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BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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Tut, Tut, Tut

FARCE. The mummy of King Tut is on the loose and he wants his liver back! After business tycoon Mortimer Tutley purchases an urn containing King Tut's liver, he receives a threatening note from King Tut demanding the liver back or "My curse I place upon your head, and you shall be the last one dead." Terrified, Tutley sends his lawyer, Bowsley, to hire a detective to go undercover as an Egyptologist to investigate. But when Bowsley arrives at the detective agency, he accidentally hires two elderly gun-toting sisters instead. When the sisters arrive at Tutley Manor, they encounter several suspicious houseguests including two IRS agents masquerading as bubbly interns, a grim housekeeper, a spoiled niece and her "heir expectant" boyfriend, a relative who has secretly "borrowed" money to cover gambling debts, and an actress obsessed with mounting a production of "Peter Pan" so she can play the role of Tinkerbell. Twists and turns abound (and a couple of bodies turn up) before anyone can unwrap this mystery!

Performance Time: Approximately 75 minutes.

Characters

(4 M, 8 F)

MAVIS PEPPER: 50s, doting aunt and amateur sleuth; wears an old-fashioned print dress or a skirt and blouse.

MAYBELLE PEPPER: 50s, Mavis' sister and amateur sleuth; wears an old-fashioned print dress or a skirt and blouse.

MORTIMER TUTLEY: 60s, antiques collector and wheelchair-bound tycoon; wears a robe or smoking jacket with an ascot.

ADELAIDE ROLL: Mortimer's attractive nurse who knows just how to take care of her patient; wears a nurse's uniform.

ETHELJEAN MOUNTEVILLE: 40s, Quincy's sister and melodramatic actress, who is obsessed with mounting a production of "Peter Pan" in which she will play Tinkerbell; moves like a silent screen actress trapped in a moldy tragedy and wears a long dramatic diaphanous gown that looks like it has seen a few too many performances.

SONORA WILLIS: IRS agent masquerading as a bubbly college advertising intern from Catchamuchie, MN.

LILLIAN VESTA: IRS agent masquerading as a bubbly college advertising intern from Tiger Eye, IN.

MRS. DRAYTON: 60s, grim housekeeper; wears a black below-the-knee dress, uses a cane, and wears her hair in a bun.

PAISLEY TUTLEY: 20s, Mortimer's niece; wears wild modern clothes and an outlandish hairstyle.

JARRED BOYNTON: 20s, Paisley's boyfriend and "heir-expectant"; wears a T-shirt, torn jeans, and has several tattoos.

QUINCY MOUNTEVILLE: 40s, son of Tutley's cousin who runs the family business, Ooch Pooch Dog Food; wears a turtleneck, jacket, and dark pants.

BOWSLEY BROWN: 40s, distinguished-looking lawyer; wears a suit and tie.

Setting

Tutley Manor, houses the world's greatest private collection of Egyptian antiquities.

Sets

Pepper Detective Agency: Played before the curtain. There is a small desk with a chair and a phone. A small file cabinet sits behind or to the side of the desk. A sign on the front of the desk reads, "Pepper Detective Agency."

Study at Tutley Manor: The room feels more like a museum than a room in a modern house. Small tables or shelves around the room are set with Egyptian objects d'art, and the walls are decorated with Egyptian tomb paintings and manuscript pieces covered in hieroglyphics. At center there is a large window with floor-to-ceiling curtains, which are drawn. Up right there is a desk with no chair behind it. One framed newspaper article hangs inconspicuously behind the desk. At left is a couch or chair grouping. At right is a fireplace with a small Egyptian coffin sitting on the mantel. Down right there is a wing entrance that leads to other areas of the house. Down left there is a wing entrance that leads to the main hall and entrance.

Hallway in Tutley Manor: Bare stage played before the curtain.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Scene 1: Pepper Detective Agency office, morning.

Scene 2: Study at Tutley Manor, several hours later.

Scene 3: Study, later that night.

ACT II

Scene 1: Study, one hour later.

Scene 2: Hallway in Tutley Manor, a few minutes later.

Scene 3: Study, a short time later.

Props

*Egyptian-looking artifacts	Paper and pencil or pen
Wheelchair	Small "ancient" scroll
Desk phone	***Mummy costume, for
4 Suitcases	Jarred
Pistol	Stack of old Christmas cards
Check	Laptop computer
Newspaper clipping	Blowgun and tiny darts
Gold beetle	Large knife (oversized
**Framed hieroglyphics and	plastic knife)
pictures	Note
Souvenir pencil holders	2 Badges
Small Egyptian coffin (use a	Red tape
tin souvenir pencil	
holder)	

*For Egyptian artifacts, spray paint old statues, vases, and other objects d'art gold and decorate with fake jewels.

**Make color copies of various Egyptian drawings and frame with cardboard for simple wall decorations.

***For a simple mummy costume, use an over-the-head mask to cover the face and either sew or glue strips of fabric torn in irregular long strips to a white sweat suit. Lightly spray paint the entire costume with gray paint to antique the costume.

Special Effects

Desk phone ringing
Clock chiming
Thunder
Lightning
Sirens
Cell phone ringing

Tut, Tut, Tutty
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*"I don't know
how I've come to be blessed
with such revolting relatives."*

—Tutley

ACT I

Scene 1

(AT RISE: *The Pepper Detective Agency office. Mavis and Maybelle enter SL, looking about admiringly. They each carry an overnight bag, which they set down.*)

MAVIS: Imagine, Maybelle, our nephew Jimmy ownin' all this!

MAYBELLE: A whole office with a desk 'n chair 'n file cabinet. (*Maybelle opens drawer of file cabinet.*) With real files in it!

MAVIS: Our Jimmy...a real detective. And a big city detective at that.

MAYBELLE: Just like in the movies.

MAVIS: I wonder... (*Mavis goes behind desk, opens a drawer.*)

MAYBELLE: What do you wonder? (*Mavis pulls out a pistol from behind the desk.*) Well, I'll be a skunk without a stinker. Put that thing away. (*Mavis drops the pistol back in the drawer with a thud.*) How come Jimmy's got one of those things lyin' around?

MAVIS: Humphrey Bogart always carried one.

MAYBELLE: Humphrey Bogart wasn't our nephew. Why, I remember when Jimmy was just four years old. Remember that cute birthday cake with the clowns on top?

