, never will that canoe reach the safety of this shore. Not with the both of you in it!

WINSLOW: (Aghast.) One of us (Pointing first to EMMYMAESUE, then to himself.) will . . . ?

VIDOR: You got it, buster.

A STAGEHAND rushes onstage with a sign that reads: "OH, NO!" urging the audience to shout out the words. Following the audience response, the STAGEHAND promptly exits.

VIDOR: Never shall the two of you ever see each other again! Don't even think you, Winslow P. Downs, III, will ever take away my sweet petunia.

EMMYMAESUE: (Fighting back, sweetly.) But I'm not your sweet petunia, Vidor.

WINSLOW: She's my fairest American Beauty Rose kissed by the sun.

VIDOR: We'll see how fair she is and how brave you are . . . when this -

VIDOR motions ONORA and BRUNHILDA to place the electric fans on the shore in the direction of the "canoe." They immediately do so.

VIDOR: - storm hits you!

DELLA and SMYRNA increase the speed of their back and forth waves to hurricane waves.

WINSLOW: (Paddling extremely fast.) You'll never have her, Vidor! Never, never!

VIDOR: (Laughing up a storm.) Row as fast as you can, schlep! That'll only mean you'll come to the power dam that much faster!

WINSLOW turns quickly to see two STAGEHANDS rushing onstage carrying a large piece of cardboard with the words "Power Dam" written on it. The STAGEHANDS crouch down near the front of the canoe holding the piece of cardboard.

WINSLOW: (He turns and notices the warning sign.) POWER DAM!

VIDOR: And I've made certain the dam's locks are open! Bye-bye, Winslow!

EMMYMAESUE screams! Loud and long! Horrified!

WINSLOW: I'll save you, Emmymaesue! I'll save you!

VIDOR: (*Enjoying WINSLOW's plight.*) Too late for those words, schnuck!

EMMYMAESUE: (*Standing up on her chair, jumping up and down in hysterical fright.*) Help us, someone! Help us! We're going to be swept away! Never to be heard from again!

WINSLOW: (*Quickly, but nicely.*) Sit down, Emmymaesue. You're rocking the boat.

EMMYMAESUE: (*Still standing.*) We'll be lost! All our dreams for sharing a bright tomorrow together, they'll be dashed into pieces by the churning fans of the hydro-electric power plant. I've seen what those fan blades do to fish.

WINSLOW: (*Now standing up, how very brave he is in the face of possibly tipping the canoe, he reaches for EMMYMAESUE.*) I will never let that happen, not to you, vision of loveliness. (*With that, his hand touches hers, fingertips only, and they turn away from each other blushing.*)

In the background:

- *VIDOR is cackling away.*
- *ONORA and BRUNHILDA have turned their fans to "max."*
- *DELLA and SMYRNA are moving so fast their arms must be aching.*
- *The STAGEHANDS holding the "Power Dam" sign are making loud humming sounds simulating the dam's motors and slashing blades.*

WINSLOW: I'll save you, Emmymaesue. I'll save you!

EMMYMAESUE: (*Desperately.*) I've heard that before!

WINSLOW: (*Shouting above the wind and the dam's motors.*) Stay where you are, Emmymaesue.

EMMYMAESUE: (*Shouting, sweetly.*) I wasn't planning on going anywhere.

WINSLOW: Don't move!

In response, EMMYMAESUE freezes in fright. As WINSLOW, noble rescuer that he is, whips off his shoes and socks, and dives (jumps actually) overboard! As he does so, a STAGEHAND rushes onstage and throws a bucket of water (blue confetti) on WINSLOW. WINSLOW is now swimming for dear life! All the while, EMMYMAESUE is shouting:

EMMYMAESUE: Save me! Save me! O, Winslow, save me!

WINSLOW: I'm trying to, Emmymaesue! I'm trying to! But the swift current is too swift. (*Bobs up and down.*) It's pulling me down, away from you!

