

A Graveyard Where Dead American Playwrights Go

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By *Alexis Kozak*



Encouraging Creativity Through The Performing Arts

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**RAVEYARI
AMERICAN PLAYS**

**ONE ACT PLAY
By Alexis Kozlov**

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A GRAVEYARD WHERE DEAD AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS GO

By Alexis Kozak

SYNOPSIS: An Unknown Playwright wakes up in a graveyard with American playwright giants Arthur Miller, Wendy Wasserstein, and August Wilson. In order to get this "insult playwright" to leave them alone, the residents agree to help him get his ten-minute play published. They slip in a few lessons about making it as a playwright in America.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ARTHUR MILLER Male, late seventies. Cranky.

WENDY WASSERSTEIN Female, late fifties, early sixties. Gentle, caring, mother-like.

AUGUST WILSON Male, late fifties, early sixties. Not the brightest.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT Male, early thirties. Unknown amateur playwright.

STAGE MANAGER..... Responds to character and actor requests during the play. The Stage Manager may also play some or all of the roles from the playwrights' scripts at the beginning of each scene, as well as giving offstage voices.

SETTING

A graveyard, where dead American playwrights go.

TIME: The present.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Though there are some inside jokes and references to the theatre company for which this play was written, they should be altered to fit your specific company.

A Graveyard Where Dead American Playwrights Go was originally produced by *Polaris North, Inc.*, in New York City in December 2006 with the following cast:

STAGE MANAGER..... Matt Daly
 ARTHUR MILLER Phillip Filiato
 WENDY WASSERSTEIN Nancy Finn
 AUGUST WILSON Herb Foster Quebec
 UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT Alexis Kozak

Director Barbara Panas
 Stage Manager Cara DeCicco

This play is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Carol Anne Kozak, who showed me where the dead playwrights were buried.

And to Barbara, who thought they had more to say.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

SETTING:

A graveyard, where dead American playwrights go. There are four blocks onstage which represent four gravestones. They are marked, in chalk, with the names of America's recently deceased playwrights: ARTHUR MILLER, WENDY WASSERSTEIN, and AUGUST WILSON. The fourth gravestone is unmarked. There is also a bench. MILLER sits on his gravestone. WASSERSTEIN sits on the bench. WILSON sits on WASSERSTEIN's grave, but with his back to the audience. They are frozen. There is a STAGE MANAGER's desk. The STAGE MANAGER's desk has a stool, a script for the play, a stopwatch, a bell. There is also a box of props, with "Props" written on it in chalk. At the desk sits, you guessed it, the STAGE MANAGER. He wears suspenders, down.

STAGE MANAGER: (To the audience.) This play is called "A Graveyard Where Dead American Playwrights Go." It's supposed to be a comedy, but I don't know. I haven't seen it yet. It was written by Alexis Kozak, directed by (Insert director's name.). In it, you will see (Insert actors' names.). We are in the cemetery where dead American playwrights go. Are there any playwrights in the audience? Well, pay attention, because you might come here, too, someday. I'm the Stage Manager. If you need anything, just holler. People usually do. I respond to requests from the actors and from the characters. That's my purpose: to help people. I also get to play a lot of roles, too. I like that.

STAGE MANAGER pulls his SUSPENDERS up to become **THE OLD MAN**. **THE OLD MAN** speaks with an old man voice and has an old man body.

You've joined us just in time. We are about to watch a play called *Death of a Salesman*. You may have heard of it. It's by Arthur Miller. It won the Pulitzer Prize. Arthur Miller seems to think that's quite a big deal. Excuse me a moment. I have to get ready to play Linda Loman.

STAGE MANAGER puts on a black veil and stands over MILLER's grave, a mock Linda Loman from the soliloquy from the end of "Death of a Salesman."

When **STAGE MANAGER** begins to speak, the playwrights unfreeze.

A flute begins, not far away, playing behind her speech. The **STAGE MANAGER** has a stopwatch and times himself, starting when he starts to talk.

STAGE MANAGER: (With grand histrionics! As Linda Loman.) "I'll be with you in a minute. Go on, Charley . . . I want to, just for a minute. I never had a chance to say goodbye."

MILLER: (To **STAGE MANAGER**, hurrying him along.) Go! Go! Go!

WASSERSTEIN: (From the bench.) She's never going to finish this soliloquy in a minute. It's impossible.

STAGE MANAGER stops acting.

STAGE MANAGER: That was twenty seconds.

MILLER: Well, maybe if you weren't so grand about your acting.

STAGE MANAGER: Shall I do it again?

MILLER: Yes. Start talking right away. As soon as the flute goes, you go. (To the sound operator, offstage.) Start the flute again. (Flute starts.) Aaaaaaannnnnd go!

STAGE MANAGER: (Missing the start of the flute.) "Forgive me, dear. I can't cry."

MILLER: No! Cut! Stop! (Flute and **STAGE MANAGER** stop.) You start talking at the same time that the flute starts. Do you think you can do this for me?

STAGE MANAGER: Yes.

MILLER: (To offstage sound operator.) Take the flute from the beginning . . . Flute! (Flute starts. To **STAGE MANAGER**.) And, go! Go, go, go!

STAGE MANAGER: *(In a rush.)* Okay. Where was I? *(Rattling off a list.)* "Just for a minute. No chance to say goodbye. Can't cry." Yadda, yadda, yadda.

Flute continues over scene.

WASSERSTEIN: I'll bet she could do this in a theatrical minute.

STAGE MANAGER stops acting.

MILLER: I hate theatrical minutes. They're like football minutes. They can last a half hour.

Flute music continues. AUGUST WILSON spins around on WASSERSTEIN's grave. He holds a bucket of chicken.

WILSON: Art, if you were so worried about being realistic, maybe you should have written, "Give me a little time, Charlie," or "Can I have five minutes, Charlie?" Something like that.

