A Play in Six Tales with Interludes

Adapted from Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" by Larry Rinkel

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# Cast of Characters (4 male, 2 female)

Old Man 1 Stout and pompous, a businessman. Portrays:

(Geoffrey): Carpenter John in Tale 2

King Arthur in Tale 4

Thaddeus Persak in Tale 5 Russell the Fox in Tale 6.

Old Man 2 Lean, a provisioner to colleges. Portrays:

(Simon): January in Tale 1

Simkin in Tale 3 The Father in Tale 4 Chorus in Tale 5.

Young Man 1 Athletic and attractive college student. Portrays:

(Tim): Damian in Tale 1

Nick in Tale 2 Allen in Tale 3

The Boy (Tim) in Tale 4

Palmer in Tale 5.

Young Man 2 His muscular, not quite as bright wingman. Portrays:

(Terry): Abe in Tale 2

John in Tale 3

The Hag in Tale 4

R.C. in Tale 5

Chanticleer in Tale 6.

Old Woman Florid and stout. British, from Bath. Portrays:

(Alison): Madge in Tale 3

The older Alison in Tale 4

The Visitor in Tale 5 Pertelote in Tale 6.

Young Woman Independent, no-nonsense. Portrays:

(Emily): May in Tale 1

The younger Alison in Tale 2

Molly in Tale 3

Guinevere and the Young Woman in Tale 4

Emily in Tale 5.

Minor parts: Voiceover airport announcer.

Extras (optional) for farmyard animals in Tale 6. All parts can be doubled by the other actors.

# **Setting**

For the framing narrative and interludes, the seating area inside a gate at JFK International Airport, New York, where the characters are waiting to board a flight to London's Heathrow. (Or substitute any major city and international airport of your choice.) Settings for each of the tales are described therein.

#### Time

The Internet age; that is, when Chaucer was writing. The month is April.

# A Note on the Scansion

The tales are all written in rhymed accentual verse, that is, with a more-or-less regular number of stresses per line no matter how many syllables. So long as players find the strong beats, all the weaker syllables will fall into place:

Today we've come to play for you "The Miller's Tale" by Chaucer.

It may help to take a boarder to improve cash flow.

In technical terms I'm cumbusticating some arcane meteorological divination.

I've performed the most advanced cataractological climatological prognostication.

# **Performance Notes**

Each tale may also be performed as a separate short play. Diversity in casting is encouraged.

#### The Tales and their Tellers

**Tale 1:** *The Fable of January and May* (2M, 1F)

Teller: Old Man 1; Source: The Merchant's Tale.

First performed (separately): The Secret Theatre, Long Island City, NY, May 2017; directed by the author.

The old and cold man January wishes to take a fresh young wife.

He finds this aim is complicated by a certain degree of strife.

For though this aging dotard picks the fairest flower (that's May),

He finds his randy secretary finds a way to roll May in the hay.

**Tale 2:** *The Carpenter, the Flood, and the Fart* (3M, 1F)

Teller: Old Man 2; Source: The Miller's Tale.

First performed (separately): City Lit Theatre, Chicago, July 2018; directed by Cathy Crocco.

In a college town lived a carpenter,

A simple, beefy, burly man named John.

The love of his life was his charming young wife,

A nubile girl by name of Alison.

But this being college, which is full of that species

Called the clever and amorous young male,

It appears with the help of a flood and a fart

That all John's hopes of protecting his wife were doomed to fail.

**Tale 3:** *The Tale of Three Beds and a Cradle* (3M, 2F)

Teller: Young Man 2; Source: The Reeve's Tale.

John and Allen are fraternity brothers,

Who think their provisioner Simkin is a cheat.

When their truck is stuck in a ditch, the boys decide

To take revenge on Simkin would be sweet.

For Allen pounces on daughter Molly,

John sleeps with Madge (she's Simkin's wife),

While Simkin and Molly's baby Moo

Get the thrubbing and the drubbing of their life.

**Tale 4:** What Women Most Desire (4M, 2F)

Teller: Old Woman; Source: The Wife of Bath's Tale.

A college boy convicted of rape

Could be sentenced to death or life in prison.

Queen Guinevere however will spare his life,

But only on one condition.

He's given a year to journey the world

And of every woman he meets to inquire

The answer to the simplest of questions:

"Just what do women most desire?"

**Tale 5:** *The Three Prayers Answered* (4M, 2F)

Teller: Young Man 1; Source: The Knight's Tale.

In the 2nd U.S. Civil War,

Two Rebel soldiers and friends, named Palmer and R.C.

Are imprisoned in a Union tower

Where they fall for the lovely Emily.

No longer friends but rivals,

They are sentenced to fight until one loses his life.

And though R.C. wins, he is ambushed and dies,

Leaving Palmer to claim Emily as his wife.

**Tale 6:** The Cock and the Fox (2M, 1F, 3 optional extras)

Teller: Old Woman; Source: The Nun's Priests' Tale.

A proud little rooster named Chanticleer, a famous tenor too,

Had a nightmare where he was eaten by a fox.

On waking next morn he found his dream coming true,

As he was captured by Russell Fox who loved to feed on cocks.

When all the farmyard animals couldn't catch the wily mammal,

The cock tricked the fox into releasing his succulent prey.

And so ends our little fable with the rooster turning the table

As Chanticleer flew away and Russ lost his dinner that day.

The complete play was a semi-finalist at the B Street New Comedies Festival, Sacramento, CA, 2019.

# **CANTERBURY SEXTET**

# ACT ONE PROLOGUE

Five passengers (OLD WOMAN, YOUNG WOMAN, YOUNG MEN 1 and 2, OLD MAN 2) are seated outside a gate at New York's JFK Airport (or substitute any major city and airport close to you), waiting for a flight delayed by rain. OLD MAN 1 enters.

**OLD MAN 1.** Cruelest month. (*The others ignore him.*) Cruelest month, I say. April.

YOUNG MAN 2. I think it's all right. Rainy.

**OLD MAN 2.** Taxes.

**OLD MAN 1.** Not what T.S. Eliot had in mind.

YOUNG MAN 2. Never heard of him.

**OLD MAN 1.** No, of course not. Major American poet. In *The Wasteland*, he refers to April as the cruelest month.

YOUNG MAN 2. I'd say February, on account of the snow.

**VOICE.** Because of inclement weather, Flight 1377 non-stop New York's JFK to London Heathrow has been delayed another two hours.

YOUNG MAN 1. Oh, man. How long has this flight been delayed already?

OLD MAN 2. Torrential rain over New England, eastern Canada. Can't be helped.

**OLD WOMAN.** You know the song, "When April showers —"

**OLD MAN 1.** Please don't sing. It's copyrighted.

**YOUNG MAN 1.** Watcha reading?

YOUNG WOMAN. Book.

**YOUNG MAN 1.** They still have those? *The Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer. Why not Stephen King?

YOUNG WOMAN. School. English Lit.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Hate English. (Young Woman smiles, in a less than friendly way. Young Man 2 reads.) "Whan that Aypril with his"—. What the fuck, this isn't even English.

YOUNG WOMAN. Middle English.

**OLD MAN 1.** (From memory.) "Whan that Aprille with his shoores soote The drought of Marche hath percèd to the roote."

Very sexual if you understand it properly.

YOUNG MAN 2. Yeah?

**OLD MAN 1.** Yes, April is the male piercing the dry female earth with his sweet showers, out of which are born the flowers of May. And that's when folks like to travel.

**YOUNG MAN 1.** For us it's just spring break. So why does he spell it G-e-o and not J-e-f?

YOUNG WOMAN. Why don't you dig him up and ask him?

YOUNG MAN 2. Batting a thousand, dude.

