

Artificial Intelligence

By Robert Frankel

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 MEN, 4 WOMEN)

PROFESSOR DONALD RICE	Professor of Advanced Computing at Rand School for Business. (431 lines)
DR. TERRI RICE	Gastroenterologist and Donald's wife. (103 lines)
JACK CHISEL	Programmer and Professor Rice's assistant. (221 lines)
JENNY RICE	Pregnant daughter of Donald and Terri. (99 lines)
TEX RIDER	Wealthy oil baron and potential computer investor. (58 lines)
CHARLENE RIDER	Accountant and wife of Tex. (32 lines)
MEL	Owner of "Mel's Deli." (66 lines)
DEAN BURDER	Dean of the Rand School for Business. (112 lines)
WANDA	Long-time systems operator. (70 lines)
FLETCH	Janitor. (45 lines)

PROPERTIES

- Three boxes of submarine sandwiches labeled 'ham,' 'turkey' and 'roast beef,' the latter with at least three actual wrapped sandwiches in it
- Two video tapes
- Sunglasses
- Garbage pail on wheels
- Mop and bucket (on wheels)
- Rag and spray bottle
- Pack of cigarettes and butane lighter
- A sheet of paper with the meeting agenda typed on it
- Wheelchair
- Cowboy boots and hat
- Stapler
- Pie in a box labeled, "Granny Pie from Mel's Deli"
- Several paper cake plates, plastic forks and napkins

SYNOPSIS

Professor Rice heads up Rand University's computer department and today is the day for ALICE'S big debut in front of a bunch of hotshot investors from Texas. There's only one problem—ALICE is dead. ALICE, is a financial prediction program and the Dean of the school, Dean Burder, is expecting a demo in one hour. The fun begins when Tex Rider, head of the investors, overhears Rice and his assistant discussing the demise of ALICE, which he believes is the name of Rice's only daughter. But Rice's real daughter, Jenny, has eloped with Jack and is pregnant - and looking to explain both to her father, Professor Rice. She also, of course is thinking of naming their baby-to-be...ALICE. To make matters worse, Rice's wife - a doctor, herself - is awaiting word as to whether she's pregnant. Confusion reigns over both the pregnancies and ALICE as Rice tries to keep his stories straight, and the naïve janitor tries to "help."

The action catapults another notch when Mel, the Australian owner of Mel's Deli, delivers sandwiches to the hungry investors. Unfortunately he returns to inform Rice that the roast beef has gone bad, but too late as Tex Rider falls ill and unconscious at their feet. As Dean Burder arrives for the demo, Mel is transformed into Tex...an Aussie attempting (poorly) to do a Texas accent! Meanwhile, our acerbic systems operator Wanda has threatened once again to quit while she searches for a backup tape of ALICE and stumbles upon a prior demo, SARAH. To top matters off, Tex's lascivious wife finally finds her time to make a move on Rice. The play culminates in a wild exposé scene, complete with Rice being blackmailed by Jack and a hilarious summary speech by Fletch. It closes with everyone celebrating and Donald and Jack eating the special beef-n-kidney "granny pie." As they discover it was made by Mel's Deli, Mel rushes in to tell them to "STOP!" The play ends with a frozen tableau of wild reactions!

The cast is ten: six men and four women. It is a simple, single set with all the action taking place inside a computer room. It has four doors and a basic, sterile office feel to it, with several computer monitors around.

ACT ONE

SETTING:

A computer room. DSR exit to the hallway. DSL exit to the computer tape room with hallway access to the rest of the university. There is a phone on the wall outside of this exit. USR exit to another hallway. USL entrance to PROFESSOR's office. USC is a computer and assortment of computer-related machinery. In front of the equipment are two desks, each with a phone, a computer terminal, and a mouse on it. A ramp about three feet high runs from below the PROFESSOR's office US in a soft arc behind the computer equipment to just below the USR exit. It has a guard rail on it.

AT RISE:

PROFESSOR DONALD RICE sits at HIS desk USL, talking on the phone.

DONALD: *(Into phone.)* Yes, Dean Burder, the investors are being well taken care...no, no, Dean I don't know why the food hasn't shown up. But they...yes, I understand the importance of the demo...*(Under HIS breath.)* Only the school's future depends on it, you ninny...*(Into phone.)* The head of the investor group? Well that would be Tex Rider. I don't think he's here yet, but when...He is? ...and he's hungry? Well they're from Texas sir, they're always hungry...A pencil? Certainly, hold on...*(Grabs a pencil and paper. Under HIS breath.)* This is the age of computers, but I've got a pencil here just for you, you pompous - *(Into phone.)* Hmm? No, just looking for - okay, ready. *(Writing.)* "No research funding, no job for Donald!" *(Realizes and stops writing and angrily balls up paper.)* Donald. That's me, Dean...I see. Ha, yes, very funny...well no, not "funny" ha ha, just...right - if Tex Rider and his investors aren't impressed by the demo today, our research funding is down the tubes and so are we...well no, not you. *(Under HIS breath.)* You'll live on forever like a cursed talisman. *(Into phone.)* Hmm? Oh just saying that you could never be replaced...*(Under HIS breath.)*...though if there's a god in heaven, someone will at least try.. *(Into phone.)* Now, if there's nothing else, we've got a demo in ninety minutes, so...A preview?...Twenty minutes? I, well we're quite busy but I don't see why not...certainly, come on down and we'll show you what she can do...twenty minutes...not twenty-one minutes? I understand. You can count on my punctuality, Dean Burder. When I say - hello? Hello? *(Slams phone down as HIS wife, DR. TERRI RICE ENTERS DSR and goes to HIM.)* Misinformed, misguided misogynist...