EMMYMAESUE: No! No! A thousand times no!

VIDOR: Don't bother wasting your energy to fight the current, Downs. In minutes, you'll be swept over the dam! That is if the man-eating fish don't get you first!

From the wings, crawling in place, a STAGEHAND moves "behind the waves," holding up a cardboard "shark fin!"

EMMYMAESUE: (*Sees the shark's fin, screams*) Winslow! Winslow! Look out! There's a shark in the water!

By now, VIDOR has seated himself on a smaller chair or stool and is paddling out toward EMMYMAESUE. Actually, two STAGEHANDS are crouched down, unseen, pushing him along.

VIDOR: (*Grinning.*) There certainly is.

EMMYMAESUE: Winslow! Winslow! Save me! Save me!

VIDOR: I'll save you, precious!

EMMYMAESUE: (*Turning around, sees VIDOR paddling towards her.*) NEVER!

She jumps out of the canoe into the water (yes, another bucket of water/blue confetti from the STAGEHANDS). She is swimming for all she's worth.

VIDOR: That was the wrong thing to do, my sweet! Now you've both got a very serious problem!

*A STAGEHAND rushes out with the sign: "OH, NO!" Another STAGEHAND rushes out with a sign that reads: "HOW WILL THEY GET OUT OF THIS DAM PREDICAMENT?" **Note:** Use of the word "dam" is strictly optional. As WINSLOW and EMMYMAESUE are swimming for dear life, the lights suddenly go to black. In the darkness:*

NARRATOR: *(Over a loud speaker.) But how did our hero Winslow P. Downs, III and our lovely heroine Emmymaesue Anne Sketchington find themselves in this perilous dilemma in the first place? To find the answer to that we must go back in time, back several years ago, to a time when Winslow P. Downs, III was away at technical school and his American Beauty Rose, Emmymaesue Anne Sketchington, was keeping the homefires burning. And ours is a very sad tale to tell indeed. Often while hearing this tale, you may find yourselves wanting to cry. Feel free to do so, at any time. Now to our story. While Emmymaesue was busy baking homemade apple pies for the sick and destitute of her rural countryside neighborhood, baking creamy chocolate and vanilla fudge for orphans, foster children, and the elderly who spend their days dreaming of just such a melting treat, her honey was at technical school, slaving over books so one day he could become a suspension bridge construction engineer, and in addition to everything else she had to do, Emmymaesue took constant loving care of her grandmother, two aunts, three stingy step-sisters, and of course, her mother dearest -*

During the darkness, the STAGEHANDS remove the "set" from the stage. As the lights come up and/or the curtains open:

SCENE 2

CASSANDRA hustles onstage, carrying a postcard which she places on an easel. She turns to the audience and cutely smiles. Hopefully, the audience applauds. But if not, no matter. CASSANDRA, with little hand motions, urges the audience to do so. When they do, CASSANDRA cutely smiles, curtsies and exits.

The posterboard reads: A CHILLY NIGHT IN FEBRUARY

Scene Set-up:

DELLA and SMYRNA, set drawings in hand, rush onstage directing the STAGEHANDS.

The STAGEHANDS carry onstage a rocking chair, a small throw rug, and a hassock. Two other STAGEHANDS hurriedly carry on a large piece of cardboard on which is painted the inside of a dilapidated house. DELLA and SMYRNA direct the STAGEHANDS to set the cardboard house behind the rocking chair, small throw rug, and hassock.

Another STAGEHAND walks onstage wearing an old wig and old-fashioned blouse with contemporary jeans, carrying an empty picture frame. The STAGEHAND crosses to GRANNY TAWANDA's rocker, stands behind it, holds the picture at mid-chest, "freezes," and instantly becomes a picture of one of GRANNY TAWANDA's long-deceased relatives.