**YOUNG MAN 1.** Chill. Watch the master. So where you sitting?

YOUNG WOMAN. Seat.

**YOUNG MAN 1.** I mean, on the plane. Oh! 19D. Me and Terry are in 20A and B.

**OLD WOMAN.** Not if this plane never boards.

YOUNG WOMAN. I'll try to change my seat.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Watching the master, dude.

**OLD MAN 1.** Isn't it lovely we're all getting along?

YOUNG MAN 1. I'm getting along, I'm getting along, I just want to get moving.

**OLD MAN 1.** Patience, grasshopper.

YOUNG MAN 2. I just want something to do.

YOUNG MAN 1. I got something for you. But you have to go to a bathroom stall.

YOUNG MAN 2. Fuck you.

YOUNG WOMAN. I have an idea. We can all tell stories.

YOUNG MAN 1. Whoop-de-doo.

**YOUNG WOMAN.** No, just like *The Canterbury Tales*. They're all on this pilgrimage to Canterbury and each one tells a story.

YOUNG MAN 2. Too much work.

**YOUNG WOMAN.** Just flip through my book and decide on a story; then we'll all act it out.

YOUNG MAN 2. I'd rather die.

**YOUNG MAN 1.** I want to go to sleep.

**OLD WOMAN.** You'll sleep on the plane. Though perhaps at this rate not until next month. Meanwhile I very much like — what's your name, dear?

YOUNG WOMAN. Emily.

**OLD WOMAN.** Emily's idea that we all tell a story.

**OLD MAN 2.** I agree. A lovely idea, from a lovely young lady.

**YOUNG WOMAN.** It would be just as lovely if I were an ugly old hag.

YOUNG MAN 2. Go Emily!

**OLD WOMAN.** Don't everybody look at me.

**OLD MAN 1.** Yes, I suggest you watch your language and treat this young lady with respect.

**OLD MAN 2.** All right, all right. No harm meant, just a compliment. You can't even say a word these days without someone jumping all over you and assuming the worst —

YOUNG MAN 1. Tell me about it.

**OLD WOMAN.** All right, everybody. We'll be here a while; if someone else has a better idea —

**OLD MAN 1.** Obviously not. So can I have a motion?

**OLD WOMAN.** So moved.

YOUNG WOMAN. Second.

YOUNG MAN 2. Third.

YOUNG WOMAN. You can't "third."

YOUNG MAN 2. Free country.

**YOUNG WOMAN.** And we each have to tell our story in verse.

YOUNG MAN 1. Ah, come on. No way!

YOUNG MAN 2. This is going from bad to worse.

**OLD MAN 1.** Very well, Emily. You wish to amend your motion?

YOUNG MAN 1. It's all just too much commotion.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Who gives a crap?

YOUNG MAN 1. I'd rather just take a nap.

**OLD MAN 1.** I'll take that as a second. All in favor? (All hands up, the two Young Men reluctantly last.) Opposed? (Young Man 2 raises his hand again.) You've already voted yes. Are you reversing your vote? The motion still carries.

**OLD MAN 2.** I've never been very comfortable with rhyme.

**OLD WOMAN.** Don't take it too seriously; we're just passing the time.

**OLD MAN 1.** So who starts?

**OLD WOMAN.** Emily, since this was your idea, why not you?

YOUNG WOMAN. I'll go when I'm ready; I just don't want to go first.

**OLD MAN 2.** After all this. Oh, this one looks good. It's all about a guy who farts.

**YOUNG WOMAN.** Oh, I know that one. You had to pick the worst?

**OLD WOMAN.** How classy.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** And gassy. (The Young Men high-five each other.)

**OLD WOMAN.** Don't worry, dear. You'll see what fools they make of themselves; then you'll come in at the end and clean up.

**OLD MAN 1.** Since the motion carries,

To hell with it. I'll give it a whirl.

I'll do this one, "The Merchant's Tale," about the old man who married A lovely, unfaithful young girl.

**OLD WOMAN.** Why do old men always have

Such an exaggerated sense of their virility?

**YOUNG MAN 1.** Not to mention signs of incipient senility. (High-fives again.)

**OLD MAN 1.** I'll ignore such juvenile stupidity.

And I want you (Old Man 2), you (Young Man 1), and of course you (Young Woman) for my cast.

**YOUNG MAN 1.** Do I hafta be part of the show?

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Of the two of us, you're the better actor, bro.

And if I can watch you make a total fool of yourself,

Who knows, this whole thing could be a real blast.

## TALE 1: THE FABLE OF JANUARY AND MAY

The estate of rich old January and his secret garden with a wondrous pear tree. JANUARY (Old Man 2), MAY (Young Woman), and DAMIAN (Young Man 1) enter.

JANUARY. Today we've come to play for you "The Merchant's Tale" by Chaucer.

MAY. And when our tale is over, then we'll pass around the saucer.

**DAMIAN.** It's the tale of rich old January, and his lovely young wife May.

**JANUARY.** A cautionary tale, we'd say: why you shouldn't marry past your day.

**DAMIAN.** The characters in our play today are limited to three:

The lovely May, the old man — he,

And January's charming, dashing, gay,

And handsome assistant Damian — that's me.

MAY. And now to our tale. Imagine please, old January's magnificent estate.

A mansion, grounds, and servants too,

Plus a garden that your minds must recreate. (Exit.)

**DAMIAN.** (Narrating.) Now January was a rich old man,

Whose movements were as slow as a tortoise.

Instead of blood, he had ice in his veins,

So you'd think he'd already gone through rigor mortis.

His four or five hairs were white as snow, his skin was dry as parchment.

His shin was thin, his chest depressed, his limbs too slim for his garments.

He had Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, cataracts, and gout.

And a thousand more diseases med'cine's not yet heard about.

**JANUARY.** Now Damian, lad! I wish to wed,

Though my face and form are shriveled,

And enjoy my nubile wife in bed.

**DAMIAN.** With respect sir, that's such drivel.

To take at your age a youngish wife, do you really think that's wise?

Though of course it's your decision; I don't mean to criticize.

But if you'd take a bride of 20, you'd best be younger than 30,

And now that you're past 92, well,

You're just a dirty old man who's trying to be flirty.

**JANUARY.** I know what they say! He's just like the month:

All frigid and undesirable,

A nasty old man, whom no one can stan[d], and nobody finds at all admirable.

But you'll find yourself when you reach my age,

You start thinking about eternity.

And never having had a legitimate heir, I wish to claim paternity.

Now I don't want some wizened crone I can hardly bear to see.

It's bad enough for her that she should have to look on me.

Instead I want the most luscious, scrumptious, fertile girl in all the nation.

And that's why it's your job to search for her,

Both high and low all over creation. (Exit.)

**DAMIAN.** And so I combed the Internet, I used all social medias.

I friended thousands on Facebook, Skyped hundreds yet;

The job was unexpectedly quite tedious.

But then I found her, the girl who'd wake the dead —

MAY. (In and out.) That's me!

**DAMIAN.** And that's the girl I bought for old January's bed.

**JANUARY.** (Returning.) Oh lovely May, so fresh and gay.

To see her is an every day joy.

Such firm and perky breasts, such thighs, and all the rest.

(It's said last year she actually posed for Playboy.)

With such a heavenly beauty, can I perform my husband's duty?

Run, Damian, fill my prescription for Viagra! (Damian exits.)

She's truly a mirage! Even more beautiful than the Taj

(Which everybody knows is in India, actually Agra). (Exit.)

MAY. (Returning.) He's a nice old guy (and he's loaded too),

But he really wasn't good at all in bed.

He tried his best, A for effort and the rest,

But his little old thing kept drooping its little head.

He was stumbling, bumbling, mumbling, grumbling,

Crumbling, fumbling hit or miss,

And despite at least a dozen tries, he couldn't find my clitoris.