WASSERSTEIN: What are you doing in my grave?

WILSON: *(Suggestively.)* I was getting me some of that forty calorie a teaspoonful bleached white sugar.

WASSERSTEIN: August, I told you already. I haven't any milk. I haven't any eggs. And, most of all, I haven't any bleached white sugar. My cupboard is bare. Get it?

WILSON: *(Suggestively.)* I like your cupboard bare.

WASSERSTEIN: Arthur, tell him to stop.

MILLER: August, stop.

WILSON: Ok, dead white male.

WASSERSTEIN: August.

WILSON: What? I ain't telling him something he don't know. He's dead, he's white, and he's a male.

MILLER: Where'd you get that chicken?

WILSON: From that guy.

A head appears in the grave that is unmarked.

MILLER: *(To the UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT.)* Hey, fella. *(This goes unnoticed.)* Hey, pal.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT speaks in gibberish.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: *(With hands pressed over his ears.)* Ohaisaejlkckhhjfsalkfdg. *(Stop the flute!)*

MILLER: What did he say?

WASSERSTEIN: I couldn't understand him.

WILSON: I think he said, stop the flute.

MILLER: *(To STAGE MANAGER.)* Would you stop the damn flute? *(Flute stops.)* Hey, kid. What did you say your name was?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: *(Signaling towards the blank tombstone.)* Alkkjdsjkjkc,mnwlkriyereitythjggk. *(If you don't have a name, you don't have a voice.)*

WILSON: I think he said, if you don't have a name, you don't have a voice.

MILLER: You speak gibberish?

WILSON: I spent a lot of time in Pittsburg.

WASSERSTEIN: Let's give him a name, so he can talk. *(UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT motions the symbols for "pen and paper.")* Write it down? You want us to write it down.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: *(Signaling to the blank gravestone.)* Alkkerkhjsdfkflj. *(Do you have a pen?)*

WASSERSTEIN: *(As if talking to someone who does not speak English.)* No pen here.

WILSON: I have chalk.

MILLER: Where the hell did you get chalk?

WILSON: *(Laughs.)* I smuggled it in the only place they didn't check.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT becomes excited by the appearance of the chalk. UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT begins to make wild gesticulations towards the blank stone.

WASSERSTEIN: I think he wants us to write his name on the stone.

WILSON: What are we gonna call him?

MILLER: Let me get real creative here and call him the Unknown Playwright.

WILSON: I like it. It's got a nice ring.

WASSERSTEIN: Well, write it.

WILSON signals the STAGE MANAGER. The STAGE MANAGER takes chalk from WILSON and scrawls "UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT" on the UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT's gravestone.

MILLER: Now, what have you been trying to say, boy?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: *(Gasping, as if out of breath from the gibberish ordeal. To MILLER.)* What does the flute mean?

MILLER: How the hell should I know? I'm not a director.

WASSERSTEIN: We use sound effects in our plays sometimes.

WILSON: As symbols.

MILLER: The vaguer the better.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: That sound effect thing is a great idea. I'm going to try that in one of my plays.

MILLER, WASSERSTEIN, WILSON, and the STAGE MANAGER all laugh.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: What?

WILSON: You're dead.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Dead?

MILLER: These gravestones, not a theatrical convention. They are real.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: How did I die?

WASSERSTEIN: The worst thing about this place is that we don't get the Writers' Guild Newsletter, so we don't have a real connection to what goes on in the world of the living. If I knew you were coming, I would have baked you a cake. Except baking a cake is a typical female errand and therefore repressive.

WILSON: We knew somebody died. We just didn't know who.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: How did you know?

WILSON: There's a bell that rings when an American playwright dies.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Wow! So, I am actually considered an American playwright?

WASSERSTEIN: Well, the bell rang.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Holy shit! That's awesome.

MILLER: Language, language.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I forgot, you old guys don't like language in the theatre. Wow, I'm a playwright.

MILLER: You don't have a name?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I don't have a name for myself yet. I'm no one you would have ever heard of.

WASSERSTEIN: Are you Adam Rapp?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Who?

WASSERSTEIN: Exactly.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: *(Climbing out of his grave.)* Well, who are you guys? *(To MILLER.)* You I recognize from the flute and the soliloquy. You are Arthur Miller. *(To WASSERSTEIN and WILSON.)* Now, you two I'm not so sure about.

WILSON: *(To WASSERSTEIN.)* Give me my five bucks.

WASSERSTEIN: For what?

WILSON: They always recognize Arthur.

MILLER: With a face like this?

WILSON: Why's Arthur the recognizable one?

WASSERSTEIN: He married up.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I'm sorry. Who are you? *(WASSERSTEIN and WILSON signal to their gravestones.)* Oh, of course. Wendy Wasserstein and August Wilson. Holy cow! You two are famous. I guess what they say is true. It doesn't matter if you have nothing to say, as long as you say it real loud.

WILSON laughs aloud, enjoying the little joke.

WASSERSTEIN: August, stop laughing. I don't think he meant that as a joke.

MILLER: You know what? I don't like this lad very much.

WASSERSTEIN: He's a little rude and irreverent.

MILLER: August?

WILSON: The boy gave me a bucket of fried chicken. I ain't complaining.

MILLER: Young man, I think the three of us would appreciate it if you just stuck to your own grave and left us alone.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Absolutely not.

WILSON: Excuse me?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I'm an insult playwright.

MILLER: I've never heard of that.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: It's easy. You start with just the smallest bit of information on someone and then you just keep hitting them on it. Like you, Wendy. I know you write boring feminist plays. August, you write plays about black people. Arthur, you write plays about Jewish capitalists who can't live with themselves any longer. So then I just make jokes about it.