A STAGEHAND also places a stuffed dog or cat close to the rocking chair. The STAGEHANDS, DELLA, and SMYRNA exit as TAWANDA SKETCHINGTON, the mother of all grannies, toddles onstage with knitting supplies. She sits in the rocking chair and rocks back and forth.

THE COMPLAINING SCENE

AUNT MARVA and AUNT MONA enter complaining about everything.

AUNT MARVA: Where is she, that niece of ours?

AUNT MONA: Never here when you need her, that's for sure.

AUNT MARVA: Look at these floors. Haven't been scrubbed in two and a half weeks if it's been a day. And have you seen the ceiling corners in my room? Dust balls and cobwebs everywhere. Ugghh! I can hardly stand to look up at night.

AUNT MONA: The musty, mildewy, condition of the dirt cellar beneath us makes these floors and your ceiling corners look like Mr. Clean was here last night.

AUNT MARVA: (*Crossing to TAWANDA.*) How are you, Granny Tawanda?

TAWANDA: Could be better.

AUNT MARVA: Couldn't we all?!

TAWANDA: Could be worse.

AUNT MONA: Couldn't we all?!

TAWANDA: Have you seen Emmymaesue? She hasn't brought me my morning breakfast of blueberry eggs, bacon, french toast, and orange juice plus a side of bran yet.

AUNT MARVA: (*Looking at her wristwatch, tsk-tsk-tsking.*) And it's almost six . . . at night!

AUNT MONA: Where can that sorry child be?

TAWANDA: (*Quite disgusted.*) Out delivering her homemade chocolate and vanilla fudge to some toothless shut-in and slicing apple pies down at the homeless shelter. And who knows what else, that's where she is!

AUNT MARVA: Outside? It's 25 below tonight.

TAWANDA: Fifty-six below with the wind chill, according to Joe FinNardo's winter weather advisory on the weather channel.

AUNT MONA: That's what you've been doing all day, Granny Tawanda? Watching the weather channel?

TAWANDA: Had to. Emmymaesue wasn't here to change my channels.

AUNT MARVA: My, oh my, what is getting into that child? She's neglecting all of her responsibilities.

AUNT MONA: You ask me it's because of that Winslow P. Downs, III, feller.

AUNT MARVA: You're right, sister. Ever since she's been dating him, well, it's just like the rest of us don't even exist.

AUNT MONA: I tell you if we don't do something about those two, we're going to be dumped completely.

TAWANDA: (*Rocking and remembering.*) In my lifetime, I've been dumped many times. What's one more dumping?

Suddenly, over the top of the "cardboard house," a STAGEHAND dumps a bucket of "snow" (paper snowflakes) over the bitter Sketchingtons.

AUNT MARVA: Oh, my! The roof must have a hole in it again! The place is filling up with snow.

AUNT MONA: She's going to have to fix it, soon as she gets here, even before she changes Granny Tawanda's channel, Emmymaesue is going to have to get up in the attic and nail a board over that hole. (*Crossing to TAWANDA.*) Can you stand to watch the weather channel a bit longer, Granny Tawanda?

TAWANDA: Do I have a choice?

AUNT MARVA: My, oh my, this place is just falling apart. (*Crossing to the picture and pointing to the person pictured.*) What would Grammy Lucretia have thought?

STAGEHAND: (*Old, craggy voice.*) Charity begins at home.

TAWANDA: That's what she would have thought.

AUNT MONA: Oh, if ever we needed that . . . it's today, it's this very night!

TAWANDA: It's Emmymaesue's mother, my daughter, who didn't raise her right, that's most of the problem. I should have stepped in and taken a much firmer hand when I saw things getting out of control. Back when Emmymaesue started baking those chocolate chip cookies every Christmas for Santa. That was the start of all this doing-for-others stuff. Yes, it was. Santa would munch down all the cookies and leave Emmymaesue a real big present. That's what started all this.

The lights start to flicker.

AUNT MARVA: (*Startled.*) Oh, no! What's that mean?