MAVIS: That was the year we gave him a cowboy set with holsters and two six-shooters.

MAYBELLE: (*Shocked.*) Jumpin' jiminies! I suppose that was when he decided to do this for a living.

MAVIS: You can't say it ain't an exciting profession. We don't even have any detectives in Boone's Bluff.

MAYBELLE: You think it's dangerous?

MAVIS: Why else would he be packing heat?

MAYBELLE: You've been watching too much ["Law and Order,"] Mavis. [Or insert the name of another popular TV crime show.]

(Phone rings.)

MAVIS: Ought I answer it, Maybelle?

MAYBELLE: (Brightly.) Act like Jimmy's secretary. You know, professional-like.

MAVIS: (Into phone.) Pepper Detective Agency. Oh, hiya, Jimmy...Yup, we sure made it. The bus was a bit late leaving Boone's Bluff, but he made up the time going downhill on the Interstate...What? Jury duty? I thought you said you could get out of it...None of the lies worked? Oh, dear...And you're being sequestered? (Mavis covers phone.) He's got jury duty and he's being sequestered for three days.

MAYBELLE: (Disappointed.) And we'll only be here for five.

MAVIS: (Into phone.) Can't you get out of it?...Tell them you've got a sick aunt who needs you...Oh, you tried that. How about a sick mother?...A sick Chihuahua?

MAYBELLE: Tell him to say his psychic told him jury duty could be fatal.

MAVIS: (Into phone.) Oh, I see...Yeah...Well, all right. We will just lock up and leave...Oh, Jimmy, of course we won't get in any trouble. We wouldn't know how to shoot that gun of yours....Oh, well, I...I was looking for a piece of paper to write you a note...All right...We will...Yes, there are hotdogs and beans in the fridge...Got it. All right, Jimmy. We'll talk to you as soon as you acquit whoever's on trial...Of course he's not guilty. Bye-bye. (Mavis hangs up.)

MAYBELLE: Hotdogs and beans in the fridge?

MAVIS: And Jimmy said there's a spring popping through the sleeper-couch mattress, so just be careful when you roll over.

MAYBELLE: Do I get the idea Jimmy's detective agency isn't exactly hauling in the big bucks?

MAVIS: He said he doesn't have any jobs goin' right now.

MAYBELLE: Oh, Mavis. Poor Jimmy...he's probably too poor to buy bullets.

(Bowsley enters SL.)

BOWSLEY: Excuse me, is this the Pepper Detective Agency?

MAVIS: Why, yes, yes, it is.

BOWSLEY: Good. I have a job for you.

MAVIS: Well, Mr. —

BOWSLEY: Brown. Bowsley Brown.

MAVIS: How-dee-do. I am Mavis Pepper, and this is my...sister and partner, Maybelle.

(Maybelle pulls Mavis downstage a bit.)

MAYBELLE: What are you doing? Jimmy said not to get in any trouble.

MAVIS: Look at that guy's suit. You want hotdogs and beans on a mattress with a spring popping through it? *(Mavis approaches Bowsley.)* We were just checking our schedule and we've got a bit of time before next week to devote to a new job. What is it you're interested in having us do?

BOWSLEY: Are you familiar with Mortimer Tutley?

MAYBELLE: *(Thrilled.)* Mortimer Tutley?! I saw his house on ["Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous."] *[Or insert the name of a similar TV show.]*

MAVIS: Doesn't he collect dolls or something?

MAYBELLE: No. I remember, he collects old circus wagons.

BOWSLEY: Mr. Tutley has the greatest private collection of Egyptian antiquities in the world.

MAVIS: We were close.

MAYBELLE: Is somebody trying to steal some of his Egyptians?

BOWSLEY: Frankly, I have no idea. He said he will only tell the private operatives face to face.

MAVIS: Private operatives?

BOWSLEY: Isn't that what you are?

MAVIS: *(Excitedly.)* Sure. It just sounds so...secretive when you say it.

(Maybelle looks around.)

MAYBELLE: Well, where is Mr. Tutley?

BOWSLEY: At Tutley Manor. He never leaves his antiques.

My car is downstairs waiting to take you there.

MAYBELLE: Oh, how delightful.

MAVIS: Now, hold on, sis. We haven't exactly talked turkey.

BOWSLEY: Yes, of course. *(Bowsley pulls a check from his pocket.)* I forgot your retainer. Is this enough turkey for you?

(He hands Mavis the check. Her eyes light up.)

MAVIS: Looky there, Maybelle. Now we know why it's called Thanksgiving.

BOWSLEY: I can wait here while you pack a bag.

MAYBELLE: So happens we're ready, Mr. Brown. *(Maybelle picks up her bag.)*

MAVIS: Yeah...in this business, you never know who's going to invite you over for the weekend.

MAYBELLE: Say, Mr. Brown...how come you chose Jimmy's...I mean, our...detective agency?

BOWSLEY: Simple. All the others were busy. This way, ladies.

(Bowsley leads Mavis and Maybelle off SL. Lights fade.)

Scene 2

(AT RISE: Study at Tutley Manor, several hours later. Mrs. Drayton, wearing a black dress with her hair pulled back into a bun, enters SL. She leans on her black cane. Maybelle and Mavis follow, each carrying a suitcase.)

MRS. DRAYTON: (*Grimly.*) You'll wait here in the study.

MAVIS: Oh, my, this looks nicer 'n the Beaver Bend Public Library.

MAYBELLE: Looky here, Mavis, honey. (*Indicates gold beetle.*) One of them beetles they got in Egypt, only this one looks to be solid gold.

(*As Maybelle reaches for the gold beetle, Mrs. Drayton slams her cane on the floor [or a piece of furniture], making a loud sound.*)

MAVIS: (*Startled.*) Gracious!

MAYBELLE: (*Startled.*) Coulda given me a heart attack!

MRS. DRAYTON: We never touch Mr. Tutley's collection. The oil on your hands will decay these priceless pieces quicker than battery acid.

(*Maybelle looks at her hands, disgustedly.*)

MAVIS: Told you to wash your hands after lunch, Maybelle.

(*Bowsley enters SL.*)

BOWSLEY: Quite a collection, isn't it, ladies?

MAYBELLE: Priceless. Just priceless.

BOWSLEY: And which guestroom are we putting the Pepper sisters in?