WASSERSTEIN: Hmm.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Yeah. It's a little reductive, but it makes people laugh.

WILSON: Hmm.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Yeah, I like it.

WASSERSTEIN: So, you're sort of like my friend Christopher Durang.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Oh, no. He's a serious sitcom writer; I just string a bunch of jokes together.

WILSON: So what do we need to do for you to leave us alone?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Well . . .

WASSERSTEIN: He probably wants us to write him a play.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Not exactly.

WASSERSTEIN: What? You want us all to combine and write you one play together?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: That's very Lincoln Center of you, but no.

WILSON: What, then?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Well, I have this ten-minute play.

WASSERSTEIN: And?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I want you to help me get it published.

MILLER: We're dead.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Yeah, but you still get stuff published after you're dead.

WILSON: That's because we were good to begin with, so people dug up stuff we weren't done with, finished it in a slapdash style, and published it.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I don't see the problem.

MILLER: We are good. You're a hack.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: (*Grimacing.*) An insult hack. Who is stuck with you three for the next millennia or so. And believe me, with you as inspiration, I'm just getting warmed up.

MILLER: This ought to be good.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I can do it. I just need a shot. I never got my shot.

WILSON: How about a writing sample, so we can get a sense of your style.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Oh, don't give me that writing workshop b.s. I know you people never really read that stuff.

MILLER: He's right.

WASSERSTEIN: I always read it.

WILSON: You would.

STAGE MANAGER sneakingly places the Writers' Guild Newsletter on his desk and draws UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT's attention to it.
STAGE MANAGER and UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT trade a look.
UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT looks at the newsletter, puts it behind his back, and turns to the playwrights.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I'll tell you what. Not only will I leave you alone for the next millennium, I also have something else to trade that might be of interest to you.

WASSERSTEIN: What?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: (*UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT holds up the NEWSLETTER.*) The Writers' Guild Newsletter. Most recent edition.

MILLER: How did you . . . ?

WILSON: (*Winks.*) Did you smuggle that in the only way you know how?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: No. I got a fully furnished grave. They must have thought I was just here for pilot season.

MILLER: Let me see it.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: (*Pulling newsletter back.*) Do we have a deal?

MILLER, WASSERSTEIN, and WILSON trade significant looks.

MILLER: I don't know . . .

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I just want to be remembered the way you guys were remembered. (*Holding up newsletter.*) So what do you say?

MILLER: Give it here.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT hands the newsletter to MILLER. MILLER, WASSERSTEIN, and WILSON crowd around the newsletter.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: You guys changed the face of American theatre. I want to change something, have some positive influence on others.

MILLER: Having one ten-minute play published won't change anything.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: It'll help. Then I can e-mail all my friends from college and tell them I'm a published playwright.

WASSERSTEIN: You get e-mail down here?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I have a wireless connection. Look, I want theatrical fame so badly. I want it so badly.

WASSERSTEIN: Theatrical fame is not like other fame. Even when you're famous, nobody knows who you are.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: That's awesome!

MILLER: Where do you want it published?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: American Theatre.

MILLER: Pseudo-intellectual tripe.

WASSERSTEIN: It's onanistic. That means "masturbatory," to any of you people who didn't know what that word meant.

WILSON: That's what I'm talking about.

MILLER: Oh, Wendy, please.

WASSERSTEIN: What? A woman can't talk about her own body in public?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: (*To WASSERSTEIN.*) Onanism aside, that's where your last play was published. (*To WILSON.*) Yours, too. (*To MILLER.*) You haven't written a good play in years.

MILLER: Aaack. They can't tell the difference anyway. The only reason to publish a play is so people can start to fuck it up. *Death of a Salesman* set in Tokyo, with some Asian guy who can't pronounce L's -- "Wirry Roman."

WILSON: P. Diddy in *The Piano Lesson*.

WASSERSTEIN: The Pussycat Dolls in *Uncommon Women and Others*. They were the "others."

MILLER: You lose control of the thing the second you give it away. As a young playwright, you want to keep control of your work as long as possible. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. You know what I'm saying, son?

STAGE MANAGER rings bell: ding.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: What was that?

MILLER: That's the American playwright death knell.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: That? It's so . . . tinny.

MILLER: What did you want? The bells of Saint Peters? We ain't Shakespeare.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: There's going to be nobody left to write plays in our country.

WILSON: Screw the plays. Who's going to teach in the M.F.A. writing programs?

MILLER: Unpublished hacks.

WASSERSTEIN: Those who can't do, teach.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: (*Slightly hurt.*) How about those who can't teach, do.

WASSERSTEIN: (*A realization.*) Is that what you were? A teacher?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: (*Cough.*) Maybe.

MILLER: What college?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: (*Cough.*) High school.

WILSON: High school? He taught high school.

WASSERSTEIN: Oh, that's so cute. You were the drama teacher.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Hey, come on.

WASSERSTEIN: Aww. He's feeling insecure.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: (Cough.) No, I'm not.

WASSERSTEIN: Aww. Were you part of some rinky-dink membership company in New York so you could feel like you were part of the theatre scene?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Polaris North is not a rinky-dink membership company. I'll have you know there has been some fine work done there . . . in the seventies. There's a whole packet about it.

STAGE MANAGER hands **MILLER** a new edition of the newsletter. **MILLER** and **WILSON** crowd around the newsletter. **MILLER** leafs through to the obituaries.

WASSERSTEIN: Aww. He's so cute.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: You guys think you're better than me.

MILLER: (Referring to newsletter.) Nope, but Albee will.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Edward Albee?

WILSON: Yep, that was him. He just died.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Albee's coming here?

WASSERSTEIN: He should be here any minute.

MILLER: He's gonna rip you a new one.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: What do I do?

MILLER: Don't tell him you teach high school.

Looking offstage.

