

PERUSAL SCRIPT

IF NOT ANYTHING, NOTHING WILL DO!

By Doug Stewart



Newport, Maine

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IF NOT ANYTHING, NOTHING WILL DO!

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

10 men / 5 women / 1 teen boy

SUE CARTER -- A young married woman

HERBIE CARTER -- A young married man

HELEN -- A crazy lady

NURSE JONES -- Her "guardian"

BROTHER GILES -- A Home Teacher

BROTHER KIRKHAM -- A Home Teacher

SISTER PEACH -- The Relief Society President

BROTHER BIRCH -- The Ward Genealogy Chairman

SISTER FLAKE -- Ward Choir Director

BISHOP PINGREE -- The Bishop of the Ward

FREDDIE -- Sue's younger brother

GRAVEY -- Policeman disguised as a common thief

POTATO -- Policeman disguised as a common thief

MOOSE FACE MULLIGAN -- Escaped Convict

LITTLE LOUIE -- Partner to Moose Face

RADIO ANNOUNCER -- A voice in a box

The action of the play takes place in one scene, in a dingy apartment above a brewery near an airport and a state prison.

A CRAZY MIXED-UP COMEDY SENSATION!!!

IF NOT ANYTHING, NOTHING WILL DO! by Doug Stewart. 10M 5W 1B. 1 Interior. 25 mins. A whacky, zany farce about newly-weds who move into an abandoned and condemned building, near an international airport and a prison, so they can live on what he makes -- nothing! The couple is LDS so the first day they are visited by the Home Teachers, the Relief Society President, the Ward Genealogy Chairman, the Choir Director, the Bishop AND two escaped convicts, two police officers and a lady from the looney bin who is now living in the room next to the newlyweds. This play is a scream!!

Doug Stewart lives in St. George, Utah. One of the most influential writers in the history of Latter-day drama, Stewart was the playwright and lyricist of the groundbreaking Latter-day Saint-themed musical *Saturday's Warrior* (1974), a project staged by California college students independent of institutional Church sponsorship. He followed this up with a sequel, the musical *Star Child*. "Saturday's Warrior" was adapted to a direct-to-video feature film in 1989 by director Bob Williams and producer David West, and has been widely seen by Church members. A "Star Child" video was released in 1999. Stewart also wrote the screenplay for the major Church-produced film "The Lost Manuscript" (1974), which was directed by Wetzel O. Whitaker. He wrote the screenplay for the independent family film "Where the Red Fern Grows" (1974), produced by Lyman Dayton. Doug brings with him a distinguished career in stage and film. He received his MA degree from BYU in 1968. He went on to become the associate producer of the film, *The Fearmaker*. In 1973 Doug won first place in the Utah Playwriting Contest for his book and lyrics to *Saturday's Warrior*. He also wrote the screenplay for *Where the Red Fern Grows*, which starred James Whitmore and Beverly Garland and won the Blue Ribbon Box Office Award, parent's Magazine Citation, and awards from McCall's and the Motion Picture Association. He also wrote the screenplays *Seven Alone* and *Against a Crooked Sky*, which starred Richard Boone. In 1976, he was commissioned by the LDS Church to write the book and lyrics for the Bicentennial Musical, *Threads of Glory*, part of which was performed at Ronald Reagan's Inauguration in 1981. In 1978 he formed his own production company which toured shows throughout the nation, and continues to license shows world-wide. In 1983 and 84, he co-produced the films *Solo* and *The Red Fury*. Other musicals to his credit include *Latter-Day Ruth*, *Star Child*, *A Day, A Night & A Day*, *Dream Street* and *Almost Perfect*. In 1991 Doug first shared his dream of producing the outdoor musical *UTAH!* The magnificent Tuachan Amphitheater and Center for the Arts are the result of that dream. Doug and His wife Mary are the parents of eight children, and reside in St. George, Utah.

IF NOT ANYTHING, NOTHING WILL, DO!

(The curtain opens to a dingy, one-room apartment. The place is cluttered with partially unwrapped wedding gifts. Orange crates serve as chairs, and there is a mattress on the floor and a wooden bathtub beside it. We hear the roar of airplanes taking off just outside the small open window. Steam comes through cracks in the wall near the baseboards. HERBIE CARTER, a young man in his early twenties, enters carrying several pieces of luggage, followed by SUE CARTER, a pretty girl, nicely dressed.)

