
Harold and Maude and the Joy Of Missing Out

A comedy in two acts

FIRST ACT – SAMPLE

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Harold and Maude and the Joy Of Missing Out

By Robert J. Wheeler

FOUR ACTORS REQUIRED WITH DOUBLING

2 males: 70-75, 35-50 -- 2 females: 70-75, 45-55

SEVEN ACTORS WILL WORK IF AVAILABLE, FOUR IF DOUBLING

(One actor can play Brent Brewster, Sammy, Jack and Frankie White if necessary)

CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
HAROLD	Troubled retired town painter	70-75	Male
MAUDE	Harold's wife, reader, church goer	70-75	Female
JOYCE	Maude's younger, affluent sister	55ish	Female
SAMMY	Maude's high roller brother-in-law (Joyce's husband)	45-50	Male
JACK	Harold and Maude's detective son	35-40	Male
FRANKIE WHITE	Local crime boss	55ish	Male
BRENT BREWSTER	Eccentric TV Newscaster, playful disposition, is heard.	35-45	Male

SETTING -- A living room.

I have included music to help transitions from scene to scene, however, if the director wishes not to have music, or thinks different music will make for a better play, please include it.

The playwright would like the following to be read to the audience by A.D. or his representative. "Welcome to our production of (*Harold and Maude and The Joy Of Missing Out*) at (*name of theatre or church*) on this (*the date*). The playwright has dedicated all productions of this play to Irene and Norm Perkins, his friends and inspirers from long ago. Now please relax and enjoy the play. Children play during the day. Tonight (*or today*) is your time to forget your troubles and enjoy your play time. Please remember to have phones turned off or silent and recording of any kind is not permitted".

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

Time: Morning

Place: Modest Living room

LIGHTS UP ON LIVING ROOM

A long sofa and two end tables with lamps and TV remote control are DC.

Sofa chair with cover and small coffee table are SL of the sofa. D far L is a TV, it's back to the audience.

The FRONT DOOR is on the DR wall.

A BASEMENT DOOR is beside it toward US.

A BACK DOOR is centred on the US wall.

A BEDROOM and KITCHEN OPENINGS are on the SL wall.

A few bars of the song "Sweet Home Alabama" plays.

MAUDE (70-75), sounding and looking like a hillbilly, sits fully dressed on the SL end of sofa, silently reads from a Kindle. She drinks coffee from a mug she takes from an adjacent table.

HAROLD (70-75), sounding and looking like a hillbilly, hair ruffled, in funky pyjamas, ENTERS from the bedroom doorway, walks awkwardly, like he's been kicked in the groin, sits on the SR end of sofa.

The song fades out.

HAROLD You sleep okay?

MAUDE Fine.

Harold looks at Maude expectantly.

HAROLD Go ahead, ask me. I know you want to.

MAUDE *(holds up Kindle)* Make it short.

HAROLD *(more of a moan)* Woke up tired, weary, sorta drained, exhausted, yu know . . .

MAUDE Is I spose tu pick a winner?

HAROLD *(with attitude)* I was awake at one, two, three, five and six!

MAUDE You mustu slept through four.

HAROLD *(with attitude)* Okay, I got minimal, very minimal sleep. It's called insomnia.

MAUDE Last week you was dyin' of terminal brain tumor. What now, you think you'll keel over from bein' awake?

Harold shrugs.

You've had every ailment known to man, all but one.

HAROLD *(curious)* What's that?

MAUDE Dead!

HAROLD *(ignoring her)* At three there was a sharp pain in my throat.

MAUDE Sore throat? Probly strep.

HAROLD Not sore, a pain! I lay there half the night thinkin' I got throat cancer.

MAUDE *(bored)* Can we fast forward to the last half?

HAROLD It was at five a.m. or was it six? Anyway, my nuts was ahurtin' like somebody kicked me or worse.

MAUDE Testicular cancer?

HAROLD Crossed my mind.

MAUDE What about the dreaded and loomin' throat cancer?

HAROLD Maude, you know the nut problem had tu take priority!

MAUDE Rolled on 'em in your sleep. What's ahurtin' now, right now, anything hurtin'!

Harold swallows, shifts his rear around on the sofa.

HAROLD *(surprised)* Nothin' now, but I was athinkin' . . .

Maude silently reads from her Kindle.

MAUDE *(interrupts, glances to Harold)* Thinkin's your problem. Stop thinkin' you'll be fine. Didn't yu see yur new doctor last week?

HAROLD Yeah. Doc. Cassidy looks like he should be in high school. I need to find a doctor closer to my age. He's got 'em testin' my blood! My blood!!

MAUDE Did yu tell your Doc. about how yur magic pill's not aworkin' no more?

HAROLD He says that pill eventually loses its magic for everyone.

MAUDE Nonsense!

HAROLD No?

MAUDE It's yur blood.

HAROLD My blood?

MAUDE Yu got tired blood! It's all about the blood.

HAROLD Blood gets tired?

MAUDE Tired body's caused by tired blood, or is it th oder way around? Anyway, you been usin' it too long.

Harold is fearful, panicky, pleading.

HAROLD *(desperate)* My blood or my body?

MAUDE *(shrugs)* Probly both.

HAROLD *(more desperation)* What'll I do?

MAUDE A transfusion! A complete blood transfusion ul fix yu up fine.

HAROLD *(confused, desperate)* Complete?

MAUDE Although, you never know what it's comin' from.

HAROLD No?

MAUDE No. I read somewhere they'd been doin' experiments with blood from animals, pigs in particular.

HAROLD I'd be gettin' pig blood?!

MAUDE It'd be okay as long as you don't start eatin' like one.

HAROLD I's not havin' none u dat!

MAUDE Pig blood's still in experimental stage, so it'd likely be human blood.