WASSERSTEIN: Here he comes. Hide. Hide.

MILLER, WASSERSTEIN, and WILSON run frantically around the graves. **The UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT** hides behind his grave. **WILSON** tries to hide behind his own grave, finds that it is too small to cover him, grabs the **UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT's** grave, places it on top of his own, and hides behind it. A moment later, the **UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT** realizes what has happened.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Hey, you took my grave. Hey, what about my play?

MILLER: (Popping out from behind his grave.) Forget your play surviving you! You've got to survive Albee.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT looks around for a place to hide and then dives behind the bench.

LIGHTS DOWN. END SCENE ONE.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

The gravestones of **MILLER, WILSON, WASSERSTEIN** and the **UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT** have been moved to the opposite side of the stage of the **BENCH**. The four playwrights sit in a **FROZEN TABLEU**, ready to watch **WILSON's** piece.

The STAGE MANAGER is at his desk, and he begins to speak from there.

STAGE MANAGER: (To the audience.) About thirty seconds have gone by. A lot has happened in this world since then. Edward Albee can be seen way over there near Belle Reve, doing mint julep body shots off of Tennessee Williams. The chalk of the grave markers has gotten bitten away the smallest fraction of an inch by the stagelights. . . well, I guess that's supposed to be by the lack of the stage lights. We'll have to fix that in the next draft of the play. All that can happen in thirty seconds, especially a theatrical thirty seconds. But all in all, things are much the same as they were thirty seconds ago.

The STAGE MANAGER pulls up his SUSPENDERS and becomes THE OLD MAN.

August Wilson wrote many scenes about African-Americans and pianos, none finer than this one that you are about to see. Watch for the thinly veiled conflict between the old and the new as two characters argue over whether to keep a family heirloom piano carved with traditional African images. I'll be playing both characters. That gives me the right to say a few more things about it. Human beings were made to fight about past and present. About change. And we ain't the only ones interested in the outcome of this play. Generations of unknown American playwrights are watching just out of sight of the audience and actors, for the change that is to come, to see how it will all turn out. The play gets serious now for awhile.

It's Pittsburgh, 1937.

STAGE MANAGER pulls down ONE SUSPENDER to become TWO BLACK ACTORS. Both characters have different voices and bodies. He crosses to the BENCH, which will serve as the PIANO for this scene. The two black characters play tug-of-war with the bench/piano during the scene.

BLACK ACTOR 1: Yo sho as hell ain't taking that piano out my house.

BLACK ACTOR 2: I sho as hell is.

TRAIN WHISTLE AND RUMBLE, as if a train is coming through the middle of the set.

BLACK ACTOR 1: Aaah. A ghost.

WILSON: (Imitating the train whistle.) Whoo! Whoo!

ALL: (Other playwrights join in, enjoying WILSON's enthusiasm.) Whoo! Whoo!

BLACK ACTOR 1: The moral of the story is, when faced with progress or holding onto your roots . . .

BLACK ACTOR 2: . . . always hold onto your roots.

WILSON laughs uncontrollably, unable to make himself stop, barely able to breathe. This turns into WILSON clapping, uncontrollably . . . and laughing. WILSON's enthusiasm causes MILLER, WASSERSTEIN, and the UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT to join in the clapping.

STAGE MANAGER bows.

The UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT and the STAGE MANAGER begin to put the gravestones back in order.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: You don't get tired of watching your own plays over and over?

WILSON: Well, it's better than liver cancer.

MILLER: It's supposed to be a punishment.

WASSERSTEIN: Watching our own plays over and over and contemplating their flaws. For example, August constantly promotes African-Americans flying under the radar. That they should keep quiet and work from the inside.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: She is right. It does seem that you think African-Americans should accept their plight.

WILSON: That's the problem right there.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: What?

WILSON: It ain't a plight.

WASSERSTEIN: So you're saying living in the projects, let's say, is good?

WILSON: Good? They're great.

MILLER: Great?

WILSON: It's like an African village.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: It is?

WILSON: Albeit a tall African village.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Is that how they get so tall? From living in tall buildings?

WILSON: No, no, no. Architecture 101. The dwelling reflects the occupant. They are built tall because tall people live in them.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Oooh.

WILSON: See, what white people don't understand is that we haven't accepted assimilation. We live separate from white American society, in an enclave, living the way we want to.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Huh. I never thought about it like that.

WILSON: Don't tell nobody, though.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Why not?

WILSON: Cause then they'll try to disperse us.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Yeah?

WILSON: Oh yes, my brother. The one thing they don't want is a lot of strong, smart African Americans living together.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Who's "they"?

WILSON: You know. "They," "them," . . . "those."

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Huh.

WILSON: So they introduce the victim mentality to us.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: (Suspiciously.) This is starting to get complicated. Ever heard of Ockham's razor? The simplest explanation is the right one?

WILSON: No. Ever heard of Hakeem's shank? You shut the hell up, 'cause I'm talking?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: . . . I apologize for interrupting you, sir.

WILSON: They make us feel like victims for being in the projects, when in actuality, we should be looking at it as an opportunity.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I know. A lot of my poor artist friends would love to live in housing projects. It's like getting a playwrighting grant from the government.

WILSON: I mean for African-Americans to look at it as an opportunity for isolation and unification.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Whoa! That's a little scary.

WILSON: No shit, Sherlock.

WASSERSTEIN: It fosters the kind of unification that comes from attending an elite all-women's college, like Mount Holyoke in Massachusetts.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: And you can change all of that with playwrighting?

WILSON: I hope so. Only how many black people you know gonna pay seventy-five bucks to go to Broadway to see one of my plays?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Maybe the new mayor of Newark?

WILSON: He wants to ruin African culture by taking us out of the projects. We gotta get to the people who don't know.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Huh.