MRS. DRAYTON: (*Surprised.*) They're staying here?

BOWSLEY: Didn't Mr. Tutley tell you?

MRS. DRAYTON: He never tells me anything.
BOWSLEY: Oh, well, they'll be here at least two nights.
MRS. DRAYTON: Why?
BOWSLEY: They're Mr. Tutley's...guests.
MRS. DRAYTON: He's never had guests before.
BOWSLEY: Mrs. Drayton, please take their suitcases to their room.

(Mrs. Drayton grabs the suitcases.)

MRS. DRAYTON: I'll put them in Marie Antoinette.
MAVIS: Why's the room called Marie Antoinette?
MRS. DRAYTON: The beds don't have headboards. *(Mrs. Drayton exits SR.)*
MAYBELLE: Are you sure Mr. Tutley wants us to stay?
MAVIS: *(Nervously.)* Really, we could get a motel somewhere. Or camp. We don't mind sleepin' under the stars.
BOWSLEY: Ladies, there's nothing to be afraid of. Mrs. Drayton is just...well...shall we say, devoted?
MAYBELLE: But I don't think it's the church-goin' type of devotion.
BOWSLEY: If you'll excuse me, I'll go find Mr. Tutley. He wanted to speak to you before anyone else did. *(Bowsley exits SR.)*
MAVIS: Now who else you s'pose is here?
MAYBELLE: And I wonder what rooms they got.

(Mavis and Maybelle begin to look around at the items on the walls.)

MAVIS: How come them Egyptians drew all their people funny.
MAYBELLE: What do you mean "funny"?
MAVIS: Like this. *(Mavis strikes an Egyptian side pose.)*
MAYBELLE: It's kind of like modern art. You're not s'posed to ask.
MAVIS: Say. Looky here. *(Indicates a newspaper clipping.)*

MAYBELLE: Looks like an old newspaper clippin'.

MAVIS: *(Reads headline.)* "Search for Tutley Tot Terminated."

MAYBELLE: *(Reads article.)* "The search for one of Dr. Trent Tutley's twins was called off yesterday as a blinding sandstorm swallowed up the Valley of the Kings. The tot had wandered off while his parents were searching for a new royal tomb. Dr. Tutley is an avid amateur Egyptologist whose wife, Nichole, is the heir to the Charmel Perfume fortune."

MAVIS: So that must be how the current Mr. Tutley got his money.

MAYBELLE: The sweet smell of success.

MAVIS: *(Looking at framed hieroglyphics and pictures.)* What do you suppose all this stuff says?

MAYBELLE: Well, I think the guy in that paintin's had a bit too much turkey at Thanksgivin'.

MAVIS: And that lady there...why, she's holdin' hands with one feller but got eyes for that feller over there.

MAYBELLE: Looky here at this one. This here fellow's got wings like a bird 'n an antenna on top of his head. What do you s'pose is his story?

MAVIS: Superhero. Kind of like Superman, but he don't wear tights.

MAYBELLE: Oh, Mavis, honey, looky here on the mantel. *(Indicates small coffin.)*

MAVIS: Why, that's one of them little souvenir pencil holders you can buy at the Museum of Natural History, ain't it?

MAYBELLE: Looks a bit older than the kind they sell.

MAVIS: Well, see if it's got a pencil inside, 'cause I gotta write this phone number down so I can give it to Jimmy next time we hear from him.

(Maybelle is about to touch the small coffin when Adelaide pushes Tutley, who is in a wheelchair, on SR. Adelaide is dressed in a nurse's outfit. Tutley wears a robe or smoking jacket with a blanket thrown over his legs.)

TUTLEY: (*Growls.*) Stop. Don't you dare touch that.

MAYBELLE: Why, shake the pecans off the tree. What is it with you people around here?

ADELAIDE: We don't touch Mr. Tut's collection, do we, Tuttsy?

MAVIS: Tuttsy?

TUTLEY: I'm Mortimer Tutley. And that piece you were about to touch is one of four canopic jars found in King Tut's tomb. It contains his liver.

MAVIS: Well, now, I'm sure not ready for a transplant just yet.

TUTLEY: Allow me to welcome you to my humble home.

MAYBELLE: It might be home, but it sure ain't humble.

MAVIS: And who are you, honey?

TUTLEY: This is my nurse, Adelaide.

MAYBELLE: You're needed full-time here, Adelaide?

ADELAIDE: I'm in charge of Tuttsy's blood pressure.

MAVIS: Raising it?

ADELAIDE: Why, aren't you silly. Tuttsy, who are these two?

MAVIS: I'm Mavis Pepper, and this here's my sister Maybelle. We're from the —

TUTLEY: Akenhaten Antiquities Society.

MAYBELLE: We are?

MAVIS: We are.

TUTLEY: (*To Adelaide.*) They're here to...authenticate a few of my recent purchases.

MAYBELLE: Nothing we like better than shopping.

TUTLEY: They'll be staying with us for a few days.

ADELAIDE: They will?

TUTLEY: I believe Mrs. Drayton has a room ready for them.

MAVIS: The Marie Antoinette room.

ADELAIDE: Oh, dear.

TUTLEY: Adelaide, why don't you go take your little afternoon siesta?

MAYBELLE: We can take care of Tuttsy. I mean, Mr. Tutley.

ADELAIDE: Are you sure, Tuttsy Whatsy?

MAVIS: Sure. Go take a load off.

TUTLEY: Not that she's got any extra load to take off.

ADELAIDE: (*Sings.*) Tut, Tut, Tutsy...goodbye.

(*Adelaide kisses Tutley on the top of his head and exits SR.*)

TUTLEY: Anyone out that way?

(*Mavis looks right.*)

MAVIS: Coast is clear.

TUTLEY: How about that way?

MAYBELLE: Can't see nobody.

TUTLEY: Good, then let's get down to business.

MAVIS: What seems to be the problem, Mr. Tutley?

TUTLEY: In a nutshell—

(*Mrs. Drayton enters SL.*)

MRS. DRAYTON: Where is that idiot?

TUTLEY: Which idiot is that, Mrs. Drayton?

MRS. DRAYTON: That nurse of yours?

TUTLEY: Adelaide is taking her siesta.

MRS. DRAYTON: And she'll be guacamole when I find her.

TUTLEY: (*Tiredly.*) What crime has she committed this time?