HAROLD Good.

MAUDE Hobos sells dare blood cheap fur food.

HAROLD *(panicky, pleading)* Blood from a hobo? I don't think . . .

MAUDE *(interrupting)* You get an itch to hop a westbound freight I'll know where the blood came from.

HAROLD Du yu think the blood transfusion can make everythin', includin' the sex thing, work like before?

Maude makes face, shrugs.

I's stuck between a doc. and a hard place.

Maude takes her coffee mug and EXITS into the kitchen area.

Harold turns on the TV with the remote.

BRENT BREWSTER *(V.O.) (TV newscaster, upbeat, almost gleeful, oblivious to suffering or tragedy)* Brent Brewster, your buoyant backwater backwoods broadcaster here with the twelve noon East Forks local and world news! First off. The election results are in, and our old mayor is our new mayor once again. The fact that Charlie Hamilton promised to freeze taxes for the next year is what most people credit the victory to. Others allege it's because of his alleged ties to Frankie White, an alleged nefarious type, meanin' he's a crook. A lot of allegin' goes on in elections. On the other political front it has been learned that U.S. President Nixon has quit. Something to do about the water. The rumour going around is he tried to stop water with a gate. Every idiot knows you gotta use a dam to stop water. Politicians, hu. Our weather report - same as yesterday, cloudy and gloomy. Sorry, no fake news today. I'll try for some on the next broadcast. Brent Brewster, signin' off, wishing all Eastforkians a reasonable life.

Harold takes the remote, points it at the TV, presses the off button.

Maude ENTERS with her coffee mug and sits on the sofa where she was before.

Harold takes the bag of chips and eats some.

HAROLD Just heard the election news about Charlie getting' re-elected. That man has a whack of charisma goin' for 'im.

MAUDE So the jerk got re-elected tu bein' our mayor despite the video of him with a strange woman in his office.

HAROLD They says they's workin' on the 'lection campaign.

MAUDE What's them layin' half naked on his desk got to do with the campaign?!

HAROLD It seemed Charlie was ashoutin' somethin' at the time.

MAUDE I heard it. It was *(shouts)* "oh God!, oh God!, oh God"!

HAROLD Hard for me tu hear above that damn hound ahowlin' on and on.

MAUDE Harold, that weren't no hound.

HAROLD Meanin'?

A disbelieving look from Maude.

MAUDE Charlie's got more than charisma goin' for 'im.

HAROLD Yu mean he's got Frankie White?

Another disbelieving look from Maude.

MAUDE Frankie White's the biggest crook this town's ever seen. Bein' as how he's Charlie's best friend is what got the jerk elected.

HAROLD I don't . . .

MAUDE *(interrupting)* You voted for him, didn't yu?

Harold guiltily shrugs.

HAROLD Charlie promised tu give us a break on *(puts hand over yawn, muffles next word)* taxes.

Maude reads from her Kindle.

MAUDE *(loud)* You'll chop yur foot off.

HAROLD Maude! Not axes! Taxes, taxes! Yu don't listen.

MAUDE Stop mumblin'! So, what about 'em?!!

HAROLD We're gettin' a tax freeze.

Maude looks up, gives Harold her full attention.

MAUDE Free taxes?

HAROLD Free-zzzzze! A tax freeze! Means they's the same as last year. I can't believe my ears sometimes. Get your hearin' checked!

MAUDE Talk straight and I'd hear yu fine!

HAROLD Do yu remember old Jeb, the janitor down at the town hall?

MAUDE Nope.

HAROLD He's the one that done the videoin' of Charlie and his, uh, friend, in his office.

MAUDE Isn't Jeb the one they've been lookin' for?

HAROLD Turns out he's not missin' after all, no. Charlie says Old Jeb's gone south on vacation. Yu think Old Jeb's gone tu the far south.

MAUDE I expect old Jeb's relaxin' in the deep south.

HAROLD Cuba, Mexico?

MAUDE Further.

HAROLD Columbia?

MAUDE Deeper.

HAROLD Nothin's south of Columbia.

MAUDE He's retirin' south o du green grass!

Harold gives a quizzical look.

Pushin' up daisies thanks to Frankie White.

Harold shrugs, rubs his face with both hands.

Harold, I want you tu meet with the guys fur coffee and donuts like yu used to. You can tell 'em about yur ongoin' afflictions!

HAROLD Maude, yu know I can't do that.

MAUDE Why's that?

HAROLD They's all got ailments of their own.

MAUDE So?

HAROLD Yu know how I detest bein' around sick people!

MAUDE Loungin' around eatin' chips ain't healthy!

HAROLD I's not aloungin'. I's awonderin'.

MAUDE There's no exercise in awonderin'!

HAROLD Do you know what I never get?

Maude starts to speak . . .

Hungry! I have my meals on time, and my day snack and night snack right on schedule. I've never felt hunger, real hunger. Yu know what I's sayin'?!

MAUDE Harold, listen tu me. After real hunger comes real sick, then real death!!

Harold shrugs.

I'm leavin' for my bible study class tomorrow with my church ladies. Be gone a couple days or so. I don't want you contractin' any new ailments while I's gone.

A few bars of the song "Sweet Home Alabama" plays.

LIGHTS OUT.

End of Act One, Scene One

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO

Time: Evening

Place: Same modest living room

LIGHTS UP ON LIVING ROOM.

The song "It Hurts So Bad" plays for a few bars.

Harold ENTERS in his PJs, from the bedroom, is in abdominal pain, holds his stomach, moves slowly toward the sofa, plops down on it.

Harold picks up the phone, punches in numbers.

The song ends.