WILSON: Playwriting is subterfuge. You gotta hide what you're saying under the surface.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I know what subterfuge means.

WILSON: You gotta encrypt a message in the story.

MILLER: Whoa! Keep the Bloods and the Crypts out of this.

WILSON: That was gonna be my next play. *The Bloody Crypt*.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Huh. So you're not just a fried chicken-eating stereotype.

WILSON: I'm just a man who happens to enjoy a nice piece of the Colonel's original. My race should be irrelevant in the matter. As a matter of fact, Arthur wanted some. I just chose not to give it to him. Does that make me a racial stereotype?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I guess not.

WILSON: You don't sound so sure. (To STAGE MANAGER.) Excuse me. Hey, excuse me. Could you get Art here a nice bucket of fried chicken?

STAGE MANAGER: Sure.

STAGE MANAGER gives MILLER a second bucket of fried chicken, along with napkins, plates, and forks. MILLER, WASSERSTEIN, and WILSON eat this chicken during the rest of the scene.

WILSON: There we go. I can tell the audience feels more comfortable about it now, too. Racism averted.

STAGE MANAGER rings bell three times: DING! DING! DING!

MILLER: The newsletter! Let me see the newsletter!

STAGE MANAGER hands MILLER the NEWSLETTER. MILLER flies through to the obituaries page.

MILLER: Richard Greenberg, Donald Marguiles, and Neil Labute!
WASSERSTEIN: There goes the neighborhood.
WILSON: How did they die?

MILLER: A freak playwrighting accident. It says they were participating in a playwrighting workshop at Lincoln Center when Neil LaBute was stricken with a severe case of potty mouth.
WASSERSTEIN: That's terrible.

MILLER: The highly contagious affliction quickly spread to the other two playwrights, who were sitting in close proximity to LaBute. All three were transported to Roosevelt Hospital. Labute, with the most severe case, died en route. Marguiles and Greenberg hung on until the early hours of the morning. The three universities where they taught will hold memorial services later this week. Since this is the Writers' Guild Newsletter, the editors of the newsletter, namely, me, Christopher Durang, would like to take this opportunity to remind our writers that there is no known cure for the sometimes fatal playwrighting potty mouth, so we suggest you simply don't do it. P.S. Hi, Wendy.

WASSERSTEIN: Hi, Chris.

MILLER: You gotta be careful about potty mouth, kid.

WASSERSTEIN: It happens to a lot of younger writers.

WILSON: You gotta know how to use potty.

MILLER returns newsletter to STAGE MANAGER.

STAGE MANAGER places UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT's script - - worn, torn, highlighted, rolled up - - on top of UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT's grave.

WASSERSTEIN takes and holds up the script.

WASSERSTEIN: What's this?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Don't touch that!

WASSERSTEIN: Is this your play? (*Making a show of weighing it.*)
No Anna Karenina.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT tries to get his script back from WASSERSTEIN. WASSERSTEIN, MILLER, and WILSON play keep-away with the script.

WILSON: Can we read it?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: . . . um . . . I don't let anyone read my work until it's completely finished.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT gets his script back. MILLER, WILSON, and WASSERSTEIN move their grave stones together, putting UNKNOWN's in the middle, so that they can have seats and a table to eat their chicken.

WASSERSTEIN: Regional theatres would have hated you.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Why?

MILLER: They like you to have as little of the play written as possible.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Why?

WILSON: "Developmental Programs."

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I thought "Developmental Programs" were for retarded people.

WASSERSTEIN: So young, yet so cynical.

MILLER: They'd prefer no writing at all. Just a couple of notes. That's it.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: They take it on faith?

WILSON: Yep.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: So, how's an unknown person like me supposed to catch a break?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT looks to each of them for an answer. One by one, they look away. UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT looks away, defeated and betrayed.

WASSERSTEIN: (*Pitying him.*) Oh, Unknown Playwright . . .

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: No, I get it. The playwrighting pool is so competitive, you can't afford to help anybody.

WILSON: Oh, come on, Unknown.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: The "Developmental Programs" sound great.

MILLER: You don't want to get wrapped up in one of those programs.

WILSON: They really know how to ruin a good play.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: How?

MILLER: They make you sit through talk back sessions.

WASSERSTEIN: Did you ever sit through a talk back session?

WILSON: Ninety year old Jewish ladies telling you it was "very nice."

MILLER: And twenty-five year old hipsters telling you it wasn't edgy enough.

WASSERSTEIN: They want to be able to take credit for your play.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Well, aren't they somewhat entitled?

WILSON: If the playwright didn't write nothing, there'd be nothing to say.

MILLER: You wrote the puppy, not them.

WASSERSTEIN: The play always comes first. You do not let a theatre slap their name on your play, I don't care what they've done for you. You keep control of that play as long as you can.

MILLER: Notice we ain't buried with any artistic directors.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Ok, so, how do you beat the system?

WASSERSTEIN: Ok, but I need your word as an American playwright.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: You've got it.

WASSERSTEIN: Ok. (*Looks around for eavesdroppers.*) You finish your play first.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: What do you mean?

WASSERSTEIN: You write your play, work through your drafts, finish up your final version . . . then, just send them the first draft.

MILLER: They rent you a hotel near the theatre, you go watch their sucky rehearsals, sit back and collect a paycheck every week as you hand in subsequent drafts of a play you've already got done.

WILSON: One time, I just copied out a couple of monologues in cursive. On a napkin. I know they couldn't even read it.

WASSERSTEIN: Sometimes, I just read it into a tape recorder.

WILSON: Better yet, just send them your outline.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I don't like to outline.

WASSERSTEIN: Oh, boy. You're one of those.

MILLER: So, using the I-refuse-to-outline method, how many plays have you completed in the last five years?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Um . . . one.