MRS. DRAYTON: My kitchen is a mess. Your medicines are everywhere.

TUTLEY: What medicines?

MRS. DRAYTON: How do I know? Do I look like a druggist?

She'll clean up those bottles and pills before she takes one wink of her siesta. (*Mrs. Drayton charges off SR.*)

MAVIS: Why would a nurse leave medicines lying around?

MAYBELLE: Maybe we ought to go take a look—

TUTLEY: No. You've got to know why I have hired you.

MAVIS: Whatever it is must be pretty scary, Mr. Tutley...your hands are shakin' like the hind legs of a newborn calf.

MAYBELLE: What's wrong, Mr. T?

TUTLEY: It...it concerns—

(Paisley, wearing an outlandish modern outfit, enters SR.)

PAISLEY: Well, like, he's here, Jarred. In the mummy room.

TUTLEY: Paisley, this is not the mummy room. It's my study.

PAISLEY: Could have fooled me.

(Jarred, a tattooed wannabe tough-guy, saunters on SR.)

JARRED: Figures he'd be in here with all the other relics.

MAVIS: Young man, have some respect.

JARRED: Where'd you get these two antiques, Pop?

MAYBELLE: Antiques? Listen here, you billboard—

JARRED: What?

TUTLEY: Ladies, this is my niece Paisley and her pet idiot, Jarred.

JARRED: What'd she call me? Billboard?

MAYBELLE: I'm surprised you don't have a [Starbuck's] ad tattooed on you somewhere. *[Or insert the name of another coffee shop.]*

PAISLEY: Lady, I'll have you know, Jarred's a work of art.

MAVIS: Then maybe he ought to be hanging up in a museum.

JARRED: *(Sarcastically.)* What do you call this place?

TUTLEY: I've told you before—any time you want to move out, you know where the door is.

PAISLEY: Oh, now, Uncle Tutsy, you don't mean that, and Jarred is sorry he's been so rude to these two old ladies.

MAVIS: Old?

PAISLEY: Well, if the world were divided into young and old, you gotta admit you wouldn't be young.

TUTLEY: Look, these two ladies are from the Triple A, and we've got business to discuss.

JARRED: Triple A? So how come you guys didn't come out to fix my flat the other day?

TUTLEY: Not the American Automobile Association...the Akenhaten Antiquities Association.

JARRED: They still shoulda fixed my flat.

TUTLEY: You were on your way out?

PAISLEY: We sure were, but then I remembered I'm a bit overdrawn...

TUTLEY: How much do you need?

PAISLEY: Three hundred?

JARRED: Make it four, Pops. I gotta get some toothpaste.

(Tutley wheels himself behind the desk to write a check.)

MAVIS: Honey, toothpaste don't cost no hundred dollars.

JARRED: I was speaking metaphorically.

MAVIS: Even metaphorically it don't cost that much.

TUTLEY: *(Handing Paisley the check.)* Here. Here. Now go on and leave us to our business.

PAISLEY: Thanks, Uncle Tutley. We'll be back in time for dinner.

TUTLEY: Figures.

JARRED: You know old lady Drayton might be a battleaxe on orthopedic shoes, but nobody can stuff a burrito like she can.

(Paisley and Jarred exit SL.)

TUTLEY: I'd like to stuff him in a burrito. I don't know how I've come to be blessed with such revolting relatives.

MAVIS: It's all in the genes, I hear.

MAYBELLE: Mavis.

MAVIS: I don't mean your genes, Mr. Tutley. You've got those good dominant genes. Paisley, why she probably has some recessive —

TUTLEY: Don't try and explain it to me, Ms. Pepper. I've had the finest DNA laboratory check each and every relative of

mine and...sad to say...we all have the same DNA profile.
And that brings me to the point of our meeting –
(*Mavis and Maybelle check right and left.*)

MAVIS: Coast is clear this way.

MAYBELLE: Nothin' comin' on this side.

TUTLEY: Good. It began with King Tut's liver.

MAVIS: I always heard he was a pretty gutless king.

TUTLEY: On the contrary, Ms. Pepper. He would have been
one of the finest pharaohs had he been allowed to live.

MAYBELLE: You mean somebody bumped him off?

TUTLEY: We'll never know for sure, but some say he was,
indeed, murdered.

MAVIS: So he was cursed.

TUTLEY: And the curse extends down to this day.

MAYBELLE: Oh, now, go on. There's nothin' in them curses.
Nothin' at all.

TUTLEY: Oh, no?

(*Quincy enters SL, followed by Sonora and Lillian, who each carry a
suitcase and are looking around admiringly at their surroundings.*)

QUINCY: Uncle Tutley? Good. You're not busy.

TUTLEY: What do you mean I'm not busy?

QUINCY: Girls, this is Mortimer Tutley.

SONORA: The dog food king?

LILLIAN: I just love your product. I mean, my poodle does.

SONORA/LILLIAN: "Ooch Pooch Dog Chow every day
keeps Fido fit in every way."

TUTLEY: Quincy, what is this?

QUINCY: These are the interns I told you about.

SONORA: I'm Sonora Willis from Catchamuchie, Minnesota.

LILLIAN: I'm Lillian Vesta from Tiger Eye, Indiana.

TUTLEY: What are they doing here?

QUINCY: They're here to work on the new Ooch Pooch ad
campaign.

SONORA: We want to revitalize your marketing approach.
LILLIAN: We want your sales to soar.
TUTLEY: Just hoist your own sails and get out of here.
QUINCY: Uncle Tut, there's no need to be rude.
TUTLEY: You're the one being rude. You broke in on a
private meeting.
QUINCY: What meeting?
TUTLEY: Meet Mavis Pepper and her sister, Maybelle.
MAVIS: You must be Quincy.
TUTLEY: Quincy Mounteville, my late cousin's boy.
MAYBELLE: Do you live here, too, Mr. Mounteville?
QUINCY: Well, it's easier, you know. I'm Uncle Tut's right
hand man.
TUTLEY: Just don't bite the hand that feeds you, Quincy.
QUINCY: I don't know what you mean. I'm just trying to do
what's best for Ooch Pooch Dog Food.
SONORA: And we're here to help.
QUINCY: The girls will be staying in the guesthouse.
LILLIAN: We're so excited. This is so beautiful.
SONORA: Where did you get all these wonderful things?
(Sonora attempts to pick up an object.)
QUINCY/TUTLEY/MAVIS/MAYBELLE: Don't touch that!