HERBIE: Well, honey, what do you think?

(SUE is in a state of shock as she gazes about the hovel.)

I mean, it's not thee Taj Mahal, but with a little fixin' up and your special touch -- I figured new curtains on the window, and a bedspread on the mattress.

(HERBIE crosses to window.)

And just take a look at the view.

(HE goes to the window. There is a deafening roar as a plane takes off. The wind rushes through the window and blows their hair wildly, forcing them to move back.)

Have you ever seen anything so beautiful as a jumbo jet taking off? Would you believe that yesterday, on this runway alone, 97 planes came in and out?

(He closes the window, cutting off a good part of the noise)

And wait'll ya hear the best part of the deal! Guess how much we're paying for the place?

SUE: *(Sighing)* I give up.

HERBIE: 35 bucks a month and that includes utilities!

SUE: *(Sadly)* I'm overcome.

HERBIE: Well, ol' Herbie did it again, right?

SUE: Right! I mean, what more could a girl ask for? A mattress, a wooden tub -- a few orange crates -- and the International Airport.

HERBIE: And that's not all!

(He whips out the telephone from behind the box.)

Surprise!

SUE: Oh, Herbie, a real telephone.

HERBIE: But only if you promise to make only local call.

(He hugs her)

Oh, Sue, I'm the luckiest guy in the world having a wife like you.. who's willing to sacrifice after all the luxury you've been used to. Oh, it's going to be a beautiful life ... working and sharing ... and suffering together!

SUE: Suffering?

HERBIE: Well, until I get my degree in four years.

(SUE starts to cry)

Honey! What's wrong?

SUE: I want to go back to Utah! Please, Herbie take me back!

(SUE goes to her knees begging.)

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Please, please -- I don't care where you get your degree -- even BYU is OK.

HERBIE: You are in distress!

SUE: *(Extremely emotional)* I want my mother! I want to go home ... please!

HERBIE: Sue, the neighbors!

SUE: What neighbors? Who else would be crazy enough to live here?

(Suddenly there is a loud pounding on the wall and the shrill cackle of a crazy lady, HELEN, coming from the other side. SUE gets to her feet screaming, as she backs away from the wall, where big black nails are coming through.)

HERBIE: I forgot to tell you, there's this.. uh ... interesting lady next door.

(He goes to the wall and shouts.)

Lady, please don't do that!

(The pounding stops.)

SUE: Herbie, I can't take it. I'll go out of my mind!

(She goes to her knees again.)

I'm begging you... couldn't we pay five dollars more and live at the YMCA?

HERBIE: Sue, now stop it, and get up off the floor.

(He helps her up.)

Is this the woman I married six weeks ago? Is this the woman who swore to unconquerable fortitude, and pioneer zeal, who promised never to complain? Why do you think I chose you above all the others?

SUE: Yes, but ...

HERBIE: "I'll never complain," Those were your very words!

SUE: I know but ...

HERBIE: You did!

SUE: But I had no idea ...

HERBIE: Whatever the hardships I'm called to endure ... I'll never complain ... never give up ... never! Till that glorious day when Herbie Carter returns to Paragonah with his masters degree!"

SUE: But I'm not complaining.. I just want a few simple things -- like a bathtub and a bed! How do you think I'll feel writing home? 'Dear folks, guess what? We live in a condemned building on top of a beer brewery at the end of a jet runway next to the State Prison. No kitchen ... no bathroom ... not even hot water ... but it's dirt cheap.'

HERBIE: Okay, okay, so you married a pauper!

SUE: Herbie, if you'd just accept a loan from my father.

HERBIE: *(Shocked)* Sue!

SUE: Then maybe I could get a job?

HERBIE: Never!

SUE: What about selling some of our wedding gifts? We have so many things we'll never ...

HERBIE: No! Now, look, we've gone through this before. I don't want your money -- or your father's money ... or silver trays from your rich side of the family. I never want it said that my wife had to contribute one penny to my support. Is that clear?

SUE: Yes, Herbie.

HERBIE: I may be only a farm boy from Paragonah, Utah ... but I've still got my pride.

SUE: Yes, Herbie.

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HERBIE: And determination! And I'm going to make it on my own! Even if it means starving to death!

SUE: Yes, Herbie ... I mean, no, Herbie ... I mean ... Oh, I don't know what I mean!