MILLER: Uh huh. Well, I can't figure out why I'm acclaimed playwright Arthur Miller and you're the Unknown Playwright.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Well, that's easy. It's because you've published more plays than I have. Man, I'll never be able to do it as well as you guys.

WASSERSTEIN: Oh, don't do that. Don't pity yourself. I can't stand pity.

MILLER: Pity has no place in American playwrighting.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: You're either born a playwright, or you're not.

WASSERSTEIN: That is simply not true.

MILLER: That's right. I was born a sex god, chose to be a playwright.

WILSON: Why don't you show us what you've got?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: No. You'll think it's terrible.

WILSON: Maybe we can help you fix it up enough for . . .

WASSERSTEIN: For "Theatre Teacher" to publish it. That's a real magazine, isn't it?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Yes. But nobody reads it.

MILLER: Well, do you want it published or not?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Yeah, I want it published, but not in some rinky-dink educator's magazine that publishes student plays.

WASSERSTEIN: Well, soooooorry!

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Thanks for the effort.

WASSERSTEIN: Oh, come on. Don't mope around. You're gonna bring the whole energy down around here.

WILSON: Can you at least tell us what it's about?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: It's about a writer--

MILLER: Rule Number One of Playwriting, don't write about writers. They bury themselves in books. They don't interact with people. They're boring. The only people interested in reading about writers are other writers. You want drama, you write about people with jobs.

WILSON: Or with no jobs.
WASSERSTEIN: Or who are students.
WILSON: With no jobs.
MILLER: Or who are independently wealthy.
WILSON: With no jobs.
WASSERSTEIN: Or who are from a different decade.
MILLER: Or who are Jewish.
WASSERSTEIN: Or who are Jewish students.
WILSON: Or who are Jewish students with no jobs.
WASSERSTEIN: Or who are Jewish students with no jobs from a different decade.
MILLER: But never write about writers.
WASSERSTEIN: Rule Number One.
UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: What's Rule Number Two?
WILSON: There is no Rule Number Two, only a Rule Number One.
MILLER: So, your guy's not a writer, is he?
UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: No, no. He's just this guy that wants something real bad.
MILLER: And something stands in the way of him getting this thing he wants, right?
UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Something real big. Something he doesn't know if he'll be able to beat.
MILLER: Like capitalism!
WILSON: Like the man!
WASSERSTEIN: Like men!
UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: It raises the question, how do you struggle against something you can't beat? Is it worth it?
WILSON: It's heroic. Knowing you'll never win, but fighting the good fight anyway.
UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Exactly.
WASSERSTEIN: Kid, cover your ears for a minute.
UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: What?
WASSERSTEIN: Cover your ears. I don't want you to hear what I'm going to say.
UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT covers his ears.

WASSERSTEIN: Hum something.
UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT hums.
MILLER: What?
WASSERSTEIN: He's right. Playwriting shouldn't have to end when you die.
WILSON: Our hand -- our thoughts -- reach back from beyond the grave.
WASSERSTEIN: To show the way.
WILSON: To influence others.
WASSERSTEIN: That's all the kid wants.
MILLER: So?
WASSERSTEIN: So, let's help him out.
WILSON: I'm all for that.
MILLER: We're putting our reputations on the line for him.
WASSERSTEIN: I've got a feeling about him.
WILSON: Come on, Arthur.
MILLER: Did you see him talking to the Stage Manager during the last blackout? I don't trust him.
WILSON: Arthur, you don't trust anybody.
MILLER: They were all buddy-buddy.
WASSERSTEIN: You're being paranoid.
WILSON: So what do we do?
WASSERSTEIN: I am going to send his script to my good friends at the Actors' Theatre of Louisville.
WILSON: How you gonna get it out of here?
WASSERSTEIN: The Stage Manager will take it.
MILLER: I don't know, guys.
WILSON: Oh, come on, Art.
MILLER: Fine. But against my better judgment.
WASSERSTEIN: Kid! Hey, kid! You can uncover your ears.
(**UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT** uncovers his ears and stops humming.) We're going to help you out.
UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Help me out?
WILSON: Help you get published.
UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: How?

WASSERSTEIN: We'll tell you during the blackout.

WASSERSTEIN, MILLER, WILSON, and UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT
freeze.

STAGE MANAGER: (As *THE OLD MAN*.) And so another blackout
came to pass.

BLACKOUT. END SCENE TWO.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

MILLER, WILSON, and the UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT are gathered
on one side of the stage around the bench in a frozen tableau, getting
ready to watch **WASSERSTEIN's** piece. **WASSERSTEIN** sits apart
from them, on her gravestone, also frozen.

The gravestones of **MILLER, WILSON, and the UNKNOWN
PLAYWRIGHT** have been pushed together to create a raised stage
for the performance of **WASSERSTEIN's** piece.

STAGE MANAGER: (To the audience, reading from the stage
directions in the script.) "Women of ages from early twenties to
early forties are onstage. They are Wasserstein women:
attractive, successful, feminist, educated, witty, feminist. They
have just had a party or gathering."

When the **STAGE MANAGER** steps onto the "stage," the playwrights
unfreeze.

STAGE MANAGER plays all three of the **WASSERSTEIN** women, in
forensic competition style, with a different voice and body for each
woman.

WOMAN 3: Oh, you are great women!

WOMAN 2: Outstanding women!

WOMAN 3: Super-duper women!

WOMAN 1: Uncanny women!
WOMAN 2: Uncommon women!
WOMAN 3: Really neat women!
WOMAN 1: Fantastic women!

*Music starts to play under the scene, something feminist, maybe by
Tori Amos. STAGE MANAGER* begins to dance, as a feminist
woman.

WASSERSTEIN: No music!

Music continues.

WOMAN 1: I'm weird! You're weird! We're all weird!