(Sonora, shocked, backs away.)

QUINCY: We don't touch Uncle Tut's collection.
TUTLEY: Go on 'n take 'em to the guesthouse. And on the
way, tell old lady Drayton to set two more places for dinner.
QUINCY: Oh, no. Do I have to?
TUTLEY: No guts, no glory, Quincy. Get going.
SONORA: It's so nice meeting you, Mr. Tutley.
LILLIAN: It's going to be such fun making up a new ad
campaign.
TUTLEY: Yeah, a barrel of laughs.
QUINCY: This way, girls.

(Quincy leads Sonora and Lillian off SR. They carry their suitcases.)

MAVIS: How many other relatives do you have living here, Mr. T?

TUTLEY: One more. But she sleeps till two every day. *(Clock chimes two.)* Uh-oh.

(Etheljean sweeps on stage SL. She wears a long diaphanous gown and has the moves of a silent screen actress trapped in a moldy tragedy.)

ETHELJEAN: Oh, Mortimer...Mortimer...Mortimer...
(Etheljean dramatically collapses on the couch or in a chair.)
...Mortimer.

TUTLEY: This is Quincy's sister, Etheljean...

ETHELJEAN: *(Dramatically.)* Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue.

TUTLEY: ...the actress.

MAVIS: We're awfully pleased to make your acquaintance, Ms. Etheljean.

MAYBELLE: That's a right pretty get-up you got on there.

ETHELJEAN: Who are you?

MAVIS: I'm Mavis Pepper and this is my sister —

MAYBELLE: Maybelle Pepper.

TUTLEY: They're with the Akenhaten Antiquities Society.

ETHELJEAN: *(Rising.)* Antiquities. We shall all be antiquities some day. Small bits of dust swept into the corners of history.

MAVIS: I take it you don't do comedy.

ETHELJEAN: What is life but a comedy with a tragic end.

TUTLEY: Oh, go take your histrionics outside or something, Etheljean. I got important business here.

ETHELJEAN: I want to go to Greece.

MAYBELLE: Who doesn't?

TUTLEY: Yesterday it was Italy. The day before that, it was Spain.

MAVIS: At least you're goin' in a straight line.

ETHELJEAN: Greece shall be the last place my eyes shall ever look upon: the Acropolis, the Temple at Delphi, the island of Santorini.

MAYBELLE: We got a real nice little Greek deli in Boone's Bluff. Can't say I like my burgers stuffed inside grape leaves, but I can't get enough baklava.

ETHELJEAN: Is that all life is to you...food?

MAYBELLE: Well, now, I sure like my share at mealtimes.

ETHELJEAN: We are here but an instant—

TUTLEY: Yeah, and then we're all dust. Go on 'n get, Etheljean.

ETHELJEAN: I will get...to Greece, there to die upon the grave of Sophocles.

TUTLEY: Uh-oh. I get it. You didn't get that part in the commercial, did you? I thought you'd make a real fine cleaning lady with rough red hands.

ETHELJEAN: Philistine. May you never feel the pain I must endure every...single...day. (*Etheljean dramatically exits SR.*)

MAVIS: You know, she wouldn't be half-bad in the right part.

MAYBELLE: Or maybe half-right in a bad part.

TUTLEY: She's just plain nuts like all the rest of 'em in this house 'cept Adelaide. She's the only one who keeps me going.

MAVIS: I can see where she'd spark a bit of interest...

MAYBELLE: But that's not why we're here, are we?

MAVIS: (*Checking right.*) Coast is clear here.

MAYBELLE: (*Checking left.*) I don't see a soul.

TUTLEY: I'm not worried now. They've all been in snoopin'. They got what they came for—just who are you two. And while you're here, you're Egyptologists.

MAVIS: Mr. T, I can't spell that, let alone be one.

TUTLEY: Fake it. That's your job, isn't it?

MAYBELLE: It'll be just like Halloween for us.

TUTLEY: And there's a treat in store for you. If you solve my little problem, your agency gets this much.

(Tutley writes a figure on a piece of paper and shows it to Mavis.)

MAVIS: I never seen so many zeros!

TUTLEY: But to get it, there's a trick. Find out who sent this note.

(Tutley pulls a small scroll from his pocket and hands it to Mavis.)

MAVIS: *(Reads from scroll.)* "Sugar and spice and everything nice, I'll get my liver, you filthy lice. My curse I place upon your head, and you shall be the last one dead. Yours truly, Tutankhamen."

MAYBELLE: Oh, dear..."the last one dead."

TUTLEY: I don't get it.

MAVIS: Well, it means everybody else will die before you.

TUTLEY: I know that, Sherlock. I mean...who would want everybody in the house dead? What could anybody gain by that?

MAYBELLE: Well, it is kind of a general curse, and if King Tut really wrote it, then he doesn't need to gain anything because he's already dead. Of course, he wants his liver back—

MAVIS: Maybelle. You don't really think King Tut wrote this, do you?

MAYBELLE: Didn't he?

TUTLEY: Of course not. Tut couldn't have written in English, and he even spelled "lice" wrong. But somebody wrote it.

MAVIS: When did you get this note?

TUTLEY: It was lying on my bed this morning.

MAYBELLE: Then whoever wrote it got into your bedroom.

MAVIS: You know what I think?

TUTLEY: There's a killer in the house about to strike?

MAVIS: Absolutely not. I think you just need to brighten things up in here. It's so closed up and stuffy.

MAYBELLE: Really. A bit of sunshine and fresh air will send this silly King Tut business on its way.

TUTLEY: Look, I hired detectives, not Pollyannas!

MAVIS: You'll see, Mr. T. Open these curtains, and King Tut will be back in his grave forever.

(Mavis and Maybelle open the curtains. Mummy is standing outside looking in. Mavis and Maybelle scream and then both faint. Blackout.)

Scene 3

(AT RISE: The study, later that night. Thunder and lightning is heard. Jarred is lazily lying across a chair. Bowsley is looking out the window upstage. Paisley is pacing down right.)

PAISLEY: So, just exactly what is Uncle Tutty worth, Mr. Brown?

BOWSLEY: A lot.

JARRED: You sound like my old lady. Every time I asked her how much she had in her purse she'd say, "not enough." Well, most of the time it was just enough for me.