HAROLD Hi Maude, it's me. *(pause)* I was thinkin', maybe you'd better stay an extra day. *(pause)* Yeah, haven't had time to clean the place. I want it, you know, ship shape for . . . *(long frustrated pause)* Whatever. Bye.

Glum, Harold hangs up the phone, grabs the remote control from the sofa arm.

(to himself) Want a wife tu do somethin', beg her tu do the opposite. She could be comin' in any minute and see me like this.

Harold points the remote DL, turns on TV, lays remote on sofa.

BRENT BREWSTER *(V.O.) (TV newscaster, sounding as before)* Brent Brewster, your buoyant backwater backwoods broadcaster here with the ten a.m. East Forks local and world news! It has been reported that the rain in Spain has been falling mainly upon the plane, so because of this berserk weather phenomenon, the plane, and it's two hundred plus passengers, have been diverted to Portugal where rainfall is more predictable. This just in!! Paramedics were rushed to a home in the suburb today to rescue a dyin' man. While wifie was out of town at a bible study retreat the victim stopped eatin' for three days and eventually passed out.

Harold's shocked hearing the news, struggles to grab the remote, knocks it to the floor toward DC, collapses on the floor, crawls, trying to retrieve the remote.

(V.O.) The accident started three days earlier when the senior citizen decided to starve hisself to feel real hunger. Sounds loonie toons to me.

Harold stretches out, gets the remote.

(MORE)

The threat to his life wasn't him lyin' unconscious starvin' on the . . .

Harold desperately turns off the TV with the remote, throws the remote onto the sofa.

It was after he came too.

Harold is shocked the TV has come on.

Right away he knew only too well what extreme hunger felt like, so an overpowerin' urge to eat seized upon him. The victim tried to swallow a dozen supersized Big Bastard frankfurters, a.k.a. wieners, a.k.a. hot dogs!

Harold's terrified, struggles, crawls to get to the sofa.

A whole dozen! He gorged himself on all the Big Bastards he could stuff in, choked, was near death when paramedics arrived. He told this reporter he chose pre-cooked Big Bastards because he didn't know how to cook!

Harold is at the sofa, grabs the remote, reaches back, points it DL, tries to turn off TV but it doesn't turn off.

If you like, you can see the interview on-line. Search for "Dumb Big Bastard".

Harold desperately tries again tries to turn off the TV.

Been told it's gone viral. I hope it's not contag. . .

Harold turns off the TV, climbs onto sofa, lays on it, holds stomach.

Maude ENTERS from the DR door with small luggage, wearing a coat. Maude hangs up her coat, moves to the sofa back.

MAUDE I'm back!

Harold turns away from her.

You stopped eatin', passed out, woke up crazy hungry, choked almost to death! Didn't I tell you!!!

HAROLD I won't do that again.

MAUDE Sammy didn't come home last night. Joyce's worried. I'm goin' to talk her down. She's . . . well, you know Joyce.

HAROLD It's always about your sister! What about me?

MAUDE *(points to kitchen)* There's peanut butter and jam! Don't hurt yourself with 'em!

Harold shrugs.

You'd better make a list.

HAROLD *(sits up)* List?

MAUDE For your appointment with your young doc. There's the sleep thing, stomach thing, throat thing, the testicular thing, and that other thing.

HAROLD Other thing?

MAUDE The blood transfusion thing!

HAROLD Oh, God!

Harold collapses on the sofa. A few bars of "Stayin' Alive" plays.

LIGHTS OUT.

End of Act One, Scene Two

ACT ONE, SCENE THREE

Time: Morning

Place: Same modest living room

LIGHTS UP ON LIVING ROOM,

A few bars of "Stayin' Alive" continues.

Maude speaks into the phone sitting on the sofa. There is muted sound of a chain saw.

The song ends.

MAUDE Is Detective Jack Wilson available?

Maude holds the phone away, throws her head back, sighs. She hears a sound on the phone and snaps it to her ear.

Yes. *(pause)* All my son's calls are important! You'd better locate him. He's a VIP on the force.

Maude holds the phone away, throws her head back, sighs. She hears a sound on the phone and snaps it to her ear.

Jack? *(pause)* Hi. I know you're busy. *(pause)* I can't *(pause)* I can't get you at your home 'cause it's always the recorded message. *(pause)* This is an emergency! Your Father is goin' crazy! *(pause)* I'm not exaggeratin'! He tried starving hisself, then he choked hisself! I was thinkin' he might be depressed. *(pause)* I told him that. *(pause)* His brain has been affected because we're not doing it! *(pause)* You know, IT! *(pause)* Not me, your father! *(pause)* Ever since he got back from seein' his new doctor, he's been actin' strange. *(pause)* He's happy! *(pause)* It's not normal! *(pause)* He says he's lost his mojo, but he's okay 'cause he's found his jomo. *(pause)* He says it's somethin' tu do with a new way of lookin' at life. I keep hearin' the chain saw in the shed. *(pause)* Yes, chain saw!

Maude points the receiver toward the door.

Listen. He hasn't touched it in over twenty years. *(frustrated pause)* The chain saw!!! *(pause)* He might be dangerous! *(pause)* Okay, good, you'll talk to him. Thanks, Jack. Love you. Bye.

Maude hangs up the phone, reads from the Kindle.

Harold ENTERS from the back door wearing yellow overalls, yellow broad rimed hat with a yellow hard hat over top, yellow work boots and gloves, yellow

overalls, bright yellow safety vest with the big white X, sound dampening ear wear clamped around his neck and a chain saw without the chain.

Maude is involved in her reading. Harold, with a wild gleam in his eyes walks in front of Maude, holds his chain saw up.

HAROLD *(delirious)* Today I'm takin' care of the forty-year-thorn-in-my-side! Cutting it into little pieces with this!