TERRI: (*Kissing HIM on the cheek.*) Hello, Dr. Rice. Who was that?

DONALD: Hello, Dr. Rice. That was our esteemed bumbler, Burder.

TERRI: Dean Burder? Has ALICE got another bug?

DONALD: (*Talking as HE uses HIS mouse to work through some items on the screen.*) No, no, our program seems bug-free today. But Burder just wants to turn the screws another quarter inch to make sure this demo for the investors is absolutely the most excruciating point in my life, that's all. (*Checking watch.*) Where is Jack? And what are you doing here, anyway?

TERRI: Well, I finished my rounds early, and I know how much today means to you, so I thought I'd come over and help out where I can.

DONALD: Thank you dear, but I'm sure you've got better ways to spend your Saturday.

TERRI: Nonsense. With all of these investors coming to see ALICE, I'm sure you could use a dose of the wife-behind-the-man charm - definitely not your forte, dear.

DONALD: No, I've never been a good wife-behind-the-man sort of guy.

TERRI: Besides...(*Slipping HER arms around HIS shoulders.*)...I want to be here when the call comes.

DONALD: Darling, it's too late for you to become a nun...

TERRI: Earth to Donald! I took a certain test this morning and they're calling here with the results!

DONALD: You took...? Oh yes. Terri, now I told you the odds of your being pregnant at your age are...

TERRI: ... about the same as the odds of you being a father at your age.

DONALD: Er, yes.

TERRI: And I say nonsense! We're forty-two, not a hundred and forty-two. Oh, Donald, wouldn't it be wonderful! Another little one to go along with our Jenny!

DONALD: They're not matching accessories, honey.

TERRI: Donald.

DONALD: Yes, yes, I suppose, Terri, it would be...fun - in oh look-I'm-skydiving-without-a-parachute-and-at-my-age sort of way. Now look, I've got to get set for our demo, so...

TERRI: I understand, dear, but do tell me if the hospital calls, hmm?

DONALD: Of course. Now...

TERRI: Okay, look darling, you just show me where the meeting is going to be, and your very own Dr. Rice will take care of the rest.

DONALD: (*Sighs.*) Thank you, dear. It's in Huxley Hall, down the...(*Glances at watch, then stands.*) Oh here, let me show you.

JACK ENTERS USR, and moves to HIS SR desk.

TERRI: Oh, hello, Jack.

JACK: Hello, Dr. Rice. *(To DONALD.)* Other Dr. Rice.

DONALD: *(With sarcasm.)* Hello, Jack. Nice of you to join us. Nothing much going on so why don't you just take the day off.

JACK: But sir, today's the big demo with the investors.

DONALD: *(AS HE and TERRI EXIT DSR.)* Oh yes. WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF THAT?! Now get the demo up and spinning and when I get back, I want to go through the data matrix we're going to use!

JACK: Right, sir.

THEY EXIT. JACK becomes active with the mouse and keyboard, staring into the monitor. As HE works, we may hear the sounds of the computer behind HIM whirring and working. HE talks to the monitor as if it were a child.

JACK: Good morning, ALICE. Got an exciting day planned for you. Going to take you for a test drive in front of lots of big, important people. Nothing you haven't done before, so nothing to be worried about, you fully compiled little sweetie. First we'll boot up your analytics module...*(Types something, then clicks. Pause.)*...then we'll get your auxiliary modules spinning...*(Types something, then clicks. Pause.)*...then we'll get...*(Stares wide-eyed at screen. Types again, clicks.)*...then we'll get...*(Stares again, begins to rise.)*...then we'll get a message, "Module Alpha-Delta-forty not found." **Not found?** Where'd you go? *(Grabs monitor. Looks behind it for an insane moment.)* **You can't be 'not found'**...wait, wait, maybe you got moved to another directory. That's it. You got moved to another directory!

Sits again and begins typing and clicking furiously. WANDA, the acerbic systems analyst of the past eight years, saunters in DSR, a bag in hand. SHE is heading toward DSL exit to tape room.

JACK: 'Main' directory...'Analytics' sub-directory...Predictor folder...Okay, okay, I've got something here...

WANDA: Hello, Jack. I'm quitting.

JACK: *(Preoccupied and not looking up.)* Hi, Wanda...the whole folder is not...! Alright, let's just try to run her financial predictives for the market crash of 1929...

WANDA: Oh. Had a little power outage last night. Disk drives crashed, ran off the UPS for thirty minutes, came back up with the Woofy and Tweety drives scratched beyond repair. Welcome to my own personal hell.

JACK: *(To HIMSELF.)* Where's the market crash?! It's bull!

WANDA: (*Removing a box of cigarettes from bag.*) Yeah, well, nice to see ya too. Gonna light one up now, before Dr. Snobby comes in and screams. Then I'm quitting. (*Starts off SL.*)

JACK: MY GOD, WHERE'S THE - (*Realizes what WANDA has said. To HER.*) WAIT! (*SHE stops.*) The power? The power last night...?

WANDA: Went out. Woofy and Tweety drives scratched.