BOWSLEY: You robbed your own mother?

JARRED: She wouldn't raise my allowance.

BOWSLEY: You know, Jarred, it wouldn't hurt you to go out and get yourself a job...make something of yourself.

JARRED: I have made something of myself. *(With a flourish.)* I'm an heir-expectant.

BOWSLEY: A what?

PAISLEY: We saw that in one of them foreign movies. An heir-expectant—somebody who's waiting to be an heir.

JARRED: And at the rate Tutty's going, we won't have long to wait.

PAISLEY: He seems to be growing weaker and weaker day by day.

(Thunder, lightning. Jarred sits up nervously.)

JARRED: Yeah. A good noise like that could scare the life out of him.

PAISLEY: You think?

BOWSLEY: Your uncle's healthier than an ox. He'll outlive us all.

JARRED: What do you mean by that?

BOWSLEY: Exactly what I said. He's not going anywhere.

PAISLEY: But just in case he does...what's he worth?

BOWSLEY: Let's put it this way...he's worth the gross national product of Paraguay.

JARRED: Huh? What's Paraguay?

PAISLEY: It's someplace in Canada. And it's gotta be rich because they're all rich in Canada.

JARRED: So who gets all this gross national whatever when Uncle Tutty cashes in his chips?

BOWSLEY: I suppose since you're in the will, you have a right to know how the estate will be divided.

PAISLEY: *(Disappointed.)* Divided?

BOWSLEY: Exactly. It will be divided among the surviving relatives of Mortimer Tutley. You, Paisley, Quincy, and Etheljean.

JARRED: A three-way split, huh?

BOWSLEY: And, of course, there will be my legacy and any debts against the estate will have to be settled.

PAISLEY: That's not fair. You're no relative.

BOWSLEY: I have been your uncle's lawyer for 25 years. I have handled his affairs and made sure the operation of Ooch Pooch Dog Food has been on the up and up.

JARRED: It's okay, Paisley...there'll still be plenty left for us.

BOWSLEY: I should say so. Your uncle's company is perfectly solvent.

PAISLEY: I don't care how clean it is. I want as much as I can wring out of it.

BOWSLEY: Like I said, Paisley, I think you're rushing things a bit. Mortimer Tutley will be with us for a very long time.

(Bowsley exits SL. Jarred approaches Paisley.)

PAISLEY: Bummer.

JARRED: Oh, Paisley, baby, life is full of surprises.

PAISLEY: What do you mean?

JARRED: Remember how we met?

PAISLEY: Yeah...you ran a stop sign right into my BMW.

JARRED: Kind of a nice surprise, huh? Kind of like the deck was stacked in our favor.

PAISLEY: Yeah...so?

JARRED: Who says the deck can't be reshuffled and stacked in our favor again?

PAISLEY: Huh?

JARRED: Brown said the gross produce will be divided among the surviving relatives. What if some of the relatives aren't exactly surviving? *(Jarred exits SR, whistling.)*

PAISLEY: Jarred. What's going on in that warped little mind of yours?

(Paisley follows him off SR. Thunder, lightning. Quincy enters SL, followed by Etheljean.)

QUINCY: I know, I know. I shouldn't have done it.

ETHELJEAN: If Tutsy finds out, Quincy, dear...

QUINCY: He won't, if you don't say anything.

ETHELJEAN: Tinkerbelle can keep a secret...but if there's a big nasty old audit –

QUINCY: Look, don't you have anything you can lend me?

ETHELJEAN: Quincy, I need every cent I have so I can mount my production of "Peter Pan" and triumph as...Tinkerbelle.

QUINCY: Sis, this is a matter of...life and death.

ETHELJEAN: I know. But if you clap your hands and say, "I believe. I believe," everything will be all right.

QUINCY: I think you've popped your cork.

ETHELJEAN: Oh, Quincy, Quincy, Quincy...it's only money to you. To me...it's theater. It's that connection between artist and audience...the life-giving applause. It's when we're all in Neverland...and we all believe.

QUINCY: Knock it off, Sis. It's all just money. You just spend it differently.

ETHELJEAN: At least I haven't stolen anything.

QUINCY: Borrowed. I just borrowed a bit.

ETHELJEAN: Borrowed a half-million dollars? You make Captain Hook look positively heroic, brother, dear.

QUINCY: I had a few debts I needed to cover.

ETHELJEAN: Wouldn't your creditors listen to reason?

QUINCY: Louie "The Shark" and Marv "The Crusher" listen to reason?

ETHELJEAN: With the crocodile nipping at your heels, you've scurried up on the rocks of Skull Island to seek refuge right into the hands of the uncle you've stolen from?

QUINCY: Shhhhh. Borrowed. Borrowed. Get that? I just borrowed it. Besides, it'll all be mine someday, so I just advanced myself a little loan.

ETHELJEAN: All yours?

QUINCY: Well, all right...ours.

ETHELJEAN: Yes, ours. And then...the curtain will rise on Tinkerbelle. *(Etheljean flits about the room.)* I'll sprinkle pixie dust on everyone. We'll all fly. Up. Up and away.

QUINCY: Grow up, Etheljean. Grow up.

ETHELJEAN: But, Quincy, that's the point. In Neverland, we never grow up. *(Etheljean lies on the couch. Quincy exits SR.)* But, Uncle Tutzy, I do need some gold doubloons from your treasure chest. I do. I do. I do.

(Sonora and Lillian enter SL, sneakily. They do not see Etheljean lying on the couch.)

SONORA: I got a bad feeling about this, Lil.

LILLIAN: Look, it's a job. No big deal.

SONORA: My astrologist told me not to take this job.

LILLIAN: She's nuts.

SONORA: He's nuts. I mean, he's not nuts, he's a he. Raul...Raul Santalivia. He knows all.

LILLIAN: Then he can tell us where to look.

SONORA: I forgot to ask him that.

LILLIAN: What did you ask him?

SONORA: I had to know if Todd loves me. I mean, we've been going together for five years and three times he's been on the verge of proposing.

LILLIAN: How do you know?

SONORA: He choked on his food each time.

LILLIAN: Sonora, that could be a clue.

SONORA: I think it was just a reflex.

LILLIAN: A gag reflex.

SONORA: Don't say that.

LILLIAN: Todd doesn't want to commit, Sonora. Be honest with yourself.