Harold pulls the chainsaw cord. The sound of a chain saw.

Maude FAINTS on the sofa.

Harold shuts off the chain saw, puts it down.

It's gotta be my breath.

Harold takes a mouth spray from his pocket and sprays his mouth.

Or my deodorant.

Harold smells his arm pits, makes a face, sprays his arm pits with the spray, pockets the spray bottle, goes to Maude, brings her around.

See! I got the chainsaw working as good as new!

Harold shows her the chainsaw.

MAUDE *(feeble)* W-w-w-why me?

HAROLD You? I'll be the one doin' the sawin' up!

Maude FAINTS again.

Understandin' women is beyond me.

Harold brings Maude around, puts the chain saw by the back door then sits with Maude.

I'm going to do man's work with it. I have a quest, Maude, a quest! The thorn in my side is the Manitoba Maple in the side yard. It's been getting bigger and bigger for forty years. Today it's finally met its match.

MAUDE *(sits on sofa)* That tree's one quest too tall. Furget it.

HAROLD Maude, the world is made up of readers and doers. You're a reader with loads to read, and I'm a doer with nothin' tu do.

MAUDE You're a sick man, remember – throat pain, testicle pain, tired blood, tired everythin'.

Harold jumps up, pulls a paper from his pocket, looks at it, shows it to Maude.

HAROLD Blood doesn't get tired! Doc. Cassidy analyzed my blood. I've got normal blood for a man my age! He crunched my numbers, said I've a fifteen percent chance of havin' a stroke or heart attack. Fifteen! I'm eighty-five percent in the clear. He doesn't do the finger prostate test neither, says the PSA test tells the whole story.

MAUDE So now yur high school doctor is du doctor king!

HAROLD I'm a changed man, no longer a concerned participant in life.

MAUDE You're dead?

HAROLD I've got jomo.

MAUDE A new disease?

HAROLD Nope.

MAUDE What's it this time?

HAROLD Since losin' my mojo, I woke up to havin' jomo.

MAUDE Where's it hurt?

HAROLD No hurtin' with jomo. Jomo's fantastic.

Unbelieving look from Maude.

Jomo stands for the Joy of Missing Out! J-O-M-O. It means I'm one who enjoys bein' alive here and now, not social media or what everybody else has, or is doin'. I's not afraid to be myself. Freedom!

MAUDE *(resigned to the idea)* You're gay!

HAROLD Gay?! No. Jomo could be, but I'm not. Jomo's about havin' balls enough to not care about Sammy and Joyce's lavish lifestyle what they do or can afford. I'm free to live in the moment, to fell our monster tree.

Harold struts around.

Because of Jomo you're lookin' at a much happier, casual spectator. The world's problems don't matter to me. It's exhilarating!

MAUDE What about your throat and testicle pain?

HAROLD Doc. Cassidy says pain is a problem only if it's chronic. The Doc. says stretchin' and takin' a multi-vitamin will help. I stretched and took my multi-vitamin.

Maude sits on the sofa.

MAUDE You haven't used it in over twenty years.

He gives her an intense stare.

The chain saw!

HAROLD Right.

MAUDE The garage needs painting. I've got new curtains for the kitchen window. They need a new rod. What about fixing the loose railing on the basement stairs? Then there's the bathroom door.

HAROLD Bathroom door?

MAUDE It wobbles. Leave the chain saw in the shed. There's real work tu be done.

HAROLD *(jumps up)* The bathroom door still closes okay. The basement stairs hand railin' is loose because it's split, screws won't hold, can't fix it. I'm not wastin' money on a new hand railin' when the railin' on the other side works fine. Use the other railin'.

Harold rushes to basement door, turns on the basement light, reaches in, grabs left railing.

See, it's solid. Use it!

Harold closes door, turns off light, sits with Maude.

MAUDE What about the curtain rod?

HAROLD We replaced those curtains with a new rod four months ago. They's like new.

MAUDE The garage needs paint!

HAROLD The garage is fine! Sammy and I spent the best years of our lives pushin' paintbrushes around for the town. Bridges, bus shelters, public buildin's. Bridges were the worst. Paintin' from a scaffold is dangerous work. I'm not good at heights no more.

Maude indicates the chain saw.

MAUDE It could fly apart, cut you. Where would we be with you in the hospital!

HAROLD *(joyous oblivion)* The chainsaw's a man's tool. Remember the time the neighbors' tree flattened the fence? I made short work of it with my old pal. Over a weekend we had a nice pile of firewood.

MAUDE *(jumps up)* The saw could be as good as ever, but you're not.

HAROLD I'm the exception.

MAUDE Exceptionally stu . . .

HAROLD *(interrupting)* Maude!

MAUDE What?

HAROLD You were going to say stupid, weren't you?

MAUDE If you wanted to know what I was going to say you wouldn't have been stupid enough to cut me off.

Harold does slow burn.

How is executin' an innocent tree going to make a difference?

HAROLD *(jumps up)* Innocent tree?!! Bringin' that tree down has been in the back of my mind since forever. The leaves are always cloggin' the eavestrough. You've told me it could fall on the house or car in an ice storm. A couple years ago a branch came off, just missed the deck. *(delirious)* No, the menacin' Manitoba Maple Monster has got to go and it's goin' tудay!

MAUDE You're obsessed! The tree's your Moby Dick.

HAROLD My what?

MAUDE Your white whale. Never mind, Ahab.

Harold shakes his head, EXITS out of the back door with the saw.

HAROLD *(O.S.)* She's forgot my name.

Sound of a chain saw starting and running.

The sound of the chain saw fades out as a few bars of the song "Sweet Home Alabama" plays.

LIGHTS OUT.