JACK: Not Woofy and Tweety!

WANDA: (*To HERSELF.*) My life is a cartoon. (*To JACK.*) Yes, my child. Dark as a hole in the ground here when it happened. Thank god I had a cigarette lit. I felt like Rudolf the Red-nosed Reindeer.

JACK: Wanda, the backup tapes for ALICE. We've got to find them.

WANDA: Yes, yes. Be a pal, huh? Tell God I'm quitting when he comes in, will ya?

JACK: But you can't -

DONALD: (*OFFSTAGE.*) Thank you, dear. I'll see you soon.

WANDA: Uh-oh, Himself is coming. I'm outta here.

JACK: (*Yelling after HER.*) Wanda, the backup tapes!

WANDA: Remember, Jack, I'm quitting!

SHE EXITS DSL, as DONALD ENTERS DSR and heads toward HIS desk.

JACK: (*Yelling after WANDA.*) But not today!

DONALD: Yes it's today, Jack. All day. That's what I like about being with you - one astute observation after another. Now let's get cracking, shall we?

JACK: Sir?

DONALD: Yes, yes, what?!

JACK: ALICE is dead, sir.

DONALD: ALICE is...what?

JACK: Dead. Sir.

DONALD: What??!!

JACK: You see, the power -

DONALD: Yes, yes, but not today, Jack!

JACK: That's what I was -

DONALD: That big blowhard from Texas -

JACK: Tex Rider is...

DONALD: Don't interrupt me, Jack - Tex Rider and his investors are coming today! So this can't happen today. The university's blasted research funding is depending on what happens today. Do I make myself clear?

JACK: See, I know that, Dr. Rice. But ALICE, well she doesn't. I just tried to pull her up and - she's gone.

DONALD: Gone?!

JACK: Well, parts of her.

DONALD: God! What happened?

JACK: An outage. There was a power outage last night - the Woofy and Tweety drives got scratched...

DONALD: Not Woofy and Tweety!

JACK: ...and ALICE's memory is sporadically erased.

DONALD: Sporadically...! But, well we can restore that, can't we? We've got the pieces copied, haven't we? They're backed up on tape, aren't they?

JACK: Maybe. Maybe not.

DONALD: God! Did you call Wanda?

JACK: She's here, sir. In the tape room. I'm hoping she'll be able to find the backup tape cartridges for us.

DONALD: You're hoping?? Does she know that Tex Rider is here today? That all of our jobs are at stake if we don't get this research money - including hers? Does she?!

JACK: Uh, Wanda says she's quitting, Dr. Rice.

DONALD: She always says that, Jack.

JACK: She says she's had it this time.

DONALD: That chain-smoking, coffee addict hasn't had it until I've given it to her!

JACK: About ALICE sir?

DONALD: Yes, yes, yes -

JACK: Well it's not just the spots of her memory, it's, well, uh -

DONALD: What else, Jack? Spit it out.

JACK: Well, I brought her back up just now. And I started up the financial predictive capabilities, you know, and then ran the test simulator -

DONALD: Yes, yes, the one that predicts the stock market crash of 1929. And?

JACK: And now ALICE calls it as a bull market that runs straight through until 2004!

DONALD: Bull?!

JACK: Honest, sir, that's what it -

DONALD: Never mind! Here, let me drive! (*DONALD sits at JACK's desk. HE grabs mouse and keyboard, and types and clicks furiously through the next dialogue.*) Look, look, you've already got the kernel program up...

JACK: I know but -

DONALD: ...so let's run her against the 1929 stock market crash data...

JACK: But I already -

DONALD: Alright, alright! Now. Let's see if that does 'er. Come on, ALICE, you can predict for us, can't you? You're a good... little...*(THEY lean in to watch the results on the screen.)*

DONALD and JACK: Ahhh!

DONALD: Where is the damned Depression of the 1930's?

JACK: ALICE is showing no depression, sir.

DONALD: Now that's depressing.

JACK: She is showing another bull market that takes us well into the 21st century.

DONALD: Well, you've really done it, Jack. Well done. Perhaps she can predict forty days of sunshine for Noah and the animals. Or smooth sailing for the Titanic!

JACK: Or a sunny day for Ben Franklin and his kite!

DONALD: Jack!

JACK: Sorry sir.

FLETCH ENTERS with large garbage pail.

DONALD: So she's lost all her memory...

JACK: Well sporadically, she-

FLETCH: Mornin', Jack. Mornin' Don. I've got a good memory, maybe I can remember. Go ahead - ask me anything.

DONALD: It's Dr. Rice to you, Fletch. How many times have I told you that?

FLETCH: Twenty-three. *(Proudly.)* There, you see?!

DONALD: Fletch, we've got a crisis here. Please don't bother -

FLETCH: Someone's in a bad mood this morning.

DONALD: Just take the garbage and go, will you?

FLETCH: No problem there, Don. Then I'm gonna give the floor here a little—

DONALD: Yes, yes.. *(To JACK.)* Does Dean Burder know about this?

FLETCH comes and goes at intervals, mopping and catching critical pieces of the story as HE does so.

JACK: Dean Burder?

DONALD: Yes, you know, angry-looking, sadistic man that pays our checks. DEAN BURDER!

JACK: Oh. Him. No, I haven't told him.

DONALD: Well, that's one thing you've done right. The man's been a terror ever since his wife left him two years ago. Now then, what are we doing about the backups, hmm?