(She starts to cry.)

HERBIE: Now, honey, You're just tired from the trip. Why don't you take a nice hot bath and rest up? I'll turn on the radio ... it will help calm your nerves.

(He whips a blanket off a pile of junk, revealing an old standing radio [made from a cardboard box]. From behind the round speaker hole the face of the RADIO ANNOUNCER peers out. Lines are drawn on his face to represent the grill work covering the speaker. HERBIE turns on the radio. We hear soft music. The RADIO ANNOUNCER could have a cassette recorder which he controls. There are other ways this might work. Do what works best for your group.)

HERBIE: There now, isn't that better? I should be back from registration in about four hours

(Suddenly HELEN begins pounding on the wall again.)

SUE: Oh, Herbie, you can't leave me alone ... not with that crazy lady next door.

HERBIE: She's not crazy, honey, she's just ... different.

(He picks up a hammer and hands it to SUE.)

SUE: What's this for?

HERBIE: To pound the nail back! But above all else, Sue, keep the doors locked ... and don't trust anyone.

This isn't exactly the nice part of town.

(He takes a shotgun out of a box and hands it to her.)

And if you need this ...

SUE: Herbie! I could never use that!

HERBIE: Just remember you are a woman of great strength!

(He puts the gun down and kisses SUE, then makes an exit out the front door. SUE stands stunned, then begins to pace the floor, wringing her hands.)

SUE: Oh, I've got to get a hold of myself! I've got to take courage! I must be a woman of strength! It's so hot in here ... and those smells from the brewery.

(She flings open the window and meets the blast of jet engines and wind. She closes the window quickly)

Aspirin! I need and aspirin!

(She starts searching through boxes)

How can I find anything in this mess? Not even a medicine cabinet.

(HELEN starts her pounding again. SUE takes the hammer and goes to the wall, pounding the nails over.)

Please, lady, don't do that! Stop it!

RADIO ANNOUNCER: We must interrupt to bring you a special alert! Two convicts have just escaped from the state prison.

SUE: The state prison?!

RADIO ANNOUNCER: Yes, the state prison.

(SUE rushes to the door and locks it and begins pushing boxes against it, as the ANNOUNCER continues.)

As of yet, they are unidentified, but prison officials warn that they may be extremely dangerous. We recommend that you lock your doors and say your prayers. We now return you to music for the quiet

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hours.

SUE: Oh, Herbie, why did you leave me? I'll call mama ... yes ... I don't care if it is long distance!

(She picks up the phone, her back to the rear entrance. As she talks, HELEN creeps toward her, with a hammer upraised)

Hello, operator, I'd like to place a call to Ephriam, Utah ... Utah! U as in upset ... T as in terror ... A as in afraid... and H as in horror! That's right! 735-8578! And operator, will you please call me back and tell me the charges when I'm through? Hurry!

(The lights come up on a side scene. Can be done simply using a table with a phone on it and a chair next to it. The phone rings. FREDDIE enters.)

Oh, I must be calm ... a woman of strength.

FREDDIE: Freddie's Pizza Parlor!

SUE: Oh, it's good to hear your voice, Freddie. Is mother there?

FREDDIE: She's just been arrested, Sue, for grand larceny. I'm working on the case right now and hope to have her released by dinner.

SUE: Freddie, I don't have time for your jokes ... this is urgent!

(HELEN lets out a horrible screech. SUE turns and sees HELEN standing over her with upraised hammer. SUE screams, drops the phone and rushes out of HELEN's reach. Lights remain up on FREDDIE who listens indefinitely.)

FREDDIE: Outta sight! Fantastic!

HELEN: You bent my nails over! Why did you bend my nails over?

FREDDIE: The bent nail case! Perfect!

(He writes on scratch pad as action continues.)

SUE: I'm sorry ... I'm sorry! Please, don't hurt me!

NURSE JONES: *(Entering)* Helen! Put down that hammer!!

HELEN: Not until she unbends my nails!

SUE: *(Cowering against wall)* I will! I will!

(As SUE unbends the nails, NURSE pursues HELEN around the room.)

HELEN: You scraggy witch! Why don't you leave me alone?

NURSE JONES: Because I love you Helen, and I want to help you.

HELEN: You're all against me! You're all after my jewels!

NURSE JONES: No one's against you, Helen. It's all in your imagination. Now, give me the hammer.