Well, I'm sure you've got the idea by now, since I'm running out of rhyme

Because once a guy hits 90 he can't shtupp a girl worth a dime.

JANUARY. (In and out.) Oh, woe!

My quest to sire an heir has fallen into the gutter.

For lovely flower though she may be, my May will ne'er be a mother.

MAY. But then that guy who brought me here!

I've seen him by the pool in just a Speedo.

With a bod like a god, and what looks like quite a rod,

Well, I'm guessing he's exactly what I need-o.

So, Damian, Damian! Where the hell could he be?

**DAMIAN.** (Returns, feigning illness.) As it happens all of a sudden I'm sick in bed.

With a fever, chills, a runny nose, and a temp of a hundred-three,

Sore throat, muscle pain, a cough, and an aching head.

So I asked my doctor why I'm sick. (In fact, I sent him an email.)

He replied there was no doubt

What my symptoms were about:

There's no question, it was lack of company female.

JANUARY. (In and out.) Poor Damian is sick! Chicken soup will do the trick!

I'll dispatch my May to nurse him all today.

I'm not worried, not a lick, that he'd try to use his — hands

On my lovely wife, because the boy is gay!

MAY. C'mon, big boy, eat your soup!

**DAMIAN.** It's disgusting. Tastes like gloop.

But you could join me here in bed, for a nice surprise.

MAY. Why, you're trying to hump my rump! You're just another Donald Trump!

And here I thought you were only into guys!

**DAMIAN.** That's what January thinks, mostly after a few drinks.

He's such fun to fool 'cause he's an intellectual.

But in fact I must confess, that I'll play with either sex,

I'm not gay, per se, but what you'd call bisexual.

MAY. Well, that's a huge relief. It will spare me so much grief.

'Cause bottom line: I'm frustrated to no end.

After an hour with your boss, I'd be filing for divo(r)ce

But I still am desp'rate for the love of men.

**DAMIAN.** That's me!

And so what's next?

**MAY.** I'll write you a text.

**DAMIAN.** And where should we meet?

MAY. I'll send you a tweet.

**DAMIAN.** The most important thing is how to fool the old man.

MAY. Oh, we'll work that out real soon. Not too hard with that buffoon.

And I'm starting to form the outlines of a plan.

Do you know his garden? (Damian shakes his head.)

It's his secret garden, a magical place, with all his prized possessions.

Fountains and flowers, statues and a bower,

And a unicorn that's only two feet tall.

I stole the only key, so you can take a wax impression.

Then you can make a copy at the mall.

We'll have our fun 'round midnight, in the dark no one will see.

You'll unlock the gate, you'll go inside, and you'll climb way up a tree.

**DAMIAN.** And this pear tree, how do I find it?

Does this pear tree have a partridge?

MAY. It's not too hard, I'd give you a map, but my printer needs a cartridge.

(May shoos Damian off. Night. May is now in bed with January.) Husband?

**JANUARY.** My love.

MAY. January?

JANUARY. May.

**MAY.** Do you know what I'd really love right now, before it's break of day? A pear.

**JANUARY.** A pear at midnight, dear? Why not a bagel and coffee?

MAY. No, I crave some fruit, though what kind is moot

(So long as Damian's waiting there to boff me).

Pears are the sweetest fruits of all, their aroma indescribable.

Eaten out of hand, they taste so grand,

And in a liqueur so wondrously imbibable.

I'd really love a pear right now! We've got Anjous, Boscs, and Bartletts.

And if I could pluck me just a few, cook will bake them in a tartlet.

**JANUARY.** (Exploring the garden with May, as Damian enters unobserved.)

This garden's very dark, in fact my eyes aren't yet dilated.

This adventure's so much harder than I first anticipated.

That tree is high. It stretches to the sky.

MAY. So let me climb on your back, I'd say.

JANUARY. I'll have a heart attack!

MAY. (Oh, alack, alack!)

But I've thought this through and it's the only way.

**DAMIAN.** Ho-ho.

MAY. Tee-hee.

**DAMIAN.** Here we go.

MAY. Up in a tree.

**JANUARY.** And what's with all that rocking back and forth?

Such clattering, such rattling, such clickety-clack. I'm breaking my back.

And all this for a pear? There's the store just two miles north!

But now it's morn, my eyes are clear.

Your ruse has been ineffectual.

I thought you were homosexual, but no!

MAY. He's bisexual.

**JANUARY.** He's bisexual?

**DAMIAN.** He's bisexual.

**JANUARY.** You've been fucking my little wife! Though I no longer give a fig! The sweet girl that I married! (Oh my God, that thing is big.)

And all these hot gymnastics while my shoulder blades were stooped!

I should have known with you two, sooner or later I'd be duped.

I've been blind, I've been so blind!

MAY. Oh no, sir, your sight is fine.

You just need the new prescription for your glasses.

If you'd just put on the right pair (and you left them in your nightwear),

You'd see those were merely rocks, not our round bare asses.

**JANUARY.** Give the benefit of the doubt? While his ding-a-ling is out?

**MAY.** Oh, sir, truth to tell, he only had to tinkle.

**JANUARY.** Do you take me for a fool? When I see that massive tool?

And I've read the script as penned by Mr. Rinkel!

I loved you both, in all the world, no two were ever dearer.

But if this is how you repay my trust, my path by now is clearer.

I'll file for divorce, the lusty boy is fired of course.

You couldn't wait till I was safely dead and gone?

You'd have all my goods and money (since I made you both my heirs),

But I'll now update my will and you'll have none!

**DAMIAN.** I'm sorry, you can't do that, sir, 'cause your assets are all in a trust,

The terms of which are irrevocable, so to leave me my half is a must.

But since all I ever cared about was the money anyway,

I'll leave you to your squabbling with the fair and lovely May.

Who as it happens (after all those pears) I'll tell you by the way

Despite her impressive bra size, wasn't all that great a lay. (Exit.)

MAY. Up yours, you little rotten stinking stuck-up muscle-bound maggot!

JANUARY. Whatever you do, don't you dare rhyme that too!

I suggest whatever thought you had, just bag it.

**MAY.** My husband, can you please forgive? It's you with whom I wish to live.

And as for that lascivious little puppy,

His one asset aside (though he gave me quite a ride),

He's worth no more than a minnow or a guppy.

JANUARY. This has all been such a terrible, miserable,

Absurd, and pathetic muddle,

When at my age all I really want is to hug my girl and cuddle.

The warmth of her body next to mine would thaw the ice in my veins.

We could stay that way till the end of time

And she'd make me feel human once again.

MAY. Cuddling is nice, I ask for nothing more.

Besides after this morning, my insides are rather sore.

JANUARY. I'll share all I've known and learned with you

About poetry, theater, music, and the arts.

And that's how I'll make love to you.

MAY. Just so long as you control your little farts. (Damian returns.)

JANUARY. And that concludes Master Chaucer's tale of January and May.

MAY. We hope you've learned a thing or two and had some fun today.

**DAMIAN.** The moral of this little story is not too hard to find.

JANUARY. It's that: even though I'm old and cold and smelly,

I'm not so gone that I can't still quote from Shelley:

Whose famous "Ode to the West Wind" comes to mind.

MAY. "If winter comes — "

**DAMIAN.** "Can spring be far behind?"

#### **INTERLUDE 1**

**OLD MAN 1.** Not a bad start, if I don't say so myself.

YOUNG MAN 2. It was all right.

**OLD MAN 2.** You're just trying to make me look like a fool.

YOUNG MAN 1. No fool like an old fool.

**OLD MAN 2.** I suggest you mind your manners, young man.

YOUNG MAN 1. Ooh, I'm scared!