WOMAN 3: (Speaking very quickly.) But "weird" is a feminist way of
saying "special" and that being weird is okay.

Music continues.

WASSERSTEIN: No music!

WOMAN 1: I love you.

WOMAN 2: I love you.

WOMAN 3: I love you.

Women 1, 2, and 3 hug each other.

STAGE MANAGER dances to the feminist music.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT, MILLER, and WILSON applaud. **STAGE
MANAGER** bows.

WASSERSTEIN: Damn it, damn it, damn it! Why does there always
have to be music? That's so masculine.

MILLER: How is it masculine? It's music.

WASSERSTEIN: How many shows have you seen that don't have
music?

MILLER: A few.

WASSERSTEIN: That's my point. It's common. And this play is about what is uncommon.

WILSON: Why does "common" have to mean "masculine"?

WASSERSTEIN: It just does. Okay?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Because it's predominant.

WASSERSTEIN: (To MILLER, indicating UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT.) See? And I didn't even have to tell him.

Music continues.

WASSERSTEIN: (To STAGE MANAGER.) Now take that freakin' music out!

Music stops.

MILLER: Frankly, your plays could use a little music.

WASSERSTEIN: They are intended to be terse.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Filled instead with the music of feminism.

WASSERSTEIN: I can't tell if you are making fun of me or not.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Don't worry. You'll know when I am.

STAGE MANAGER rings bell once: DING!

STAGE MANAGER hands MILLER the newsletter.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Who died?

MILLER consults newsletter obituary page.

MILLER: (Surprised.) It's not a death.

WASSERSTEIN: Well, what is it? A better dental plan?

MILLER: Worse.

WILSON: A new Sam Shepard play?

MILLER: Better.

WASSERSTEIN: What could be better than two brothers trying to come to terms with an alcoholic or absent father?

MILLER: I didn't say a lot better.

WILSON: Well, what is it?

MILLER: The kid got published.

MILLER hands UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT the newsletter.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I did?

WASSERSTEIN: Congratulations! As the French say, "I fete you to the stars."

WILSON: Good job, kid. As the crazy people in the park say, "I fete you to the birds."

MILLER: Nice work, kid.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Thanks, guys. Where did I get published?

MILLER and UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT consult the newsletter.

MILLER: Actor's Theatre of Louisville, Ten-Minute Play Festival, Three Thousand Four Hundred Sixty-First Edition.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: (Disappointed.) Well, it's not the Sam French Off-Off Broadway Play Festival.

MILLER: What the hell? Did you want to be published or not?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Yeah. But I kind of wanted a production in New York.

WILSON: You haven't had a production in New York.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Real playwrights have had a production in New York.

WASSERSTEIN: You just said you were a member of Polaris North.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I said I was a member. I never said I had a production.

MILLER: He's a virgin.

WASSERSTEIN: Oh, come on. You're a real playwright.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I just wanted one New York production.

WASSERSTEIN: You don't care where?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Anywhere.

WASSERSTEIN: *(To the audience.)* I think I might be able to think of a place we might be able to convince to produce one of your plays.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Really?

WASSERSTEIN: As long as you're willing to clean the lobby and endure a weekly e-mail.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Thanks, Wendy.

WASSERSTEIN: Oh, and you'll need a two hundred and twenty-five dollar annual membership fee. Three hundred for a key.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: What's wrong with the place? Is it a dump?

WASSERSTEIN: It's a little old-fashioned. It could use a little work. But it's a neat little space.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I wasn't born yesterday. People only say, "It's a neat little space," when there's something wrong with it.

Offstage, loud sound of a backhoe tractor.

STAGE MANAGER enters as **CONSTRUCTION GUY**. He wears a hard hat and carries a shovel and clipboard. He has a **CONSTRUCTION GUY** voice, maybe Boston or Brooklyn or New Jersey.

All actors look offstage at the backhoe.

MILLER, **WASSERSTEIN**, and **WILSON** run to protect their gravestones.

MILLER: A tractor?

WILSON: Actually, that's called a backhoe.

MILLER: Well, you'd know about black hoes.

WASSERSTEIN: I think he said "backhoe," and not "black ho."

MILLER: What's the difference, really?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: That's a pretty cool sound effect. It raises the question, do we get out of the way of progress, or do we hold onto our roots?

WASSERSTEIN: And by we, you mean, do old playwrights get out of the way of new playwrights.

STAGE MANAGER: Actually, we used a sound effect because we couldn't afford to bring a real backhoe onstage.

MILLER: Who died and made you producer?

WASSERSTEIN: The kid's right about the sound effect. It is pretty symbolic.

STAGE MANAGER: Actually, I'm here for him. We're moving you. *(Waving offstage to the backhoe.)* Bring her in, boys.

Sound of backhoe starting up and moving.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: *(Yelling over the sound of the backhoe.)* Wait. Wait! Why?

STAGE MANAGER consults his clip board.

STAGE MANAGER: Turns out you were in the wrong graveyard. We're moving you to the graveyard where dead American high school teachers go.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: But I'm an American playwright.

STAGE MANAGER: You are?

STAGE MANAGER signals backhoe to stop. *Sound of backhoe stops.*

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I've published.

STAGE MANAGER: You have? *(Checking clipboard.)* Where?

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Actor's Theatre of Louisville National Ten-Minute Play Festival, Three Thousand Four Hundred Sixty-First Edition.

WASSERSTEIN: It says it right here in the newsletter.

STAGE MANAGER: Oh, come on. Everybody knows ten-minute plays are the invention of pseudo-intellectuals who care more about form than they do about content.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: Oh, give me a break. Published is published.

STAGE MANAGER: Oh, come on. You're not going to give me a hard time, are ya? I get off in ten minutes.
WASSERSTEIN: Just enough time to read his play.
UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I'm not going anywhere.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT picks up his GRAVESTONE, runs to the bench, and sits on the bench side-by-side with the gravestone.