JACK: Well I -

DONALD: *(Suddenly sniffing.)* Wait a minute. I smell smoke! *(Calling angrily toward DSL.)* Wanda. Wanda, is that your cigarette?!

JACK: Dr. Rice, I'd suggest you go easy on her. I had to promise to buy her a pound of Columbian ground roast coffee just to get her in last weekend.

DONALD: Mighty big of you, Jack.

WANDA SAUNTERS in, coffee cup in hand.

WANDA: You rang, oh great one.

DONALD: Cut the bull, Wanda.

JACK: Wanda, we're so glad you're here. We really need -

DONALD: Am I smelling smoke in here?

WANDA: Smells more like a crash, Dr. Rice.

JACK: It's those drives. ALICE went down and -

DONALD: Wanda!

JACK: *(Admonishing.)* Dr. Rice...

DONALD: Wanda. Dear. I've got a dozen Texan investors coming through here at one o'clock. That's one hour and seventeen minutes from now, Wanda...

WANDA: Which number is Mickey's big hand on?

DONALD: ...and I don't want it smelling like the O.K. Corral in here. Surely you can understand that, hmm?

WANDA: Rather have that Listerine smell Fletch is spreading, huh.

DONALD: Wanda, don't make me remind you about our strict no-smoking policy? It's grounds for dismissal.

WANDA: Taste the coffee. Now that's grounds for dismissal.

JACK giggles and is glared at by DONALD. WANDA begins to EXIT.

DONALD: Wanda!

SHE stops.

JACK: ALICE crashed and...

DONALD: We're doing some final testing here....

JACK: ...we need your help finding the backup tapes for ALICE...

DONALD: ...and we've got to find the backup tapes for ALICE...

DONALD and JACK: ...and fast!

WANDA: What's the magic word?

JACK: Dr. Rice?

DONALD: *(Summoning all HIS patience.)* PI-ease.

WANDA: Now that wasn't so hard, was it? I'll find your precious tapes.
And then I'm quitting.

DONALD: It's a deal.

JACK: Dr. Rice.

WANDA: (*To HERSELF.*) God I need a cigarette...(*Singing sarcastically to HERSELF, to the tune of "I Love New York" as SHE EXITS.*) I...LOVE THIS PLACE!

DONALD: There, you see? She loves this place.

JACK: By the way, the hospital called, sir.

DONALD: The hospital?

JACK: Something about tests being negative...?

DONALD: Tests negative?...oh! The tests are negative. Are you positive?

JACK: Absolutely. Negative.

DONALD: Thank God. (*To HIMSELF.*) I certainly wasn't ready for another little one running around in diapers.

JACK: Another what?

DONALD: (*To HIMSELF.*) Jennifer was certainly quite enough. I suppose Terri'll want to know.

JACK: Uh, speaking of your daughter Jenny, I -

DONALD: No.

JACK: I said speaking of Jenny -

DONALD: No, you didn't. You are not speaking of my daughter, Jenny. You may not speak of my daughter, Jenny. You must not. You can not. You will not. There. I think I've given you the full conjugational options, Jack. Now

JACK: But Dr. Rice, Jenny and I have been dating for -

DONALD: And it's been killing me for the same amount of time. Jack! Jenny's an aspiring lawyer at a prominent university studying with a world-renowned professor. You are an average computer science major at a failing university studying with me! (*Considers.*) Okay, you're one for three.

JACK: But I love her, sir.

DONALD: Don't.

JACK: And she loves me, sir.

DONALD: DON'T!! Jack!

JACK: And there's something else I've got to tell you!

DONALD: Jack. Have you taken Chemistry?

JACK: No.

DONALD: Has Jennifer taken Chemistry?

JACK: No, but -

DONALD: You see Jack - between the two of you, there is no chemistry. Do I make myself understood? (*JACK suddenly rises and rushes to the DSR door.*)

DONALD: Where do you think you're going?

JACK: Chemistry, professor - whenever I'm nervous. I need to hit the can.

DONALD: Jack, if we don't get ALICE up and running in exactly one hour and...(*Checks watch.*)...four minutes, we're both going to "hit the can" - in a big way!

JACK: I promise to keep thinking on the way there, sir.

TEX ENTERS, wandering about, unbeknownst to either DONALD or JACK.

JACK: But crash victims aren't easy to fix, Professor. And ALICE crashed bad. (*EXITS.*)

DONALD: (*Calling after HIM.*) I know that, Jack!

TEX: We got a little problem here?

DONALD: Yes! No! Look, no visitors here today. We've got a big demonstration coming up. So run along, and come back tomorrow.

TEX: I'm one of the demonstrat-ees, son.

DONALD: I don't care if you're Tex Rider, you can't -

TEX: But I am Tex Rider.

DONALD: Oh, Mr. Rider! What a pleasure to finally meet you! I am Rice - Dr. Donald Rice, the creator of ALICE. So nice to see you. You are a bit early.

TEX: What's this I heard about ALICE crashing?

DONALD: ALICE crashing? Oh, no, no, no, no, she's just -

TEX: Now isn't ALICE the artsy fartsy name you gave to your new alg-o-rithmic hoo-hah program you're gonna show us.

DONALD: Algorithm? Ah, yes it is the name of my new program...

TEX: Well, is something wrong with your program, Dr. Rice?

DONALD:__Uh---uh, I also named the program after my only daughter...Alice.