**OLD MAN 1.** Oh, calm down. It was just a story.

**YOUNG WOMAN.** So the old guy can't have sex with her, so he uses her as his pillow. Gross.

**YOUNG MAN 1.** She don't care. She's got the old sugar daddy wrapped around her little finger.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Yeah. He dies, she gets millions out of it. Just needs a little patience.

**OLD MAN 1.** Unless she stirs rat poison the next morning into his chicken soup, or the unicorn disembowels him with its horn. Or he could hire another Damian, and May will have someone else young to play with. Or they could do a threesome, where the old guy would just watch. Many possibilities.

YOUNG MAN 2. Or she could run off with Damian.

YOUNG WOMAN. Damian's a jerk. She knows that already.

YOUNG MAN 1. But he's hot. I know, 'cause I played the part.

YOUNG WOMAN. Amateurishly.

YOUNG MAN 1. Everybody's a critic.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** And she's a nympho. Actually I think the old guy's more into Damian than May.

**OLD WOMAN.** My thoughts exactly. "I loved you both." And did it occur to any of you she might've actually liked the old man?

BOTH YOUNG MEN. (After weighing this possibility.) Nah!

**YOUNG MAN 1.** Just goes to show, old should stay with old, and young with young.

**OLD WOMAN.** Not at all. Age is just an accident of birth. I myself have been married 47 times, give or take, and the best time of my life was husband 19. who was little older than his place in the chronology. But God, that kid could fuck.

**OLD MAN 1.** You like 'em young, then?

**OLD WOMAN.** Much more vigor.

YOUNG MAN 2. 47 times, huh?

**OLD WOMAN.** Unless I lost count. Some people break their leases each year, I break my marriages. Or I marry them old and they just die and leave me their money.

YOUNG MAN 1. Like January.

**OLD WOMAN.** Like January.

**OLD MAN 1.** You have a story about that?

**OLD WOMAN.** I do, but it would take six or seven hours. (*Groans of protest.*) For husband 19 alone. Now what was his name —?

**OLD MAN 1.** Well, someone has to go next. (To Old Man 2) You?

**OLD MAN 2.** I'd really rather not.

**YOUNG MAN 1.** Everyone has to step up.

**OLD MAN 2.** All right. Since our stout friend here has made fun of a thin old man like me, how about one about a big, heavy-set guy.

YOUNG MAN 1. Fair, fair.

**OLD MAN 2.** A carpenter.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** A carpenter? Why a carpenter?

**OLD MAN 2.** Because it fits the story. Also a young wife. And *two* college boys trying to get into her pants. One successfully, the other not.

YOUNG MAN 1. I like it, I like it!

YOUNG WOMAN. Idiots!

YOUNG MAN 1. That's us!

**OLD MAN 2.** Perfect. I need the college boys, the young lady, and the big guy here.

**OLD MAN 1.** Oh, well, I suppose I must.

YOUNG MAN 1. And I'll be the guy who gets into the girl's pants.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** And why do you get into her pants? Why am I always the one getting shafted?

**YOUNG MAN 1.** Law of the jungle. 'Cause I'm the alpha male and you're the beta.

**OLD MAN 2.** Actually, in a sense you shaft the other guy.

YOUNG MAN 2. Yeah? OK, I can live with that. Oh, I start!

"Today we've come to play for you the Carpenter's Tale by Chaucer -"

YOUNG WOMAN. Oh, is that my cue?

"And when our tale is over then we'll pass around the saucer —"

**OLD MAN 1.** Now wait a minute, stop right there. You're stealing my opening.

YOUNG MAN 1. So what? It's a cool way to start the story.

**OLD MAN 2.** And anyway, it's not your idea; it's the author's.

**OLD MAN 1.** I think it's a lazy way to proceed.

**OLD MAN 2.** I don't care what you think.

YOUNG MAN 1. Yeah. Genius borrows; talent steals.

**OLD MAN 1.** Oh, very well. But call it the Miller's Tale. It's about the carpenter, not by the carpenter.

YOUNG MAN 2. You got it, pops!

**OLD WOMAN.** Now was his name Jason, Jackson, Jeremy —?

# TALE 2: THE CARPENTER, THE FLOOD, AND THE FART

A modest carpenter's house in a college town. The set must suggest a ground floor level, a ceiling from which will be suspended three wooden tubs, and an external wall from the bedroom with a window. ABE (Young Man 2) enters to begin the narration, followed by ALISON (Young Woman), NICK (Young Man 1), and the carpenter, JOHN (Old Man 1).

**ABE.** Today we've come to play for you the Miller's Tale by Chaucer.

**ALISON.** And when our tale is over, then we'll pass around the saucer.

**JOHN.** It's the story of a carpenter,

**ALISON.** his wife,

NICK AND ABE. two college boys, three tubs,

NICK. a flood,

**JOHN.** and a fart.

NICK. And a fart being the expulsion of hydrogen sulfide gas

From one's ass, AKA one's arse,

You can be sure that the tale we're about to tell is going to be a farce.

To start:

**ABE.** In a college town lived a carpenter, a simple, beefy, burly man named John.

The love of his life was his charming young wife,

A nubile girl by name of Alison.

**NICK.** I have no idea why she married him;

Perhaps she's just into big ol' teddy bears.

But when a guy of 55 takes a beautiful young bride,

There's no question that the buyer must beware!

**ABE.** For there are lots of horny college boys

(Such as me, I'm Abe!) with roving eyes.

And while the great majority of them will never lay by her side,

There are some who do more than fantasize —

Like the renter Nick to whom John gave access to his spouse all unaware. (Abe and Alison exit.)

**JOHN.** When times are tight and business is slow,

It may help to take a boarder to improve cash flow.

**NICK.** Hi, I'm Nick from the school! I saw you had a room to rent.

If I can just get a desk, a bed, and a stool I'll be content,

I'm a grad student in climatology, meteorology,

Physics, and atmospheric divination.

Super-busy working day and night on my doctoral dissertation.

My specialty is climate change, I'm focusing on forecasting the weather —

**JOHN.** Don't give a crap so long as you've got all your act together.

Which means all I want is that you're good each month for the rent,

And if you don't give me no aggravation I don't care how your time is spent.

**NICK.** (As Alison enters.) And is that your wife?

**JOHN.** See already we got problems,

Just the first day and we're not off to a good start.

I'm a very nice guy, that's really no lie,

But there's one rule you gotta learn by heart.

You got the run of the house, everywhere upstairs and down.

But remember what I'm telling you, 'cause now I've got to go into town:

If you want to live in this house,

College boy, you better stay far away from my spouse. (Exit.)

NICK. Guess that answers my question, pops! Have a nice day to you too!

Hey, hey, you're Alice! I'm Nick. Do you want to screw?

**ALISON.** Ho, ho, is it Nick? Can't think of anything I'd rather like to do.

And an hour with you beats those plans we both had for our hands.

NICK. My thoughts exactly!

If it sounds like I'm giving you a push,

It's 'cause I hate to beat around the bush.

And like the bush in Exodus, Chapter 3,

Yours is burning for the love of a real man.

**ALISON.** That's a pretty wild interpretation

Of that well-known Old Testament text.

**NICK.** Who cares? If you only knew my smoldering desire,

My frustration, my infatuation, my hot loins all on fire —

**ALISON.** Oh, knock off the lousy poetry and let's have sex. (*They do for a bit, but then John is heard outside returning.*)

NICK. Oh my God, I hear his footsteps. Oh, shit! he's coming prematurely!

**ALISON.** So are you —

**NICK.** He said he'd be away for an hour or two.

Why is he back so early?

ALISON. Oh, Nick! If he catches us, he'll turn violent and surly!

See, Nick, my husband is jealous and suspicious.