STAGE MANAGER: (Consulting clipboard.) Fine. Well, let's see what else we've got. You're a teacher, right? I've got three positions just open up in three very well respected M.F.A. playwrighting programs. But you'd have to go back to the world of the living.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I can get one of those jobs?

STAGE MANAGER: Oh, sure. A published ten-minute play more than qualifies you for one of them jobs.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: (To the playwrights.) I'm sorry, guys.

WASSERSTEIN: Hey, it's a great opportunity.

STAGE MANAGER: Well, pack it up, move it out.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT puts his gravestone back in place and grabs his few belongings, tied in a bandana on a stick.

MILLER: Remember, don't let anybody tell you what to do with your play.

WILSON: And remember Rule Number One. No plays about playwrights.

WASSERSTEIN: Send us your reviews.

WILSON: Send us some chicken.

UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT: I will. Thank you, guys. You've helped me more than you will ever know.

"Bad Day" by Daniel Powter plays, suggesting American Idol. In slow motion, UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT says goodbye to each character individually and then exits.

MILLER: I kind of grew to like the kid. I wish he was staying around.

WASSERSTEIN: (Honestly and sweetly, not harshly.) Can you imagine watching the piece of crap that he wrote for years to come? It's probably terrible.

WILSON: I think he had some flair.

MILLER: He had heart.

WASSERSTEIN: That he did.

They climb out of their graves and move towards the grave of the UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT.

STAGE MANAGER places UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT's script in UNKNOWN's grave.

MILLER looks into UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT's grave.

MILLER: Hey, what's that?

WASSERSTEIN reaches down into the grave.

WASSERSTEIN holds up a rolled up script, beaten, rough edges, highlighted.

WASSERSTEIN: It's his script. Now we finally get to hear it.

WASSERSTEIN gives MILLER the script. She struggles to get out of the UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT's grave.

WILSON: Didn't you read it before you sent it?

WASSERSTEIN: He asked us not to.

WASSERSTEIN: Give it to the Stage Manager to read out. Oh, Stage Manager?

STAGE MANAGER: Yes?

WASSERSTEIN: Can you read this out for us, please?

STAGE MANAGER: Certainly, Wendy.

MILLER: "Wendy"? "Wendy"?! When did you two get so familiar?

WENDY hands script to STAGE MANAGER.

WASSERSTEIN: Just pick it up anywhere.

STAGE MANAGER flips through a couple of pages.

STAGE MANAGER: (As the UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT.) "You don't get tired of watching your own plays over and over?" (As WILSON.) "Well, it's better than liver cancer." (As MILLER.) "It's supposed to be a punishment." (As WASSERSTEIN.) "Watching our own plays over and over and contemplating their flaws."

MILLER: (To STAGE MANAGER.) Hey. Gimme that. (STAGE MANAGER hands MILLER the play. MILLER leafs quickly through the rest of the play.) He just wrote down everything we said. That son-of-a-bitch tricked us into writing his play for him.

WILSON: Wait. You mean we're in a play?

MILLER: We were watching his play.

WILSON: Wait. If the audience just watched this play, doesn't that mean they are dead?

STAGE MANAGER: We'll send them back, the same way we sent the Unknown Playwright back.

WILSON: Hold up. I thought that was an extenuating circumstance. You mean you can just send people back, just like that? I want to go back.

MILLER: Me, too.

WASSERSTEIN: Yeah, me three.

STAGE MANAGER: Oh, boo hoo hoo. You had your chance. Now he gets his.

WASSERSTEIN: But --

STAGE MANAGER: No butts.

MILLER: You helped him.

WASSERSTEIN: But that's not fair.

STAGE MANAGER: Didn't anybody ever help you in your miserable career?

WASSERSTEIN: Yeah, but—

STAGE MANAGER: But what? What if Shakespeare was still alive? Do you think anybody would care about Arthur Miller? Or Wendy Wasserstein? Or August Wilson? What do you want? More fame? You gotta stay dead, so other people can have a chance.

WASSERSTEIN: Wait a second. He said he wrote a ten-minute play. This was longer than ten minutes.

STAGE MANAGER: It was like a football ten minutes.

MILLER: He ripped us off.

WASSERSTEIN: Well, that explains how he knew so much about what was going on in the outside world. The Internet, and the newsletter, and the backhoe. And he dropped all of those hints. "It's about a writer who wants something real bad."

MILLER: (Ripping up UNKNOWN PLAYWRIGHT's script and stomping on it.) We were just the little people. We were the building blocks for this world he created.

WILSON: Well zippideedoodah! That kid will be bigger than any of us!

MILLER, WILSON, and WASSERSTEIN sit on their graves.

WASSERSTEIN: American playwrighting is in for a treat.

MILLER, WILSON, and WASSERSTEIN freeze.

STAGE MANAGER: *(To audience, as THE OLD MAN.)* The dead don't stay interested in the living too long. Little changes in the world of the living. More and more people are starting to lock their doors. Ain't been any performance artists in town yet, but people have heard about 'em. Summer, people come up here, walk around, laugh at the funny words on the tombstones. Words like "the," and "dead," and "six." The living don't stay interested in the dead too long, neither. The Writers' Guild Newsletter will come less and less often, until it finally fades away. *(Indicating the playwrights.)* Their plays will get done for a few more years. Then the plays will be studied in universities. Then they will be forgotten. Dug up in a thousand years, like a Minoan bowl, and studied to show us what the world was really like now. But what about the other voices? *(Beat.)* We all know something is eternal. And it ain't fame. And it ain't being published. It's helping somebody. It's humanity. *(Pause.)* Well, goodnight. You all drive safe now. Thanks for coming.

BLACKOUT.

THE END

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