TEX: Alice?

DONALD: Yes, Alice. And I'm afraid...she's had a terrible crash this morning.

JACK ENTERS.

TEX: Well, that's a shame, son, a real shame.

DONALD: Yes. Only twenty-three and musta been in the wrong place at the wrong time.

JACK: Who was?

DONALD: Never mind, you twit. Stay out of this!.

TEX: Well, here he is.

DONALD: Who?

TEX: The guy who mentioned the crash.

JACK: That's right. I'm Jack Chisel, Professor Rice's right hand.

DONALD: (*Aside to JACK.*) Remind me to give you a bit of my left hand, will you?

TEX: (*Shaking hands.*) Tex Rider. Glad to meet you, son.

JACK: Glad to -

DONALD: (*Starting to usher TEX out.*) Yes, well, now that we've all met, I'll have to ask -

JACK: Who was in the wrong place at the wrong time?

DONALD: Nobody! Now -

TEX: The professor here's daughter. Terrible dang shame, isn't it?

JACK: Something happened to Jenny?

DONALD: No, Jenny's fine! Mr. Rider, it was a real pleasure -

TEX: Daughter was in a car accident today. Crash victim. Why I heard you sayin' to the doc here that Alice crashed...

JACK: (*To DONALD.*) Yes, but Jenny's been - ?

DONALD: Now, now, Jack, everything's fine...and there isn't much time. Now go work on the code, will you?

TEX: Oh, is there some sort of problem with the code?

DONALD: Huh? Oh. (*Indicating JACK.*) Yes, uh..."bad cold." Jack here's got a bad cold. Still recovering. Congestion and all...

JACK: But I don't -

DONALD: (*To JACK.*) Here take my handkerchief...

JACK: But Jenny -

DONALD: ...and blow! (*JACK reluctantly heads to HIS desk. Through the next, HE picks up the phone trying to call the hospital to check on JENNY.*) Sneezing all of yesterday, you know. Well, I think it's time -

TEX: Poor boy. Didn't seem to know Alice from Jenny.

DONALD: Jenny? Oh Jenny! Jenny, she's our...our other daughter.

TEX: You have another daughter? But I thought you said she was your -

DONALD: ...our only one, yes. Well you see, actually - we're expecting.

TEX: And you've already named the new one Jenny?

DONALD: Uh, yes. Get that out of the way, we thought.

FLETCH: (*Cleaning floor.*) Congratulations, Donald!

DONALD: Thank you, Fletcher.

DR. TERRI RICE ENTERS.

TERRI: Donald! I've just been to Huxley Hall. It's awfully hot in there and—

TEX: You must be Mrs. Rice.

DONALD: Yes, she must be. Now—

TERRI: Actually it's Doctor Rice. I'm a—

DONALD: We're both doctors. She's a gastroenterologist...

TERRI: Stomach disorders, gall bladder, intestines...

DONALD: ...who is just on her way out. Honey—

TEX: I don't care whether she's a bullfrog in a rodeo. Come here little lady! (*Throws a bear hug around HER unexpectedly.*)

TERRI: Well, hello! Who -

TEX: (*Releases HER grinning madly.*) I'm Tex Rider and I'm just as glad as I can be for you two. Havin' another little one is the greatest. Me and Charlene have seven of them rascals!

TERRI: Having another - ?

DONALD: Honey, this is Mr. Tex, uh, Rider? He's our -

TERRI: Yes, nice to meet you, Mr. Rider. Donald, did you get the phone call? Are we - ?

TEX: And what a doggone shame to hear about Alice. I hope she makes it.

TERRI: Donald, something wrong with ALICE again?

DONALD: Darling!

TEX: She's done this before, huh?

DONALD: Well -

TERRI: Oh, yes. Crashing all week.

TEX: You don't say!

TERRI: What is it you say, Donald?

DONALD: Terri, we're really pressed and -

TERRI: "Infested with bugs!" Have I put my finger on it, Donald?

DONALD: You've put you're foot right in it, dear.

TEX: Infested you say? Well shoot, that'd explain the crashes - all that itching and such. What with the little one coming, I'd get her to see a doctor. Don't want that around.

TERRI: Little one? Donald -

DONALD: We will! See you in an hour, Mr. Rider!

TEX: Looks like this is sort of a good news, bad news day, huh?

CHARLENE, pretty and smart, ENTERS DSR looking for TEX.

DONALD: Yeah.

CHARLENE: Tex, there you are.

TEX: Uh oh, my accountant...

DONALD: Oh we can't have your accountant in here –

TEX: ...and also my wife.

DONALD: ...in here uh without us uh meeting her, that is!

TEX: Boys and girls, this here is Charlene. Don't know what I'd do without her.

TERRI: Hello, Charlene. I'm Terri.

CHARLENE: Hi, Terri.

TEX: This here's Rice, the mastermind of that investment hoo-hah program.

SHE sidles up seductively to DONALD, appraising HIM favorably, reaching out and shakes HIS hand, holding onto it too long.

CHARLENE: Well, well, well. I thought you'd be a much...older man. Rice, is it?

DONALD: *(Instantly charmed and tongue-tied.)* That's right, Reese. Rice. Doctor. Dr. Rice. Donald. Doctor Donald Rice!

TERRI: Got them in the right order, did we?