So if you're truly zealous and ambitious

To have me, Nickie,

You'll need a plan or the best we can expect is just a quickie. (Exit.)

NICK. You'd think a brilliant college student can fool

A Neanderthal ex-wrestler with the brainpower of a mule.

So let me see, let me cogitate, let my imagination fly!

Ah, eureka! Now fast-forward; forty-eight hours have gone by. (Exit.)

JOHN. (Entering.) It's been two days since I've seen Nick!

Is he busy, dead, or sick?

I think I'll run to his room and knock on his door.

(Nick re-enters, taking a "dead" position on his bed.)

There's no answer, so what's happening?

Is it goblins playing a trick?

But I see I can peek through the cat door if I lie on the floor.

Jesu Maria, he's lying stone cold in bed!

Let me break down the door with an axe!

NICK. John, relax!

Keep your head, I'm truly not dead.

Just practicing transcendental meditation.

In technical terms I'm cumbusticating some arcane meteorological divination.

About tomorrow's weather —

**JOHN.** Sunny skies, next to no perspiration.

NICK. Next to no rain? Are you insane? Heat fried your brain? Let me explain!

I've performed the most advanced

Cataractological climatological prognostication.

**JOHN.** Them's big words.

**NICK.** In fact, if Sandy, Andrew, Ike, Charley, Katrina,

Rita, Wilma, Gloria, Maria, Michael, Harvey, and Nina

Were storms horrendous, tomorrow's tempest

Will be sixty times at least much more stupendous!

**JOHN.** How can this be?

**NICK.** The worst cyclone, typhoon, tsunami, hurricane on record

Will be no more than a dud

Compared to what's in store for us tomorrow,

I mean the return of Noah's Flood!

**JOHN.** Saints above, save us! Are we all going to die!

My little Alison and I?

NICK. No, no, friend John, that's why it's perfect

You're an experienced master carpenter,

And not in some useless line of work

Like a theater critic, politician, or philosopher.

Now listen up: I need you to build a wooden tub, or actually three —

That's one for you, and one for me, and one for Alison, she!

JOHN. I don't get it.

**NICK.** (Of course not, you moron.)

You'll waterproof them, you'll stock them with the best food in the house,

Then you'll suspend each tub with a rope from a ceiling rafter.

When the waters flood the house — and we must be quiet as a mouse,

We'll each take our axe, we'll cut the ropes, and we'll float away safely after!

**JOHN.** I get it now! An excellent plan!

Let me choose the right lumber – cherry, maplewood, or oak?

I'll make the sturdiest, tubbiest tubs 'cause this storm is truly no joke!

And I'll bring some bread, cheese, fruit, beer, baked beans, hot dogs, chips,

And a flan!

NICK. Whatever, man!

JOHN. But before I forget! for the hot dogs, can you get

Some relish, sauerkraut, onions, buns, and mustard?

And for sweet little Alison a sweet little pie;

Her favorite's the raspberry custard. (Nick exits. John hangs the tubs.)

**NICK.** (*Returning with food.*) All ready with those tubs, old boy?

JOHN. Tubs, pillows, bedding, custard, dogs, mustard,

Potato chips, pretzels, wine, and beer.

Did you remember the pickles?

**NICK.** (This is so ridiculous it tickles!)

It looks good, it looks great, we've got wood, John! We've got nothing to fear! (Alison enters, immediately "getting" Nick's plan.) So ready, everybody?

**ALISON.** Ready!

JOHN. Ready!

And don't forget your pie!

ALISON. Oh, my!

**JOHN.** Now watch when you're climbing, don't fall into the shrubs!

And this time tomorrow,

**ALISON.** We'll be sailing away with our cargo —

NICK. On our magical waterproofed custom-made wooden tubs!

(John climbs up to his tub, while Nick and Alison get into bed.)

ALISON. Tee-hee! And now to our fun, we can safely ignore

Any nocturnal rumblings from that foolish old bore.

While he's chomping down his sausages,

We'll be enjoying your sausage even more.

And then when he conks out fast asleep,

Let him snore, let him snore, let him snore!

(John starts snoring loudly. Abe enters with a guitar.)

**ABE.** I can usually hear for miles around the sounds of John's thunderous snoring.

Is it possible he's shut the window out of fear it might start pouring?

But nay! The window is ajar, and any sounds of apnea are coming from afar.

So at last I can serenade lovely Alice with my harmonious Gibson guitar!

(Singing.) Oh Alison, oh Alison, grant me a moment of bliss!

Oh Alison, sweet Alison, give me just one little kiss.

NICK. What the hell?

**ALISON.** Oh, it's the bane of my life, Abe the oversexed undergraduate pest.

He emails, texts me, serenades me, he messages me on Facebook.

He gives me gifts, he gives me the creeps, with that moonfaced outer-space look.

But I know how to get rid of him, so I'll finally get some rest.

(Sticking her ass — which Abe kisses — out the window.) Kiss this, Abey Baby!

**ABE.** Oh, disgust! Am I kissing her bush?

**ALISON.** Oh my bad! you wanted my lips; instead I stuck out my tush!

(Pieing Abe with the raspberry custard.) Kiss this instead, Abey-Babey,

You silly lovesick mule!

ABE. And this time it's a pie in my face! A raspberry yet!

Why, she's playing me for a fool!

(Singing.) Oh Alison, oh Alison, you seemed like such a sweet little bird!

Oh Alison, sweet Alison, now I see you're just a vicious nasty turd!

But don't think you'll get away with this,

'Cause I guarantee I'll have the last word! (Exit.)

NICK. Ho-ho, how clever! Think he'll be back?

**ALISON.** Whatever!

**NICK.** A shame to waste such a fine raspberry tart,

But if he returns, it's my turn to play my part!

And now back to our pleasure!

**ABE.** (Re-entering with a hot poker.) Revenge is sweet, and measure for measure!

**NICK.** Watch this! Good thing I ate all those *frijoles*!

(Nick sticks his ass out the window and farts in Abe's face.)

ABE. What's this, a fart? Holy guacamole!

First she breaks my heart, next it's a raspberry tart, and now a fart!

**ALISON.** Why, Nick, that fart nearly blew the walls apart!

That fart was a thing of wonder!

Like an elephant's roar, an atom bomb,

A tuba, or a gigantic clap of thunder!

**JOHN.** (In his sleep.) Thunder . . . .

ABE. Enough with your metaphors and your tarts, you tart!

And as for you, you little joker, take this! I'll give you a fart!

(Abe sticks the poker up Nick's ass.)

# NICK. OWWWWW!!!!

So now it seems my punishment for passing a large volume of gas

Is to be reamed by a fiery, blazing poker up my ass!

**ABE.** Touché! So you fucked her in her front. Good for you; I fucked your rear!

Enjoy your taste of Abey's red-hot ramrod iron spear!

So you think you've had your fun

Putting me through such gaseous humiliation?

Well now, you see what you get for it:

Revenge and burning anal retaliation! (Exit.)

NICK. Oh my God, the pain is blinding! It's like being struck by lightning!

**JOHN.** (In his sleep.) Lightning . . . .

**ALISON.** How simply frightening! If I can offer something enlightening —

NICK. Will you knock it off with the stupid rhymes and get me some water!

**ALISON.** Water?

NICK. Yes, water, water! Don't you understand English?

Water, agua, mizu, schwei, Wasser, eau, paani, maim, H2O, voda!

**ALISON.** Perhaps a nice Scotch and soda?

JOHN. (Awakening.) First it's thunder, then lightning, and now it's water!

Cut the cords, Nick was right, the world is coming to an end,

It's Noah's Flood! (John cuts the cord to his tub with his axe and falls to the floor.)

**ALISON.** Saints above, Nicky, what's that sound?

That tub with my hubby is crashing to the ground!