AUNT MONA: What'd ya think?

Two of the three mighty ugly step-sisters enter.

STELLA: (*Quite crabby.*) Step-sister Emmymaesue musn't have walked the six point two miles to pay the light bill this month.

MARELLA: (*Extremely picky.*) I don't see why. She had an extra day this month to get that done. After all, there's 31 days in this month.

STELLA: It's February, Marella.

MARELLA: What's that matter none, Stella?

STELLA: February only has 28 days, three less than most months.

MARELLA: When'd that happen?

STELLA: Three weeks ago, just after January 31st.

MARELLA: No, when'd they take three days away from February?

The lights flicker again, but worse this time.

AUNT MARVA: We're gonna lose all electricity. I just know it.

TAWANDA: There goes the weather channel. Dern that Emmymaesue.

And sure enough, the lights go off completely, leaving AUNT MARVA, AUNT MONA, TAWANDA, MARELLA, and STELLA in the dark.

AUNT MONA: Now what?

TAWANDA: We sit and wait.

AUNT MARVA: Wait for what?

TAWANDA: Emmymaesue to come home.

MARELLA: What good will that do?

TAWANDA: Then she can turn around and go pay the light bill.

STELLA: But do we have the money to pay the bill?

From somewhere onstage, a pernicious sneer from VIDOR as: two STAGEHANDS suddenly turn on flashlights and hold the beam on VIDOR.

VIDOR: Little do any of these throw-backs-to-the-last-century know I own the electric company and I deliberately chose this sub-zero, freezing cold winter's night to make fudgesickles out of them. UNLESS OF COURSE, Emmymaesue accepts this - *(He holds up a very large diamond ring in the light, made out of cardboard.)*

Quickly, another STAGEHAND rushes onstage carrying a flashlight and a sign that says: "OH, NO!" The STAGEHAND shines the flashlight on the sign. Following the audience response, all flashlights go out. The CAST and STAGEHANDS "freeze" onstage.

SCENE 3

Scene Set-up:

During the darkness, WINSLOW and ELWOOD carry two chairs onstage. They place the chairs near the front of the stage. Several stage lights spot this part of the stage. WINSLOW, now a technical college student, is boring and actually, the quintessential nerd.

THE BORING SCENE

WINSLOW: A suspension bridge construction engineer! I want to be a suspension bridge construction engineer! Someday, I will be a suspension bridge construction engineer!

ELWOOD: Okay, already! You only say that five times an hour, everyday, Winslow P. Are you trying to convince me or yourself?

WINSLOW: The very lifeblood of my existence. Second only to my girl Emmymaesue with whom I am totally infatuated, the very reason I go on living is to become a suspension bridge construction engineer.

ELWOOD: You still haven't answered my question.

WINSLOW: I first started designing bridges when I was but a little tyke. Building bridges with my blocks and tinker toys. Then when I grew up to be six, I'd pull two chairs together.

He suddenly jumps up, grabs his chair and ELWOOD's out from under him and moves the chairs so they're facing each other.

WINSLOW: Like this - (He picks up a small board which a STAGEHAND put on the floor between scenes and places the board between the two chairs for a makeshift bridge.) Then, I'd take a board and put it between the two chairs - like this - and to my eye, I had designed a bridge!

ELWOOD: Cool. Now can I have my chair back?

WINSLOW: When I turned nine, maybe ten, I dreamed all day long about constructing the Golden Gate Bridge . . . until I found out it was already designed and already suspended and they weren't looking for another one.

ELWOOD: Man, Winslow, when it comes to career paths these days, you are most fortunate among men. You know where you're goin' and how you're gettin' there.

WINSLOW: Thank my lucky stars and I thank my lucky stars each night for Emmymaesue Anne Sketchington. She's a jewel among life's pieces of coal, that's for sure.

Blackout. ELWOOD and WINSLOW "freeze" in position.

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