SONORA: That's where you're wrong. Raul told me that Todd is more into me than he has been with any other girl in his entire life. I am his goddess.

LILLIAN: Well, if you're a goddess, you ought to be able to see through drawers and find what we're looking for.

SONORA: Why is it that you always have to ruin everything by bringing up reality?

LILLIAN: One of us has to be practical. Now, look over there.

SONORA: I don't see why it'd be in this house.

LILLIAN: It wasn't at the corporate headquarters, so it's got to be here.

SONORA: All right...all right...

(Sonora looks about the room, as does Lillian.)

LILLIAN: While we're looking, we'd better think of some stupid commercial for Ooch Pooch Dog Food.

SONORA: Raul told me something funny, now that I think of it. He said that after this weekend I'd be dog tired. Isn't that prophetic?

LILLIAN: I wonder if he's that good picking stocks?

SONORA: I've got it.

LILLIAN: You found it?

SONORA: No. But I've got an idea for a new slogan: "Ooch Pooch in every pooch makes tails wag." Whatdaya think?

LILLIAN: We're gonna get fired. C'mon, there's nothing in here, but I have an idea where we should look.

(Sonora and Lillian exit SR. Disturbed, Etheljean sits up and then rises.)

ETHELJEAN: Mrs. Drayton. Mrs. Drayton.

(Mrs. Drayton enters SR.)

MRS. DRAYTON: What?

ETHELJEAN: That was fast.

MRS. DRAYTON: I was dusting in the hall.

ETHELJEAN: And listening at the door?

MRS. DRAYTON: You want something, or not?

ETHELJEAN: Is...is Uncle Tutty still awake?

MRS. DRAYTON: Hasn't called for his warm milk yet, so I guess he's still up there with that...floozy.

ETHELJEAN: Nurse Adelaide is not a floozy. She's a dedicated professional.

MRS. DRAYTON: Professional gold digger.

(Etheljean exits SR in a huff. Mavis and Maybelle enter SL.)

MAVIS: Oh, Mrs. Drayton, that sure was a hearty meal y'all served tonight.

MAYBELLE: The chicken was just this side of heaven.

MRS. DRAYTON: Can't take any credit for that—comes in a box. Lazy Lady Fried Chicken.

MAVIS: What won't they go 'n think of next, right, Maybelle?

MAYBELLE: I know a good meal makes me feel a whole lot better. Thought for a minute there—

MRS. DRAYTON: What did you think?

MAVIS: Why, we were so weary with hunger our imaginations were playin' tricks on us.

MAYBELLE: That's right. Pink and blue elephants were dancin' all over the place.

MAVIS: Say, Mrs. Drayton, it must be a challenge keeping this house runnin', huh?

MRS. DRAYTON: Was at first.

MAYBELLE: You've been here a long, long time then?

MRS. DRAYTON: Six months.

MAVIS: Oh. Somehow I thought you'd been with the family for years.

MRS. DRAYTON: This family? If I'da been with 'em for years, I'd be as nuts as they are.

MAYBELLE: Oh, are they nuts?

MRS. DRAYTON: Dry-roasted. Oh, they do the family things—Thanksgiving dinner...a Fourth of July picnic...a drawer full of Christmas cards there...but somehow it never seems... *(Thunder, lightning.)* ...right.

MAVIS: They all seem just like ducks swimmin' in their own pond.

MRS. DRAYTON: You know what I think?

MAYBELLE: What?

MRS. DRAYTON: I think they'd just as soon kill each other as keep swimmin' in that pond.

MAVIS: Kill each other?

MAYBELLE: All families got their little differences, but—

MRS. DRAYTON: Can't you feel it?

MAVIS: Feel what?

(Thunder, lightning.)

MRS. DRAYTON: Impending doom?

MAYBELLE: That's just thunder and lightning.

MRS. DRAYTON: Don't kid yourselves. There's something afoot. Something dangerous...

MAVIS: Now you're scaring me, Mrs. Drayton.

MRS. DRAYTON: Warning you, that's all.

MAYBELLE: Mrs. Drayton, have you felt these things before?

MRS. DRAYTON: My last employer, Mrs. Hoppelwhite, heard voices. They told her to do things. They told her to take things—jewelry mostly, but money as well. The voices told her to hide them away in her hope chest. Then...one night...the voices told her to climb to the widow's walk atop her house and....well, when the police came, they found the hope chest empty.

MAVIS: Didn't you try to stop Mrs. Hoppelwhite?

MRS. DRAYTON: I wasn't home that night. I was out. I do get a night out occasionally.

MAYBELLE: I'm sure you deserve it.

MRS. DRAYTON: My employer before that was Mr. Alvin Crandall. He owned a company that made yachts.

MAVIS: I bet you got to sail around a bit.

MRS. DRAYTON: I'll never set foot off dry land. I hate the sea. It's dangerous. I told him so. I warned him. But he wouldn't listen to me.

MAYBELLE: What happened?

MRS. DRAYTON: He took his newest yacht out for a test run...on a night like this...just to see how it would handle in a storm.

MAVIS: Didn't handle so good?

MRS. DRAYTON: All they found was a life preserver.

MAYBELLE: Why, Mrs. Drayton...your employers don't seem to have much luck.

MRS. DRAYTON: They don't, do they?

(Adelaide enters SR.)

ADELAIDE: Why, there you are, Mrs. D.!

MRS. DRAYTON: My name is Mrs. Drayton.

ADELAIDE: Right. I just like to take shortcuts.

MRS. DRAYTON: Yes. We see that.

(Adelaide self-consciously pulls her skirt down a bit.)

ADELAIDE: Well Tutsy, I mean, Mr. Tutley would like his warm milk now. He and Mr. Brown are just about done.

MRS. DRAYTON: What's Mr. Brown still doing here?

ADELAIDE: Business.

MRS. DRAYTON: What kind of business?

ADELAIDE: None of yours.

(Mrs. Drayton exits SL in a huff.)

MAVIS: You know, she gives me the woolies.

MAYBELLE: And I sure don't care for her track record.

ADELAIDE: She was in track? I wonder what her event was?

MAVIS: A death-defying finish.

MAYBELLE: Adelaide, you been with Mr. Tutley long?

ADELAIDE: About three months now. This is my first job.

MAVIS: Well, you've certainly made quite an impression.