HELEN: You want to destroy me ... don't hide it! You can't bear to see me with Harold, can you? The man you love! The man who chose me! Now you want to take my jewels and run away with Harold!

NURSE JONES: Helen, the hammer!

SUE: Look! They're all unbent!

(She raises her hand)

And I promise, on my word of honor, I'll never do it again.

NURSE JONES: *(With commanding authority & her hand outstretched)* Helen!

(Reluctantly HELEN gives NURSE JONES the hammer.)

Now, get to your room and take your medicine.

HELEN: *(Shouting & mocking)* Go to your room and take your medicine!

NURSE JONES: She's actually very harmless.

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HELEN: I'm actually very harmless.

NURSE JONES: Will you stop that?!

HELEN: Will you stop that?!

(NURSE JONES makes a sudden move toward HELEN who lurches to the rear entrance and turns before leaving)

All right, Witch Jones, I'm going ... but you'll get yours ...

(Cackles.)

And so will you, young squirt ... soon as Little Louie gets here ... and Big Moose!

(With a cackle SHE exits.)

NURSE JONES: You poor frightened thing, you're trembling. Here, sit down.

(Both sit)

What on earth is a nice girl like you doing living in a dreadful place like this?

SUE: Ch, I wish I knew!

NURSE JONES: Well, let me give you some advice, young lady. Unless you want to end up like poor

Helen, do anything you can to get out of here ... and the quicker the better.

SUE: But we don't have any money. My husband is a poor struggling student.

NURSE JONES: *(Standing)* Oh, no. Not you too!

SUE: What do you mean?

NURSE JONES: Helen's husband was a poor struggling student.

SUE: He was?

NURSE JONES: Of course, that was forty years ago. Poor Harold, he lasted one semester.

SUE: What happened?

NURSE JONES: Fell over dead ... in this very bathtub. Died of starvation. He'd been going without so Helen could eat.

SUE: Oh, how terrible!

NURSE JONES: To this day, Helen believes that poor Harold is still alive, struggling through school. And that's why she's concocted this insane story about a box of jewels hidden in the walls. She thinks that once she finds them, all of Harold's troubles will be over.

SUE: So that's why she pounds nails ... to find the jewels?

NURSE JONES: For thirty years I've suffered through her pounding as she's gone from one floor to another. And now she's narrowed it down to this last wall.

SUE: But who's Moose Face, or whatever his name is ... and Little Louie?

NURSE JONES: Oh, yes ... two more people in her wild imagination.

(Laughs)

Supposedly gangsters who hid the jewels before they were sent off to prison.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: We interrupt again with further information regarding the prison break which occurred earlier today. The two escaped convicts have been identified as Moose Face Mulligan and Little Louie ...

SUE: What?

RADIO ANNOUNCER: That's right. Thirty-nine years ago these ruthless killers were sentenced to life imprisonment for the cold blooded murder of Stephanie Vanderbilt and for the theft of her jewelry valued at \$500,000.00. To date this jewelry has never been recovered, and authorities suspect that these

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killers are now on their way to the place where they hid the loot 39 years ago.

NURSE JONES: Then it's true?

SUE: And they're coming here!

RADIO ANNOUNCER: And there's some exciting news. Mr. Vanderbilt offers a \$10,000.00 reward for information leading to the recovery of his long lost treasure.

SUE: *(Turning radio off)* What are we going to do?

NURSE JONES: We're going to find those jewels and split the reward! Don't you see, with \$5000.00 you can move out of this place.

(Hands SUE the hammer.)

You work from this side and I'll work from the other side.

(Exiting.)

But hurry, before the gangsters come!

SUE: \$5000.00 ... the answer to our problem!

(She starts pounding frantically.)

Oh, how did I ever get into this mess?

(GILES & KIRKHAM knock on SUE's door.)

GILES: All right, Mrs. Carter -- we know you're in there!

(SUE screams and rushes for the shotgun.)

KIRKHAM: Open the door ... were not giving up.

SUE: Whoever you are, leave me alone! I have a twelve gauge shotgun and it's pointing right at the door.

GILES: Hey! Hey ... wait!

SUE: I'll give you to five ... one ... two

KIRKHAM: Don't shoot please!

GILES: We're the home teachers!

SUE: The home teachers?!?

GILES: Yes, from the Cambridge Ward.