End of Act One, Scene Three

ACT ONE, SCENE FOUR

Time: Noonish

Place: Same modest living room

LIGHTS UP ON LIVING ROOM,

A few bars of the song "Sweet Home Alabama" continues.

Maude vacuums furniture. The doorbell rings. Maude stops vacuuming, answers the front door.

JOYCE, (55-60) ENTERS. She is elegantly dressed. The muted background sound of a chain saw.

The song ends.

MAUDE Hi Joyce. A visit from my sister in the middle of the day?

JOYCE You'll never guess!

MAUDE What's Sammy done?

JOYCE No, Sammy's fine. He won at the casino! Ten thousand! Two weeks ago, he won fifteen thousand! Sammy didn't come home because he was celebrating by getting me a present.

MAUDE In addition to the hundred thousand he won in the lottery last year?

JOYCE *(excited)* That's right! Sammy's got the luck of the Irish. I drove the present over.

Maude and Joyce look out the front window of the house, out toward the audience.

MAUDE A red car. Nice.

JOYCE A new Porsche! It's all mine. I'm thrilled!

Joyce jumps up and down with excitement.

It's loaded!

MAUDE The car you've always wanted.

JOYCE Twenty kilometers old. I'm in heaven.

(MORE)

They sit on the sofa.

What's that racket?

MAUDE Harold's takin' revenge on his Manitoba Maple Monster. I don't know what's come over him, somethin' about jomo.

The sound of a thunderous CRASH. Joyce and Maude jump up.

JOYCE
and
MAUDE

Ahhhhhh!

The sound of the chainsaw stops. Harold ENTERS through the back door with the chainsaw, covered in sawdust, sound dampening ear wear covering his ears. He's overjoyed, holds up the chain saw.

HAROLD *(demented)* I win! After forty years, I've defeated the monster! Cut it down! Did you hear?! Hi Joyce.

Joyce moves to the window, looks out, toward audience.

JOYCE *(disoriented)* That's odd, I don't see . . .

HAROLD *(interrupting to Joyce)* Impressed?

JOYCE *(dismayed)* I don't see . . .

In shock, Joyce points out window, toward audience.

HAROLD *(interrupting)* Impressed, but visually challenged.

Maude and Joyce look out the window, toward the audience.

JOYCE There's a massive green blob where I left my Porsche.

HAROLD Horse? What horse?

JOYCE You dropped your tree on my new Porsche!

HAROLD I've killed a horse?

Maude removes the sound dampening device over his ears.

JOYCE Where'd you put my new Porsche?

MAUDE Her car!!

HAROLD It'd be where you left it. Are you losin' your marbles same as Maude?

The muted, rhythmic sound of a distorted honking car horn (dying elephant). They speak loudly over the sound of the horn.

JOYCE You killed my new Porsche with your tree.

MAUDE Jomo did it.

HAROLD I planned it perfect. The tree landed exactly where it was supposed to. The house is untouched. It took the expertise of a master cutter to bring the monster down. What's that racket?

MAUDE *(to Harold)* It's the pitiful sound of Joyce's dying horse, Porsche.

Joyce cries. Maude puts an arm around her.

JOYCE *(close to tears)* It's suffering under the monster.

HAROLD *(looks out the window)* Oh-oh.

MAUDE It was twenty kilometers old.

JOYCE Baby killer!

HAROLD You should have let me know you was comin' over!

MAUDE Joyce came to tell us Sammy won twenty-five thousand on the lottery and about gettin' her Porsche.

HAROLD Nowadays cars make less noise than this little saw. Why's that?

The honking trickles down, stops.

JOYCE It's finally out of its misery.

MAUDE Dead! Killed!

Harold shrugs.

JOYCE Congratulations, killer!

HAROLD Look on the bright side!

MAUDE Bright . . .

JOYCE . . . side?!

HAROLD *(jumps up)* With Sammy's luck you'll get more winnin's for another car.

A few bars of the song "Sweet Home Alabama" plays.

LIGHTS OUT.

End of Act One, Scene Four

ACT ONE, SCENE FIVE

Time: Morning

Place: Same modest living room

LIGHTS UP ON LIVING ROOM,

*A few bars of the song "Sweet Home Alabama" continues.**Maude talks into the phone, her purse on the sofa.**The song ends.*

MAUDE Our insurance and our deductible paid for everythin', right? *(pause)* Good. *(pause)* Joyce listen. In a week you'll be drivin' the exact same car. *(pause, exasperated)* Drivin' a demo Chevy isn't punishment. It's still a car. *(pause)* The dealership is bein' more than generous to supply it. It's something else? *(pause, appears weary)* The saleswoman seemed hostile? *(pause)* Right. Maybe she's had one of those days. We all have them.

Harold ENTERS from the kitchen dressed in his pyjamas, moves slowly to DC, looks passively out the front window toward the audience, behaves and sounds like a man in shock. The chain saw is near the back door.

The mindless killer has wandered in, so I need to deal with it. *(pause)* Okay, bye.

Maude hangs up he phone.

HAROLD We'll be short a thousand thanks to your sister. Money doesn't grow on, on, you know . . .

MAUDE . . . tarantulas?

HAROLD *(absent minded)* Yeah.

Maude sits on the sofa.

MAUDE Joyce thinks you're obsessed with the tree 'cause we're not having sex? What do you think?

HAROLD *(not hearing her, absent minded)* About what, the money?

MAUDE About sex?

HAROLD *(not hearing her)* It's a good thing I signed up for the no rate change after the first claim.

MAUDE *(throws up arms, frustrated)* I'm goin' to lunch with Joyce. She needs to talk.

Harold absentmindedly nods. Maude moves to the front door with her purse.

HAROLD Did you say somethin'?

MAUDE Don't remember.

HAROLD What's my name?

Maude EXITS.