And it looks like it's landed with all those hot dogs in the mud!

JOHN. Jesu Maria, I broke my arm!

ALISON. Oh, I'm sure there's been no harm!

**JOHN.** So this puddle is Noah's Flood? and what's with your ass?

Looks like you got the runs.

**NICK.** No, no, you idiot, can't you see I'm bleeding from my rectum?

My epidermis is burnt to a crisp and turning every color on the spectrum!

I was just a normal college kid who wanted a little fun,

And look at me now! my ass is on fire, and what's more I've toasted my buns!

**JOHN.** The hot dog buns?

NICK. No, you lummox, my buttocks!

**ALISON.** Will you stop whining?

First your loins were on fire, now your ass is on fire.

Any part of you not on fire?

**JOHN.** And how did you toast them buns, if one may inquire?

See, there's a lot more to this than meets the naked eye.

And I'll get to the bottom of things, if I live until I die!

Like why are there two empty tubs still a-hanging from the ceiling,

And what was all that noise last night

If it wasn't you two a-squirming and a-squealing.

I'm pretty sure by now this whole Noah's Flood

Was just you two having fun and pulling on my pud.

But still there's a couple of things which need to be imparted.

Like who rammed that poker up your ass and who the hell farted!

**ALISON.** Forget it, John, please!

NICK. Don't get me started!

**ALISON.** I'll get the Febreze!

This has been such fun!

JOHN. Ow, my arm!

NICK. My ass!

ALISON. You two big babies! I'll call 9-1-1.

**ABE.** (Re-entering.) So the poor foolish carpenter's had quite a tease,

And Tricky Nicky got a scorching on his rear.

But who knows if Nick recovered from his anal unease,

Because afterwards he seemed to permanently disappear.

Unlikely as it may seem, John and Alison remained a team,

Happily wed for many years in all kinds of weather.

As for me, I'm now a popular strippa, wearing nothing but a kippa,

And dancing at a bar whose clients are all into leather.

But if you're looking for a moral to this tale, why then welcome to the club.

In truth, I've got nothing profound or instructive to impart.

'Cause this tale is nothing more than rub-a-dub-dub, three jokers in a tub,

And a poker, some hot dogs and buns,

**ALISON.** a tart,

JOHN. a carpenter, NICK. a flood.

**ABE.** and a fart.

#### **INTERLUDE 2**

**YOUNG MAN 2.** You thought that was funny?

**OLD MAN 2.** Yeah, I thought it was funny.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** You fucking thought that was fucking funny, huh? Hey! my dad's a carpenter and you shouldn't be making fun of blue-collar workers. You have any idea what goes into making a custom cabinet?

**OLD MAN 2.** All right, take it easy. No one was insulting carpenters.

**OLD MAN 1.** "Brainpower of a mule."

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Damn right. He's acting like people like my dad are stupid because they don't sit behind a desk all day falling asleep in meetings or whatever.

**OLD MAN 2.** Nothing personal, boy.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Who you calling "boy"? You better fucking watch your language!

YOUNG MAN 1. Terry, chill.

**OLD WOMAN.** He does figure things out by the end, and he takes it all with good grace.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Hey, don't tell me chill. It's like my old man puts in 12-hour days, you have no idea what goes into these custom pieces he makes for these rich people, weeks of work, and then he's such a nice guy he won't even ask for half they're worth.

**OLD MAN 2.** He sounds like a fantastic carpenter, but he could use some business advice. Here, my card.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** "Simon Simkin. Provisioner. Colleges, fraternities, and sororities." So you sell food to college campuses?

**OLD MAN 2.** I have several accounts in this area. Looks like you two boys are in a fraternity yourselves.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Boys?

**OLD MAN 2.** Very good living too if you want to learn the business. Meanwhile, whatever food service you're using, I could undersell them and give you better quality, guaranteed.

YOUNG MAN 1. We'll see.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Oh, but I just got such a good idea for a story. Who's up?

**OLD MAN 2.** The old lady.

YOUNG MAN 2. No, I want to go now!

**OLD WOMAN.** Don't let me stand in your way! I can wait.

YOUNG MAN 2. Hey, Simon. You married? Kids?

**OLD MAN 2.** That's none of your concern —

YOUNG MAN 2. Just want to know.

**OLD MAN 2.** If you must, I have my wife Margery, my daughter Molly, and she has a little boy named Maurice. But we call him "Moo."

YOUNG MAN 1. Like a cow?

**OLD MAN 2.** You know, I'm about to sit at one of the other gates —

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Chill, Simon. Deal was, we all tell a story, and how 'bout whoever tells the best story gets dinner on the others when we get to London.

**OLD WOMAN.** If we ever get to London . . . .

**OLD MAN 2....** 

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Atta boy, Simon. So here's my story about Simon Simkin, Molly, Madge, Moo, two college boys, three beds, and a cradle.

**OLD MAN 2.** If you think I'm going to sit here and be insulted —

YOUNG MAN 2. Hey, turnabout's fair play, Si.

**YOUNG WOMAN.** More college boys?

#### TALE 3: THE TALE OF THREE BEDS AND A CRADLE

ALLEN (Young Man 1) and JOHN (Young Man 2) are approaching the house where SIMKIN (Old Man 2) lives with his wife MADGE (Old Woman) and daughter MOLLY (Young Woman). Three bedrooms are required each with its own bed, as well as a baby cradle with a prop baby.

**JOHN.** It's a stupid idea, I still say let it go.

**ALLEN.** And I say I'll give it to you again real slow.

Undercounting, overcharging, a swindler and a cheat.

You can see it in the quality of the produce and the meat.

Tomatoes, peppers, apples, grapes, potatoes, and bananas always rotten.

Half our hot dogs, milk, eggs, chips, and cheese conveniently "forgotten."

Cake that's old, bread with mold, burgers about to spoil,

You think this is nothing? When my blood's on a boil?

And whatever he's siphoned into bottles labelled Pepsi

Is rotgut gave Greg Doyle a seizure 'cause he's got epilepsy.

**JOHN.** You're exaggerating, it's not that bad —

**ALLEN.** You're wrong, brother John, the facts are we've been had!

So by coming here we can catch him in the act,

And maybe get some money back, or at least we'll prove the facts.

**SIMKIN.** (Entering.) Hey, hey, look who's here.

John and Allen from Tau Kappa Phi!

No need to come out all this way,

Tomorrow I was going to swing by!

**ALLEN.** Hey, hey, yourself, Simkin! We thought we'd save you the trouble!

We were just driving by, we thought we'd pick up our stuff,

And get back to the house on the double.

**SIMKIN.** But your stuff isn't ready, I'm still working on your order,

Which means your meat, milk, bread, cheese, and fruit are all in disorder.

Could have saved you the visit, don't mean to be gruff,

But you should just wait for me to come; you'll get your grub soon enough.

**ALLEN.** See Simon, though, the point is that there's lately been some problems, Which is why we wrote that letter.

**JOHN.** We want to give you half a chance to make relations better.

**SIMKIN.** Now boys, there may have been a misunderstanding.

With the volume I deal with, there's the occasional mishandling.

So I'll let you watch me pack up your stuff.

You'll see it's all fresh and if anything I'll give you more than enough.

See, here's your potatoes!

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, ten!

Now you ready for the cukes and tomatoes?

**JOHN.** What happened to nine?

**SIMKIN.** Eight's a big one, enough for three fraternity men!

**ALLEN.** You swine!

**SIMKIN.** All right then, here's one more!

Now you got more than enough!

I'll start loading your truck, you'll be on the road by four!

So stop being so suspicious and acting tough. (Exit with potatoes.)

MOLLY. (Entering.) Don't worry, boys, while he's not looking,

I'll slip you a few extra spuds.