ADELAIDE: I hope so. Mr. Tutley means a lot to me.

MAYBELLE: We can see that. I bet being 'round you and your bubbly personality has given Mr. Tutley a new lease on life.

ADELAIDE: That's exactly what they told us in nursing school. We can make the difference between a patient wanting to live or wanting to die.

MAVIS: You certainly give Mr. Tutley something to live for.

ADELAIDE: I hope so. He's so sweet. He never wants me to take any time off. He doesn't want to be left alone with Mrs. Drayton.

MAYBELLE: I wonder why.

ADELAIDE: Oh, he keeps saying she'll be the death of him.

MAVIS: Why doesn't he find someone else?

ADELAIDE: You know, that's kind of funny. I asked him that once, and he just grabbed the arms of his wheelchair and glared at the floor and muttered something about "It wouldn't be fair. It wouldn't be fair."

MAYBELLE: I wonder what he meant by that.

ADELAIDE: I asked him, but he wouldn't say. Clammed up like a...a clam. Well, I better go get that warm milk.

MAVIS: It was nice talking to you, Adelaide.

(Adelaide exits SL.)

MAYBELLE: You know, Mavis...

MAVIS: What?

MAYBELLE: Mrs. Drayton's right. You can feel something in this house...something sinister.

(Thunder, lightning.)

MAVIS: It's like the thunder and lightning are right on cue.

MAYBELLE: We've got to find out who sent that note.

MAVIS: How?

MAYBELLE: The Christmas cards.

MAVIS: What do you mean?

MAYBELLE: Everyone in this house probably sent Mr. Tutley a Christmas card, especially if they want to keep their place in his will.

MAVIS: And they'd sign their names.

MAYBELLE: We can check the handwriting.

MAVIS: Why, Sis, that head on your shoulders is good for somethin' aside from holding all that gray hair.

MAYBELLE: Now, she said a drawer full of Christmas cards... *(Looks around and sees them.)* There!

(Maybelle moves to the desk. She pulls open a drawer. Mavis looks on.)

MAVIS: She wasn't lyin' about the Christmas cards.

(Maybelle pulls out a small stack of Christmas cards.)

MAYBELLE: Let's compare handwriting.

(Mavis picks up a card.)

MAVIS: *(Reads.)* "Dear Uncle Tuttsy, Hope this tinkles your bells. Love forever and ever, Etheljean."

MAYBELLE: Kind of creepy. Does it match?

MAVIS: Not a letter.

(Maybelle picks up another card.)

MAYBELLE: *(Reads.)* "Dear Uncle Tuttsy, Roses are red, violets are blue, Santa is generous and so are you. Love, XXXX, Paisley."

MAVIS: Wishful thinking.

MAYBELLE: Not a match, either.

(Mavis picks up another card.)

MAVIS: Here's something interesting...it's from Quincy. *(Reads.)* "Ooch Pooch Dog Food sends wishes for the tastiest Christmas ever. Sincerely, Quincy Tutley."

MAYBELLE: Doesn't sound too chummy. Any match?

MAVIS: It's engraved.

(Maybelle picks up another card.)

MAYBELLE: Here's one from Mrs. Drayton. *(Reads.)* "Dear Sir, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Mrs. Drayton."

MAVIS: Original. Are the letters dripping with blood?

MAYBELLE: No...but they are pretty spidery.

MAVIS: Then she didn't write the note. *(Picks up another card.)* Here's one from...let's see... *(Reads.)* "Dear Mortimer: To my good friend and client, may next year be as profitable as the last. All my best, Bowsley."

MAYBELLE: Profitable, hmmm?

MAVIS: Must have had his stocking stuffed full.

MAYBELLE: A match?

MAVIS: Nope. Not that I can see.

(Maybelle and Mavis slide the Christmas cards back into the desk. They move downstage.)

MAYBELLE: Could there be anybody else?

MAVIS: Adelaide...but she's only been here three months.

MAYBELLE: I wonder how we can get a gander at her handwriting.

MAVIS: I bet we can think of something.

(Mummy enters SL, unseen by Mavis and Maybelle. Mummy stealthily moves upstage and hides behind the curtain during the next exchange.)

MAYBELLE: But, you know, I can't picture her writing something like this...

MAVIS: Not bright enough, you mean?

MAYBELLE: Yeah...her bulb isn't exactly a hundred watts.

MAVIS: But she is a nurse.

MAYBELLE: She reminds me more of Sissy Whitcoller.

MAVIS: That gal who wore the short, tight skirts 'n giggled like the village idiot?

MAYBELLE: And ended up marryin' old man Culpepper.

MAVIS: She did, didn't she? Stopped gigglin' then.

MAYBELLE: She didn't have time countin' all that money.

MAVIS: So you think Adelaide—

(Bowsley storms on SR, carrying his laptop.)

BOWSLEY: Of all the stupid, nonsensical things to do!

MAYBELLE: Why, what's wrong, Mr. Brown?

BOWSLEY: That old fool, that's what.

MAVIS: Mr. Tutley?

BOWSLEY: He wants to change his will.

MAYBELLE: He does?

BOWSLEY: I told him it's a dumb move...to at least sleep on it...but he says that since you two are here, you can witness the new document.

MAVIS: If that's what Mr. Tutley wants.

BOWSLEY: I'm not so sure about that.

MAYBELLE: How is he changing his will?

BOWSLEY: *(Horried.)* He's leaving everything to a museum.

A museum! (Bowsley moves behind the desk, sits, and opens his laptop.) He wants it changed before he goes to sleep.

MAVIS: Well, we won't bother you, Mr. Brown.

MAYBELLE: Will this upset the rest of the family?

BOWSLEY: I wouldn't be surprised if they killed him.

MAVIS: Oh, dear.

(Mavis and Maybelle exit SR.)

BOWSLEY: Stupid old fool. *(Mummy slides out from behind the curtain as Bowsley begins to type. Mummy holds a blowgun up to his mouth and shoots a poison arrow into Bowsley's neck. Bowsley grabs at his neck.)* What the—?

(Bowsley slumps over and falls onto the floor behind the desk. He is dead. Mummy wipes his hands as if congratulating himself. He then closes Bowsley's computer. As the lights begin to fade, Mummy begins to drag Bowsley off SL. Thunder and lightning. Intermission.)

[END OF FREEVIEW]