DONALD: Hmm? Yes, well the uh point is you just call me everything, uh anything you want Mrs. uh Rider.

CHARLENE: *(Giggling playfully.)* Oh he's just so cute. *(To TERRI.)* I bet you just want to take him home and play with him.

TERRI: *(Grabbing HIS ear roughly.)* Yes, I plan on giving him an earful later. *(SHE releases HIS ear and HE rubs it, wincing.)*

DONALD: Ow.

CHARLENE: Well, Dr. Donald Rice, I mostly deal with old, stuffy CPA's in my line of work. I'll enjoy working with you. In fact, I'd like the chance to get under the spreadsheets with you later.

DONALD: The uh...?

CHARLENE: The numbers, Dr. Rice. I find them fascinating.

DONALD: Ah yes. The numbers. Yes, well you keep them close to your breast, ah, chest. What I mean is - the competition is stiff, and...

CHARLENE: I'm sure it is. And speaking of numbers, Tex, I'd like to review the capitalization figures and the ROI on this investment.

TEX: There she goes!

TERRI: *(Under HER breath.)* And about time.

CHARLENE: I thought maybe now before the demonstration, darlin'? Before it's too late, hmm?

TEX: Ha, ha - that's my girl. Sharp as a tack and just as suspicious! I keep telling her all work and no play, you know but...

CHARLENE pinches DONALD's bottom. HE jumps.

DONALD: But!! But, she doesn't listen, eh?

TEX: Nope. That's why I took her on this trip with me. Here I am doing all the traveling while she always has to stay home to review the books.

CHARLENE: It gets so lonely.

TEX: Well not this time. Charlene darlin', I said, you're coming with me to check out this investment first hand. *(Checks HIS watch.)* Well boys and girls, tell you what. Charlene and I are gonna bug outta here, so that we can check her figures. OK?

DONALD: Yes, that's perfectly fine.

CHARLENE: *(To DONALD.)* Unless of course, you'd like to review my figures first?

DONALD: Review your...?!

TEX: No, no, Charlene, we need to give Donald and his wife some time to discuss important matters. . I'm sure she can talk to you later, Rice?

DONALD: *(Turning to Mrs. Rider)* Why yes. You can ride me---I mean call me anytime Mrs. Rider.

TERRI: *(Giving Donald a slight bump)* Well, it certainly was nice meeting you.

CHARLENE: Yes, it was.

DEAN BURDER, a powerful looking man with a perpetual scowl, stands in the doorway looking for DONALD.

TEX: But remember...*(Winking at TERRI.)*...expecting a new "little one" can make up for a lot. *(Glancing upward.)* The big guy's gift, you know. Hey, and send some food down, will ya son? I'm starvin'! *(THEY EXIT as DEAN ENTERS and approaches.)*

DONALD: *(Shouting after HIM.)* Food! Sure thing, Tex! *(To HIMSELF.)* Do I look like a waiter? *(Beginning to usher HER out.)* Now, dear, you've got -

TERRI: If that woman comes down here again, I'm going to wing her one!

DONALD: Who, Charlene? Now Terri, she seemed a---a pleasant enough girl.

TERRI: 'Pleasant'? And what's this 'little one' stuff, Donald? Don't tell me the test result came back this morning?!

DONALD: Yes, honey, they phoned it in to me. But --

TERRI: And don't tell me!

DONALD: I won't actually, honey, because --

DEAN: Did I hear someone here is expecting?

TERRI: Dean Burder! Well, Donald was just about to tell me the results of the test. Donald?!

DONALD: Dean Burder, what a pleasure! Actually, there's been a little misuder -

DEAN: Well, I could use some good news, Rice. Been a damned long day already. Hotel reservations got messed up for Mr. Rider and his contingency. Air conditioning is not working in the demo room. Caterers haven't shown up yet. I haven't even met this bigwig Tex Rider. And Baylor lost to Oklahoma State yesterday. Adds up to sixteen Texan investors who are tired, sweaty, hungry, and looking to punt something. Another bad piece of news and I'm liable to go off like a hand grenade. Now. What's the news, Rice? *(Pause.)*

FLETCH: They're expecting.

DONALD: Fletch!

TERRI: *(Throwing arms around DONALD.)* Oh Donald!

DEAN: Good news, Rice.

TERRI: Oh Donald! I can't believe we're having a second child!

DONALD: Neither can I.

TERRI: I have to call Jenny. She'll be so surprised!

DONALD: Terri, that's not a good idea.

DEAN: Rice...

TERRI: She's got to know. She's going to be a big sister! *(Glances back to see JACK on the phone. EXITS to another phone.)*

DEAN: Rice.

DONALD: Terri!

DEAN: Rice!!

DONALD: Sorry, Dean?

DEAN: To the point, Rice - I want to preview ALICE before the investor demo.

DONALD: Preview her?

DEAN: Yes. I want to make sure she's "show ready." As we discussed on the phone, Rice.

DONALD: Right.

DEAN: You've got ten minutes.

JACK rises from chair. Goes to DONALD.

DONALD: Ten...but, Dean Burder, there are---problems---to discuss.

DEAN: Problems?!

DONALD: Problems? Who said---no, no, no - "projects." There are projects to discuss. Projects that need, uh time.

DEAN: Well, if you must, talk while we walk. The rest of the investors are arriving and I've got to check on the air conditioning. But I still expect that preview.

JACK ENTERS USR.

JACK: Professor Rice?