MAUDE *(O.S.)* Ahab!

HAROLD Oh boy.

The phone RINGS, Harold answers it, brightens.

(into phone) Hello *(pause)* Jack, my boy! *(pause)* I'm not having a breakdown. *(pause)* I'm cuttin' up the forty-year-thorn-in-my-side with my chain saw. *(pause while he holds the phone from his ear then brings the phone back to his ear)* Jack, I'm getting' older, but I can still tell the difference between your mother and a tree!! *(pause)* Your mother has been forgettin' things. *(pause)* What things? *(pause)* Well, uh, I can't remember offhand, but there's a lot of forgettin'. *(pause)* Yes, I'm sawin' it into firewood. *(pause)* Good. Look, My son, I know you're busy solvin' crimes at the station cachin' crooks and murderers! *(pause)* I'm not havin' a breakdown! I'm soundin' like I've always. *(pause)* That's right. Good. So, take care of yourself and say hello to Angela and the kids. Love you. Bye.

Harold hangs up the phone, picks up the chain saw, works on cleaning it.

The doorbell rings. Harold answers it. SAMMY (45ish), a flashy dresser, lots of bushy hair and speaks with an Irish accent ENTERS through the back door.

Sammy!

Sammy ENTERS, furtively looks out the front window (audience) then dodges back from the window.

SAMMY *(upbeat, enthusiastic)* How's my favorite brother-in-law. How's it hangin' buddie?

Sammy fist pumps with Harold's fist.

HAROLD I've been sick, a stomach issue, but I'm over it now. I'm enjoyin' cuttin' up the miserable forty-year-thorn-in-my-side with my chain saw.

Sammy jumps back, shocked.

Why does everyone think I'm choppin' up Maude?

SAMMY Forty years of repressing stuff, eventually something's bound to snap.

HAROLD The tree layin' across the lawn is the misery I'm turnin' into firewood. Sorry about Joyce's car. Accidents happen.

SAMMY *(upbeat, enthusiastic)* Absolutely. Things are always happening. Some things are bad, but then there's the good things too.

HAROLD How would you like a nice pile of firewood?

SAMMY *(upbeat, enthusiastic)* Don't use the fireplace. No time. Sorry. Darold, lately my luck has been a little on the light side, so . . .

HAROLD You're doin' it again.

SAMMY What?

HAROLD I'm Harold, not . . .

SAMMY *(interrupting, insincere)* Sorry. You look like a Darold. I was wondering if you had any spare cash, you know, in around sixty thousand you could let me have?

HAROLD Sixty thousand dollars!

HAROLD We got a small savin's, a couple thousand, but . . .

SAMMY *(happy memory)* I bought Joyce's Porsche from Monique at the dealership.

HAROLD Yeah. Too bad about the Porsche.

SAMMY *(happy memory)* She's quite the gal, French.

HAROLD The Porsche?

SAMMY Saleswoman! Monique's hot in every sense of the word. Got the cutest French accent and oh so talented. Do you ever feel the need to leave the old Chevy at home and take a new, young, hot one for a test drive? Monique! Magnifique!

HAROLD Are we still talkin' cars?

SAMMY *(chuckle)* The young, foreign babes know how to sat-is-fy. You could make the shift into high gear.

HAROLD Me?

SAMMY You're a sex machine, right?

HAROLD (*plops on sofa chair*) My sex machine has stalled.

SAMMY Stalled?

HAROLD I could be stuck in neutral or worse.

SAMMY Worse?

HAROLD I'm pretty sure my motor's burned up.

SAMMY You're kidding?

HAROLD No drive.

SAMMY Come on.

HAROLD Don't even putt.

Sammy puts an arm over Harold's shoulder, walks him around the room.

SAMMY I don't believe it.

HAROLD I'm mojoless.

SAMMY Find yourself a younger, foreign model, you'll be purrin' like an alley cat.

Sammy grabs Harold by the shoulders, slaps them encouragingly.

She'll jump start your engine! You'll be shifting into high gear! (*hesitant*) Trouble is, Darold, I mean Harold, I made a couple bets, bad ones, borrowed some, a lot, to cover, so, you're sure?

HAROLD Can't help yu. Sorry. We got a little saved for our cremation.

SAMMY Okay. I'll figure something out.

Sammy EXITS out the back door. Harold sits.

LIGHTS DIM THEN COME UP AGAIN

Key sounds in the door. Harold hurriedly moves the chain saw by the back door.

The door opens, and Maude ENTERS.

HAROLD How'd lunch go with Sis?

MAUDE She's been arguing with Sammy.

HAROLD They's always runnin' hot and cold, yu know that's how they is.

MAUDE Has Sammy mentioned anythin' to you?

HAROLD (*nervous*) Sammy? He rambles a lot. That's it, he rambles. He's a big Rambler. You know Sammy. Life in the fast lane can cause some to stray.

MAUDE That won't happen with us, will it?

HAROLD Stuff a million dollars in my pocket and I'd be on the first slow boat to, to, to, I don't know, somewhere sunny, the sunny somewhere else.

MAUDE You'd be here with me, your chain saw, and your Moby Dick.

HAROLD (*flares*) Come on, Maude, I don't perform in bed like I used to, but you shouldn't keep referrin' to my dick as bein' mopey.

MAUDE No! It's a classic!

HAROLD I've always thought so.

MAUDE It's a classic! A classic!

HAROLD I know! I know!

A few bars of the song "Sweet Home Alabama" plays.

LIGHTS OUT.

End of Act One, Scene Five

ACT ONE, SCENE SIX

Time: Evening

Place: Same modest living room

LIGHTS UP ON LIVING ROOM,

A few bars of the song "Sweet Home Alabama" continues.