But maybe in exchange I'll get my chance

For some fun with two hot virile fraternity studs.

ALLEN. Good golly, Miss Molly, great to see you again!

Thanks for the offer but we're the most virtuous of men!

Sad to say now, we really have to scram!

'Cause it's a long drive home, and I've got an exam.

**MOLLY.** (Aside.) All right, have it your way, but I always get what I want best! Except of course when I don't, which is most of the time if not the rest.

So good luck with that drive and you better ace that test!

(To the baby crying in his cradle.) And as for you, you little turd.

Stop that crying, I don't want to hear another word. (Exit.)

**JOHN.** She's really kinda cute. But it's getting late, let's hit the road. (Exit.)

**ALLEN.** Amazing how a goddess can emerge from such a toad. (Exit.)

**SIMKIN.** (*Returning.*) So you think I'm a swindler, a thief, a liar, a crook?

You college kids always think you're so smart,

But there's more to life than you'll find in a book.

So complain all you like, I don't give a fart.

I have's to make a living, this is the real world not your ivory tower school,

And if I never cheated half the world, then I'd be a goddamned stupid fool.

**ALLEN.** (Returning with John.) Fuck it, man, and now our truck has fallen into a ditch.

So help me God, I'll murder Simkin, that lying son of a bitch.

Plus both rear tires have nails, so they're flat and we've only got one spare.

I don't know how a tire can leak so fast, until it's got no air!

**SIMKIN.** Too bad, boys, but this is why youse shouldn't come here,

A deserted spot where there's all kinds of vandals.

Glass and nails all over the road, and I see you're just wearing sandals.

We'll get you fixed, but it's too late to call a mechanic.

So just relax, first thing tomorrow so I don't want you to panic.

ALLEN. That'll be too late! My exam's at eight!

And Johnny can't get to sleep unless he yanks it!

JOHN. Not true!

SIMKIN. Don't worry, boys, I've got a comfortable guest suite

Plus a good filling heavy indigestible supper to eat

Cooked by my heavy indigestible wife.

Hey Madge! Waddle out here and show some signs of life!

So boys, get some rest, I guarantee you'll make your test.

To try to get home tonight you'd be a fool.

There's my Madge, ain't she something? Hey, Madge, we've got some guests!

These handsome college fellas from the school!

MADGE. (Entering.) Worthless degenerate frat boy animals,

Entitled hoity-toity college students,

Rapists, drunkards, immoral lazy junkies.

Husband, throw them out, we don't need them here about,

The Neanderthal, subhuman, simian, troglodyte monkeys.

MOLLY. (Returning.) Well, I like them, you horrible bitch!

**MADGE.** You like anything with a dick.

Husband, shall I thrash them with my stick?

**JOHN.** Hey, Allen, this is really weird, you think we oughta hitch?

MADGE. As for you, my stupid, worthless daughter,

Someday you'll move out on your own like you oughta.

Twenty-six years old, theater major, a kid, plus seventy-thousand in debt.

Still freeloading off your parents while there are no jobs you could possibly get.

SIMKIN. So now that everybody's getting so well along

Let's have some supper, and then a few drinks.

We've got plenty of beer, essential to any self-respecting college boy's diet,

Including some excellent Mexican brews, and a Pilsner. Care to try it?

You'll feel better in the morning after getting forty winks.

There's a nice big guest room, hope you don't mind sharing the bed.

But it's king-sized so you can keep each other warm

In case you want to give each other head.

JOHN. Hey, we don't swing that way! We're brothers, not lovers!

**SIMKIN.** No offense, that's what they all say. So g'night, boys.

Now I share the center room with Madge,

Who snores ten times as loud as any tuba.

With Moo by our feet in case he needs his toys.

Molly always sleeps alone (that's a warning if your dick gets on a bone).

And before I turn in, I always enjoy a Panatella from Cuba.

(Everyone gets into bed. Blackout. Then the snoring starts. First a bass snore from Madge on the downbeat. Then a high-pitched snore from the cradle on the next strong beat. Simkin and Molly then fill in on beats 2 and 4 as we hear four snores in regular rhythm over and over. Allen turns on the light.)

**ALLEN.** Fuck. I'm still awake. How can anybody sleep with that commotion?

**JOHN.** I'm about to choke from that cigar smoke.

**ALLEN.** Whose idea was it we came here?

JOHN. Yours.

**ALLEN.** Like hell. And now I've got a hard-on and you used all the lotion.

The food was gross, the wine was sour, the beer like piss.

Sixty bucks for a fleabag bed in a disgusting shack like this,

While we could have been back at the house having a nice fuck.

**JOHN.** Do you think he ditched our truck?

**ALLEN.** Of course he did, you moron!

So he could get more money out of us, while all he does is snore on.

But I know how we'll get back at him, while he's snorting like an ox.

'Cause there's his big old lady Madge, and the daughter who's totally a fox.

**JOHN.** So what are you thinking?

**ALLEN.** Are you really that dense?

Let me knock in that musclebound head of yours some sense.

So let's have some fun. I'll have the chick,

And you, you lucky dog, you'll do the mother.

**JOHN.** No, I want the chick, and you can do the mother.

ALLEN. We'll flip for it. Heads I win, tails you lose! Hey, it's tails!

Too bad, you dork! So, John, you in?

JOHN. Yeah, as usual I'm screwed.

**ALLEN.** So have it your way, dude. If you'd rather beat your meat –

**JOHN.** All right, I'll fuck the mom. Even though she's pretty crude —

**ALLEN.** Just pretend she's Molly, and in the dark it'll all be sweet.

Just watch, brother John, see how Allen deals with this disaster.

I'll show the kid a thing or two; now take a lesson from the master.

(Allen gets out of bed, nearly tripping on the cradle, and goes into Molly's room.)

**ALLEN.** Molly!

MOLLY. Allen! Oh, you came! Just when I was starting to masturbate!

Oh my god, that feels delicious.

Oh shit, I just remembered, I didn't do the dishes!

ALLEN. Can't they wait?

JOHN. Damn, he's getting it on and I'm stuck here alone!

No wait, the old gal's getting out of bed!

Aha! I've got a plan, now hold the phone!

**MADGE.** (Getting up from bed.) All that Pilsner, all that bourbon,

Not to mention that Chablis!

I know I should have stuck to Coke but it's always the same with me!

'Cause when you're a drunk old lady of (more or less) 63,

Every half hour you gotta get out of bed, and find the John and pee.

(Madge exits to the bathroom. John gets out of bed.)

JOHN. "And find the John!" That's me!

So here's my chance, while she's performing an act of micturition!

(If you're wondering how I knew that word,

Becoming a gynecologist is my ambition!)

I know! I'll take the cradle and I'll move it two or three feet!

Or just maybe a little more; I'll even mimic Simkin's snore!

So hush little baby, 'cause I'm gonna give your big old lady a treat!

(John moves the cradle to outside the room where he's now sleeping alone. Madge returns and feeling for the cradle in the dark, enters the room with John.)

**MADGE.** Never seemed like so many steps before; it's usually just three or four.

Can't see a thing when it's half past two,

Not the bed, the doors, or the floor.

But that's the cradle, no mistake and sleeping in there is Baby Moo!

What's more, I can hear Simkin's snore!

(As John drags her into bed and starts having fun:)

And whoa! What's going on here? Ho-ho! Woo-hoo!

Why, Simkin, my boo! Look what's happened to you!

It must be something in my cooking.

That thing of yours is so much bigger.

You've got hair on your head and a nice muscular figger.

And all of a sudden you're ten times better looking!

**ALLEN.** (To audience.) So skip ahead maybe two, three hours.

It's really only much more of the same.

Let's say it's dawn, and from midnight to morn

It was easily three times we both came.