DONALD: Right, Dean. Be right with you...

JACK: Professor Rice? I just...

DONALD: (*Aside to JACK.*) The code, Jack, work the code! Burder wants to see a preview in ten minutes. I'll stall him as long as I can.

JACK: But --

DONALD: JUST WORK THE CODE!

DEAN: I beg your pardon?

DONALD: Huh?

DEAN: Don't tell me there's trouble with the code, Donald.

DONALD: No, no I wouldn't tell you that, Dean. Actually, Jack...has a cold, sir. Nasty!

JACK: But I --

DONALD: (*Under breath.*) Blow, Jack, blow. (*Not understanding, JACK lets out a halfhearted puff of breath from HIS mouth.*) There you see. Poor boy is all stuffed up...

DEAN and DONALD EXIT.

JACK: (*Calling after THEM.*) But what about...? (*Calls OFF SL.*) Wanda?!!

WANDA: (*Poking HER head in.*) Still looking. I found one set of backup tapes - but they're older than my last raise. I'm going outside for a drag. I may be back.

TERRI RE-ENTERS.

JACK: Wanda, did you hear about Jenny? (*SHE takes out a pack of cigarettes and puts one in her mouth, grabbing HER lighter.*)

WANDA: Who?

JACK: Jenny Rice.

WANDA: (*To Terri*) Your daughter - what about her?

TERRI: Do you know what's happened to her?

WANDA flicks HER lighter and holds flame.

JACK: She --

WANDA: Sorry guys, gotta go. Flame's up. (*SHE EXITS USR, holding the flame like a Yuletide candle.*)

TERRI: Jack, what's happened to Jenny?!

JACK: Dr. Rice, I don't know for sure. But sounds like some sort of car accident.

TERRI: Oh my god! When?

JACK: Last night, I guess. I tried Saint Mary's Hospital just now - busy signal.

TERRI: And I couldn't get a hold of her at her apartment just now. Oh my god. My poor baby!

JACK: That's not all of it, Dr. Rice. You see, Jenny is...well, she's...

TERRI: I better go find Donald. Keep trying the hospital! (*Calling out as SHE EXITS.*) Donald!

JACK: But...(*To HIMSELF.*)...we're married and she's pregnant. Ahh!! (*Calling after HER.*) Dr. Rice?? Other Dr. Rice? (*To HIMSELF.*) Why is it so hard to just say "we're married and she's pregnant"?

FLETCH: (*Winks.*) It's okay, boy. She already knows.

JACK: What do you mean she---who?

FLETCH: Dr. Rice's wife, Terri. Jus' heard it.

JACK: She just..from whom?

FLETCH: Jus' heard Donald tell her.

JACK: Dr. Rice told her about the pregnancy?!!

FLETCH: You bet -- told Dean Burder too.

JACK: He what?!! Did -- did he also tell them that we are married?

FLETCH: No, don't think it came up with all the rest of it.

JACK: So they don't know...I'm doomed. He's gonna kill me.

FLETCH: Yep. Everyone seemed pretty pleased about the baby, too. Lotta hugging.

JACK: Hugging?

FLETCH: Didn't think Donald had it in him - at his age.

JACK: I didn't either. I thought he hated me. Were they really happy about it?

FLETCH: You bet. No big kisses, just hugging. Was hoping to see a big ole sloppy kiss like in the movies.

JACK: That's fantastic! That's - Jenny! I've got to find out how she is! Where she is! (*HE runs back to phone. JENNY ENTERS DSL, wearing sunglasses and not wishing to be seen. SHE looks around and spots JACK. SHE sneaks up behind HIM. Into phone.*) This is unbelievable! (*Into phone.*) Yes, yes! I'm trying to locate a Jenny Rice!

JENNY: She's right here, thank you.

JACK: (*Still into phone.*) She is? Well what room is she in?

JENNY: The computer room.

JACK: (*Into phone.*) The computer---(*Looks up to see JENNY. Stunned.*) Jenny!

JENNY: Is there someone else you were expecting?

JACK: (*Hanging up phone.*) Expecting! No I---oh, Jenny!

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

THEY kiss.

FLETCH: (*Mopping floor.*) That's more of what I expected from Donald and Terri. Like a soap opera around here.

JACK: Oh, Jenny, are you alright?

JENNY: Of course, Jack, I'm fine. I just had the weekend off and thought I'd come up and surprise you. Is Daddy here? He'll have a fit if he sees us together.

JACK: No, he just left. But you weren't hurt, then? The accident wasn't bad?

JENNY: What accident, Jack? I really have been away too long, haven't I.

JACK: I heard you were in a car accident - a crash - and I thought...(Looks to HER stomach.)...and then I thought...oh I'm so relieved.

JENNY: I missed you, Jackie -- me and...(SHE pats HER stomach.)...little 'Alice' missed you.

JACK: You still like that name?

JENNY: I think it's cute - little Alice Chisel. And if she's a 'he', we can go for 'Alan.' What do you think?

JACK: Anything you want, honey. I'm just glad you're safe.

THEY hug.

FLETCH: Now, the kissing's much more dramatic I think.

JENNY: Let's get out of here and find some place more private, more cozy, hmm?

JACK: Wait a minute. I didn't tell you the news!

JENNY: Come on!

JACK: He knows!

JENNY: (*Stops.*) He knows?