Maude sits on the sofa reading from her Kindle. The song fades into the muffled sound of the chain saw. The phone rings.

MAUDE *(into phone)* Hi Joyce. *(pause)* You did. *(pause)* Sure, come over. I'll put the kettle on. *(pause)* Somethin' stronger. Okay. Bye.

Maude EXITS into the kitchen.

Sweaty, dirty and tired, Harold, wearing his fluorescent safety vest, chain saw and cutting gear ENTERS through back door.

HAROLD That tree looks a lot bigger on the ground than standin' up.

Maude ENTERS with a clear drink in a glass.

(points to the drink) Gin and tonic?

MAUDE Gin and gin.

HAROLD Joyce?

MAUDE She's in trouble.

HAROLD The manic depressive.

MAUDE Don't drop anythin' on her!

HAROLD Her car will be safe.

A mischievous gleam in his eye, holds up chain saw.

Bruuum, brumm.

MAUDE Please! Sammy's missin'! She's hysterical, so you'll have to be good, very good. Can you do that?

HAROLD Missin' again?

Harold puts the chain saw by the back door, sits on the covered sofa chair.

The doorbell rings and Maude lets Joyce in. She has been crying. Maude gives her the drink and hugs her.

JOYCE I've called everyone. Nobody's seen him. *(crying)* He's gone, missing.

Joyce gulps the drink, sits beside Harold on the sofa.

HAROLD When did you see him last?

JOYCE Three nights ago. He sometimes stays at the track, so . . . Then there was a phone call from somebody called Frankie. Said Sammy owes him sixty thousand dollars. When Sammy got in, we argued, he got angry, said he made some bad bets, so borrowed from Frankie to cover everything.

Joyce starts to cry. Maude consoles her.

I've been getting phone calls, then the caller hangs up.

MAUDE Did you report Sammy missing?

JOYCE I did. They said in most cases missing people turn up within a week, but it's unlike Sammy to be away so long. One night is the most he's ever been away.

HAROLD I'll call Jack. Don't worry Joyce, our Jack will find him.

MAUDE We've got the spare room and bathroom in the basement.

JOYCE I don't want to impose, but those phone calls worry me. Thanks.

MAUDE Harold will go with you to get your things and bring you back.

HAROLD Your sweaty but dependable brother-in-law is ready to roll.

Joyce hugs Harold then Harold and Joyce EXIT out the front door. Maude sits on the sofa and reads from her Kindle.

LIGHTS DIM FOR THREE SECONDS THEN COME UP.

There is a KNOCK on the back door.

Maude answers it. FRANKIE WHITE pushes in. He's (40ish), huskie, bald with a beard, in a dark business suit one size too small. He speaks with a Brooklyn accent.

FRANKIE Hi.

MAUDE What do you want?

Frankie looks around as he talks, gives Maude the creeps.

FRANKIE I'm Frankie White. Been told the Joneses come by here from time to time. Jones, Sammy Jones? You seen much of 'em lately?

MAUDE Don't know any Jones's.

FRANKIE I need to speak to 'em right away.

MAUDE Jones is a common name.

Frankie pushes forward.

FRANKIE Mind if I have a look around?

MAUDE Yes.

Maude grabs the baseball bat. Frankie sees her take it, backs off, steps out. The door is still open.

FRANKIE If you recall the Joneses, let 'em know Frankie needs to see 'em. A matter of life or death.

Frankie chuckles. Maude slams the door. Maude goes to the phone, dials.

MAUDE *(into phone)* Jack, as soon as you get this message, I want you to call me. A suspicious character came by looking for Sammy.

Harold and Joyce ENTER through the front door. They overhear the last part of the conversation.

(into phone) It's okay. Your Dad just walked in. Bye.

Maude hangs up.

(upset to Harold) I had a creep here, Frankie White, looking for Sammy.

Harold hugs Maude, Maude turns to Joyce.

You didn't get your things?

HAROLD The house had been ransacked. It's a crime scene. We've come from the police station. Jack says Frankie and his gang are into shady businesses from loan sharkin' to prostitution. They've been in and out of court for everythin', includin' murder, but every time, they've gotten off. So far, they've either bought off jurors or threatened witnesses. Frankie's the leader of a bad bunch. Jack says they're goin' to arrest the gang when they can make charges stick.

Maude hugs Joyce.

A few bars of the song "Sweet Home Alabama" plays.

LIGHTS OUT.

End of Act One, Scene Six

ACT ONE, SCENE SEVEM

Time: Evening

Place: Same modest living room

LIGHTS UP ON LIVING ROOM,

A few bars of the song "Sweet Home Alabama" continues.

Maude sits on the sofa reading from her Kindle.

There is the muffled sound of a chain saw.

Harold staggers as he ENTERS, out of breath, sweaty and dirty, and in his tree cutting gear, plops down on the sofa chair.

The song ends.

MAUDE You've been chewin' at that tree for nearly a month. You're obsessed!

HAROLD I'm convertin' useless tree into useful firewood.

The phone RINGS. Harold grabs and speaks into the phone.

Hello. *(pause)* Jack. *(pause)* Sammy? *(pause)* Hang on. *(Harold turns to Maude)* It's about Sammy.

MAUDE They've found him?

HAROLD They think so.

MAUDE I'll call Joyce.

HAROLD *(to Maude)* Hang on. *(into phone)* You're tellin' me Sammy turned up? *(pause)* The lake? *(pause)* Okay. I'll tell Maude. Joyce's restin' in the basement. Bye.

Harold hangs up.

MAUDE Joyce's frantic about findin' him, and he's havin' a good time at the lake? I don't believe it. That Sammy! He'll do anythin' to . . .

HAROLD *(interrupting)* He's not at the lake!

MAUDE You said . . .