But like all good fraternity boys, I share everything with my brothers,

So which room was John sleeping in again?

Right, this one, since the other's the old man's and the mother's.

(Goes into Simkin's room.) Hey, John, I had a blast fucking Molly.

Never seen a chick so horny and so jolly.

SIMKIN. What?

**ALLEN.** So how did you make out with the fat old bag?

**SIMKIN.** What the fuck is this?

**ALLEN.** Holy shit! What the fuck! You're not my brother!

**SIMKIN.** And what the fuck are you doing here, mister?

And what happened to my Molly and her mother?

Hey, I know Madge's snore! She's in the room next door!

But who's there with her?

**ALLEN.** I don't know, maybe her sister?

SIMKIN. I'll kill you, I'll cut off your balls, you motherfucker!

**ALLEN.** No, John fucked the mother! I fucked the daughter!

See, John moved the cradle when Madge got up to make water.

(Simkin pushes Allen out of the way and heads to the room where Madge is sleeping with John.)

**SIMKIN.** Hey Madge! Who the hell is in bed with you?

**MADGE.** (Awakening.) What the hell? Another college kid too?

(Beating Simkin with her cane.) Take that, you derelict, you ruffian, you maggot,

You goddamned muscle-bound fraternity boy, you uncivilized horny little —!

MOLLY. Please don't rhyme that one, and good morrow, everybody!

**ALLEN AND JOHN.** Good morrow, Miss Molly!

MOLLY. Oh, no, Mommy's beating Daddy up again!

SIMKIN. Stop it, Madge, I'm Simkin! Not those fraternity men!

**MADGE.** Like hell! I know a college boy when I see one!

(Now hitting Simkin with the cradle. The baby starts crying.)

Here, take this, fucking degenerate frat boy!

SIMKIN. I'm Simkin! I'm Simkin!

MOLLY. Mom, stop! You hurting Daddy and Baby Moo!

**MADGE.** Molly, stick it up your crop! It's nothing more than a theatrical prop! (*The baby's cries are ear-splitting.*)

Oh, my bad, it's a real kid, but hey! what's done is done.

**JOHN.** (As all the men start fighting.) Take that!

SIMKIN. No, take that!

**ALLEN.** Take that!

**JOHN.** Why are you beating on me? I'm your brother!

**JOHN.** Sorry, bro, I thought I was wailing on the mother.

**MOLLY.** This place is really turning into a zoo —

SIMKIN. Ow! Ow! They've beat me till I'm black and blue!

MADGE. Poor Simkin! Why it's really you! Let me kiss your boo-boo!

And let's all cuddle, you and me and Baby Moo!

(Madge and Simkin lie down together in the guestroom bed along with the cradle, which has gone silent.)

**ALLEN.** Now how are we getting out of this place?

MOLLY. Allen, John, down the stairs there's a curio case.

You'll see a little turquoise box on your right.

Don't open it too loudly,

It has the keys to Simkin's Audi,

Plus some cash so you can escape while it's not yet light.

Take it! It's my gift to you! In thanks for a blissful night!

**ALLEN.** But what happens, dear Molly, what happens to you?

And what's more, what happens to little Baby Moo?

JOHN. I think he's dead. Poor little guy.

**MOLLY.** Doesn't matter. We'll bury him where I ditched your truck in the rut —

**ALLEN.** You slut!

MOLLY. Then Simkin and me'll make another bye and bye.

**ALLEN. Simkin?** 

JOHN. Simkin's —

**ALLEN.** — your father and your lover? Which means that Moo —

**JOHN.** — that Moo's your baby and your brother.

ALLEN. Was.

**JOHN.** Allen, let's get out of here. This place is starting to scare me, Between Simkin, Moo, the taters, and the mother.

ALLEN. Molly, I love you. I'll friend you on Facebook!

I'll text, I'll Skype, I'll call.

MOLLY. Oh, ten minutes from now you won't remember me at all.

Now you better get going while my parents still are snoring!

**JOHN.** Molly, no one should live like this. Molly, there's a way out.

**MOLLY.** What if Simkin finds out?

**ALLEN.** With all we've got on Simkin, Simkin's headed for a fall.

But we'll help you, Molly, make a whole new life.

**MOLLY.** Does that mean, dearest Allen, does that mean you'll be my wife?

ALLEN. Don't push it, Moll!

But let's get moving before they wake and start making a fuss.

**JOHN.** Molly, sweet Molly, quick! grab your things,

'Cause Molly, you're coming with us! (All exit.)

#### **INTERLUDE 3**

YOUNG WOMAN. I didn't like that one at all.

YOUNG MAN 2. I thought it was cool.

YOUNG WOMAN. Beating that poor little baby to death!

YOUNG MAN 2. It was funny.

YOUNG WOMAN. It was sick.

**OLD MAN 1.** Immature, in my opinion.

BOTH YOUNG MEN. That's us!

YOUNG WOMAN. And then the incest!

YOUNG MAN 2. Now that was cool!

**OLD MAN 1.** I know for a fact that was not in Chaucer.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Yeah, I made that part up.

**YOUNG WOMAN.** If you make things up, how is anybody supposed to know you're telling the stories right?

**OLD MAN 1.** Public domain. Can change anything you want.

YOUNG MAN 2. True, what he said.

YOUNG WOMAN. And then those fraternity boys. Only one thing on their minds!

**OLD WOMAN.** True —

OLD MAN 1. "Rapists, drunkards, troglodyte monkeys."

YOUNG WOMAN. True —

YOUNG MAN 1. Not true! That's just what Madge says —

**OLD MAN 1.** True —

**OLD WOMAN.** I rather like her. Speaks her mind. Takes no guff from nobody.

YOUNG MAN 2. True —

**YOUNG MAN 1.** And the guys aren't that bad. They rescue Molly at the end —

**OLD WOMAN.** True —

**OLD MAN 1.** To do what? Rape her at their fraternity parties?

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Just because you're in a fraternity doesn't mean you're a rapist. (*To Young Man 1.*) True?

**YOUNG MAN 1.** Don't go there, bro.

**OLD WOMAN.** I have a story about rape. At least the aftermath of a rape. The proper punishment for a rape.

YOUNG WOMAN. Death. True.

**YOUNG MAN 1.** And what if the guy was innocent? What if he thought it was consensual and the girl was just trying to ruin his life?

YOUNG WOMAN. Never happens. I'd still string him up by the balls.

YOUNG MAN 1. Getting nasty here.

YOUNG MAN 2. True!

**OLD MAN 2.** Nasty? I'll give you nasty. This child with a carpenter for a father has insulted me, my family, my livelihood, made my lovely wife to look like a pig, my daughter a slut, my innocent little grandson murdered —

YOUNG MAN 2. Oh, cut the crap! And who you calling a child? When you treat my dad like some fucking Neanderthal when he's a better man than you'll ever be.

**OLD MAN 1.** Looks like we still got a lot of animosity.

**YOUNG MAN 1.** Not to mention some pomposity and verbosity!

**OLD WOMAN.** Terry, Simon's tale was not meant personally. Yours on the other hand —

OLD MAN 2. Can't believe somebody's sticking up for me. That'll be a first.

**OLD MAN 1.** Now everybody calm down. It was just a story.

**OLD MAN 2.** No such thing as "just a story."

YOUNG WOMAN. I want to hear Alison's.

**OLD WOMAN.** I want it to be heard. But not until you gentlemen shake hands and make up.

YOUNG MAN 2. Fat chance.

YOUNG MAN 1. C'mon, Terry. Chill. I mean it, dude.

YOUNG MAN 2. Fuck. Okay, Simon. No hard feelings, K?

**OLD MAN 2.** Very well.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Maybe we'll even look into a professional relationship?

OLD MAN 2. We'll see.

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