SUE: *(dragging boxes away from the door)* Oh, thank goodness you're here.

(She stops.)

Wait a minute. How do I know this isn't a trick?

KIRKHAM: Sister Carter, don't you understand? We're from the Church. You know ... your Church ... and our Church.

SUE: And you are home teachers?

GILES: What do we need to get in ... a Temple recommend?

(Shoving something under the door.)

How about a Utah driver's license?

KIRKHAM: *(Pushing something under the door)* Here's a tithing receipt.

(HELEN enters wearing NURSE JONES' uniform. She creeps across the floor toward SUE with a hammer in her hand. SUE finally gets the front door open.)

SUE: Oh. I can't tell you how happy ...

(GILES & KIRKHAM enter just as HELEN is about to attack SUE.)

KIRKHAM: Look out!

(KIRKHAM shoves SUE aside and, with GILES, chases HELEN who screams hysterically as she

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runs. GILES grabs her and she stamps on his foot. He lets out a holler and jumps around in agony holding one foot. Finally the two home teachers chase HELEN out the rear entrance, just as NURSE JONES hobbles in tied up and gagged. She is wearing only a slip. SUE rushes over to her.)

SUE: Nurse Jones?!?

(SUE's back is to the front door as she works the gag off NURSE JONES. GRAVEY & POTATO enter, pushing in BISHOP PINGREE who is tied up. NURSE JONES screams and SUE whirls around.)

GRAVEY: All right ladies, this is a stick-up!

(POTATO shoves the BISHOP into the corner where he plops down on the floor.)

SUE: Oh, please don't hurt us, please!

(HELEN re-enters rear entrance screeching at the top of her voice, with the home teachers in hot pursuit. They chase her around the room a time or two. HELEN makes a dart for the front door just as SISTER PEACH enters, stopping GILES & KIRKHAM cold in their tracks.)

PEACH: Well, wouldn't you know it ... the home teachers ... the 31st of the month! Shame, shame! And you must be Sister Carter. I'm Sister Peach, the Relief Society President.

GILES: *(To GRAVEY)* You must be Brother Carter.

(GILES & KIRKHAM introduce themselves to GRAVEY as BROTHER BIRCH & SISTER FLAKE enter.)

BIRCH: Oh, my aching bones ... the longest climb I ever made.

FLAKE: You can say that again.

BIRCH: Oh, my aching bones ...

(He fall asleep on his feet.)

KIRKHAM: *(To GRAVEY)* Brother Carter, meet Patriarch Birch, the Genealogy Chairman!

GRAVEY: I'm not Brother Carter! And this is not a social call! This is a robbery ... understand?

PEACH: *(Laughing)* Ohhhh, isn't that funny!?

(They all laugh as GRAVEY fires a gun into the air. They all look shocked and there's dead silence.)

GRAVEY: For the last time we're dangerous gangsters! Understand? And if you're not real nice, well, too bad for you. Understand?

FLAKE: Oh, how, thrilling! A robbery! Brother Birch ... wake up!

GILES: And here I was just doing my home teaching!

BIRCH: *(yawning)* And all I wanted was a family group sheet.

BISHOP: And I just wanted to welcome the Carters to the ward.

(ALL turn to see the BISHOP tied up in the corner.)

ALL: Bishop!!

PEACH: Of all the nerve! Do you hooligans realize what you've done? You've tied up the Bishop!

POTATO: The Bishop?

FLAKE: Yes, the Bishop!

GRAVEY: Oh dear, we've tied up the Bishop! Ya hear that? We tied up the Bishop!

POTATO: I guess we done a real no-no, Boss. We tied up the Bishop!

(POTATO & GRAVEY begin to circle the group, and they dance and sing and at the same time wrap a rope around everyone until they're all tied up back to back)

POTATO & GRAVEY: WE TIED UP THE BISHOP! WE TIED UP THE BISHOP! (etc.)

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PEACH: You won't kill us, will you?

NURSE JONES: Please, you've got to let me go. There's no telling what Helen might do!

(POTATO & GRAVEY pay no attention but go to work filling their canvas bags with SUE's wedding gifts.)

SUE: All of my beautiful wedding gifts. They're all I have left in this world.

PEACH: You heartless criminals!

KIRKHAM: *(To SUE)* Nice place you have here, Sister Carter.

(SUE breaks into tears.)

7 more pages to the end of the script