HAROLD *(interrupting)* He's in it!

MAUDE In the lake?

HAROLD Yeah. For a month!

MAUDE Oh-oh.

HAROLD The cops want Joyce to identify the body. Might need to check dental records.

Maude makes a face.

We'll tell Joyce in the mornin'. I'm tired. How about you?

MAUDE Bedtime.

Maude and Harold EXIT into the bedroom. Harold turns off the lights before leaving.

LIGHTS DIM.

Sound of breaking glass. The door opens. FRANKIE WHITE ENTERS through the DR door holding a handgun.

Frankie looks around, slowly enters the kitchen, comes out, slowly goes into the bedroom area, comes out, slowly moves to and opens the basement door, moves his gun to his left hand and EXITS down the darkened basement stairs.

There is a LOUD SOUND OF FALLING DOWN TWELVE BASEMENT STAIRS

Silence.

JOYCE *(loud shrieking scream)* Ahhhhh!

Harold, dressed in flannel pyjamas, rushes in from the bedroom. He grabs the baseball bat, approaches the basement door.

The sound of feet running up stairs.

Harold readies the baseball bat to swing at whoever comes through the door.

The basement door flies open. Joyce, in a robe, rushes in from basement, sees Harold in the dark with the bat.

JOYCE Ahhhhh!

(MORE)

Harold drops the bat, turns on the lights.

LIGHTS UP.

Joyce rushes to Harold, hugs him.

There's an unconscious man at the foot of the stairs clutching a chunk of handrail!

Harold grabs the baseball bat and rushes down the basement stairs.

Maude rushes in from the bedroom, joins Joyce.

THREE SECONDS OF SILENCE.

The sound of a GUN SHOT then a THUD.

The sound of twelve heavy, steady footsteps coming up the basement stairs.

Terrified, Joyce grabs her hair with both hands.

Maude grabs a lamp, wraps the cord around it, jumps on the sofa with it, her left foot on the sofa arm, her right arm back, ready to throw the lamp at whatever comes through the basement door.

A bloodied and crazed Frankie White staggers through the basement door, is at the threshold with a foot of handrail in his right hand and his gun in the other.

Frankie points his gun at Joyce and Maude.

JOYCE *(loud shrieking scream) Ahhhhh!*

Joyce faints.

Maude brings the lamp back for throwing when Harold's hand grabs the back of Frankie White's collar and pulls him backwards down the stairs. CLUNK, CLUNK, CLUNK, CLUNK, CLUNK, CLUNK, CLUNK, CLUNK, CLUNK, CLUNK, CLUNK, then a THUD.

The sound of twelve heavy footsteps coming up the stairs.

Maude readies the lamp for throwing.

Dishevelled, Harold appears with the bloodied baseball bat in two pieces.

Maude puts the lamp down, hugs him. Harold and Maude revive Joyce.

HAROLD *(out of breath to Joyce and Maude)* He broke my bat . . . with his head.

MAUDE Dead?

HAROLD Dead.

Harold holds up the broken blood-stained bat.

Broke his fall.

MAUDE That was Frankie White!!

HAROLD So?

MAUDE You've killed Frankie White! The leader of a gang of hardened criminals is laying dead in our basement?

Harold shrugs.

Joyce faints. Harold catches her, puts her on the sofa.

MAUDE We should call Jack. He'll know what to do!

HAROLD No! They'll think I murdered him. I'll go to jail!

MAUDE Then there's Frankie's friends to deal with.

HAROLD If they find out I killed him they'll kill us, all of us.

Maude collapses beside Joyce on the sofa. Joyce comes too, looks at Maude.

MAUDE Us? JOYCE Us?

HAROLD I'll take care of Frankie myself.

MAUDE You? JOYCE You?

HAROLD I know I've lost my mojo, but, frankly, I've never felt more alive. Maude, why do you think that is?

Maude jumps up.

MAUDE Oh God, I don't know, don't want to know. Please don't tell me.

HAROLD Go ahead ask me Maude. Ask away.

Maude hesitates. Joyce jumps up.

JOYCE I can ask.

HAROLD Maude needs to do it.

JOYCE Ask him! Ask him! (*begging*) Please ask him!

MAUDE Okay, Harold, why do you, a man with no visible physical, mental, spiritual, or any other sign of havin' a shred, morsel, or even an ounce of mojo, feel so alive?

Harold does a slow burn.

HAROLD More than aptly put, Maude. (*Maude and Joyce smile*) Thank you for that much appreciated, crystal-clear insight. Are you ready?

Maude and Joyce nod in unison, like robots.

Because I have a new quest.

MAUDE Another Jomo quest?

HAROLD Precisely!

Maude and Joyce collapse on the sofa. Harold searches through his pockets.

JOYCE If Jomo can kill my new Porsche he can kill anything.

MAUDE A tree, a car, a thug. That's a lot of killing.

JOYCE Ample killing experience.

MAUDE Harold, you need to dispose of the evidence without getting' caught.

JOYCE Evidence?

MAUDE What's stinkin' up the basement!

HAROLD And there's Frankie's car.

MAUDE Is Jomo okay with disposin' of both?

HAROLD Jomo knows. (*a little demented*) Oh, Jomo knows.

(MORE)

Harold pulls a set of car keys from his pocket, points them out the window and presses a button the key fob.

There is the faint rhythmic sound of a honking horn.

(a little more demented) That's Frankie's car. Smart, hu?

JOYCE Frankie's wife could be waiting for him in the car.

MAUDE Find a car with a dead woman clutchin' her chest, you know you've found the right car.

Harold presses the key fob again. The sound of the honking stops.

A few bars of the song "Sweet Home Alabama" plays.

LIGHTS OUT.

End of Act One – END OF SAMPLE