JACK: He knows you're pregnant. And your mom knows. And Dean Burder knows!

JENNY: Dean...oh my god. How?

JACK: I don't know. But get this - they were happy about it!

JENNY: You're kidding?

JACK: Fletch here said they were hugging each other after the news!

FLETCH: No kissing, mind you, but I suppose they are older parents...

JENNY: But that's...that's great!

DONALD: (*OFFSTAGE.*) Twenty-minutes, Dean Burder. Twenty-five tops!

JENNY: Oh god, it's my dad!

JACK: Ooooh, I have to pee!

JENNY: (*Trying to tug HIM out the USR door.*) Quick, Jack!

DONALD ENTERS in a whirlwind.

DONALD: Listen up Jack. We've got forty-five minutes to get ALICE working, fifteen minutes to get her to Dean Burder's office and - Jenny is here.

JENNY: Hi, Daddy.

DONALD: It's so nice to see you...with HIM?

JENNY: Daddy, Jack's just told me the news. I'm so happy!

JACK: We thought you might, you know, be...upset about the...baby.

DONALD: (*Blankly.*) The baby. (*Realizing.*) The baby! You mean, you know too?

JENNY: Well of course, silly. We'd be the first to know.

DONALD: Yes, your mother's quite the blabber-mouth, isn't she? Well look it's not quite what it seems. You see...

JENNY: I'm going to name her 'Alice.'

DONALD: (*To HIMSELF.*) Oh good---irony lives. (*To JENNY.*) Now don't go naming her already. There may not be a baby after all --- you know--- things happen...

JENNY: Daddy!

JACK: Pardon me, Professor, but what a horrible thing to say.

DONALD: Horrible, you...! (*To JENNY.*) I simply mean that, well, there's been a misunderstanding. (*JACK consoles JENNY USR as MEL, the Australian deli man, ENTERS USR with three boxes of sandwiches - one each labeled 'roast beef,' 'ham,' and 'turkey.' HE also carries a pie box.*) What did I say?

MEL: Deli time, mates. Mel's Deli here to quiet your stomachs, eh. Where do you want the sandwiches, Jack-o?

DONALD: I didn't order any --

MEL: 'ello Professor. Your right-hand mate Jack did. Thought you might be hungry. Right nice fella, you fancy?

DONALD: Not right at all, Mel.

MEL: Where do you want 'em?

DONALD: Over there. What'd he order?

MEL: Got a bunch of each - ham on rye, turkey sandwich, and the roast beef special. 'Tween you and me, mate? Stay away from the roast beef special.

DONALD: The roast beef special?

MEL: On it's last hoof, you know? Now, what can I toss you

DONALD: I don't know - flip me the bird. (*MEL looks at HIM.*) The turkey, give me the turkey!

MEL: Smart choice. (*Tosses HIM sandwich. Puts the rest on counter.*)
Well, I'll just be...

FLETCH: Say Mel, did you hear that Don's expecting.

MEL: What ya say, Fletch?

DONALD: Nothing. (*Stuffs money into HIS hand and leads HIM to door.*) Here --- here's some money. Now off you go, back to deli-land, Mel. It's a busy morning.

FLETCH: A little baby for the Rice's. And at his age!

DONALD: Shut up, Fletch. Now -

MEL: We-ell! Congratulations, Dr. Rice! At your age, this must be a very special one, eh?

DONALD: Oh, it's special alright. Now -

MEL: Two older doctors - going to need "patience," eh?! (*Laughs at HIS joke. FLETCH joins in.*)

FLETCH: Oh that's a good one, Mel.

DONALD: Mel. Mel!

MEL: Well, that's just lovely 'cause I've brought you my special Granny Pie, compliments o' the house then! (*Holds up pie box labeled 'Granny Pie.'*) It's a special meat pie recipe made o' beef, kidney beans, a little paprika - here, I'll cut you a slice and -

DONALD: MEL, NO! No you won't. Thank you, thank you very much, and off you go.

FLETCH: Humbled by the whole experience, I think.

MEL: Well, g'day then, Dr. Rice. Fletch. (*MEL EXITS.*)

FLETCH: "G'day!" I always think he's gonna ask me to put another "shrimp on the barbie"!

DONALD: (*Throwing sandwich at FLETCH.*) Why don't you put this in your Barbie, will you?

FLETCH: (*Catching it.*) Thanks. Member of the class football team, nineteen hundred and thirty-three, you know.

DONALD: Good god...

JACK and JENNY move stage center from USR

JACK: Dr. Rice? I just had a thought.

DONALD: Well, shall we take the day off to celebrate or are YOU GOING TO TELL ME WHAT IT IS?!

JENNY: Oh, Daddy...

DONALD: Jennie, this is business -- stay out of this.

JACK: It's just...Wanda can't find the tapes.

DONALD: The tapes?

JACK: The backup tapes. So it doesn't look like Alice got backed up recently and I -(*JENNY laughs and pats HER stomach knowingly. Now to JENNY.*) No I...(Realizes, back to DONALD.)...so I don't... (*JENNY and JACK chuckle*)

DONALD: What in the world is so funny?

JACK: (*Laughing.*) Nothing, just "Alice", you know, and we've decided to name the...

JENNY: (*Laughing, and patting tummy.*)...all "backed up"...

JACK: (*Through laughter.*) We won't be able to recover Alice!

Peals of laughter.

DONALD: (*Sarcastically*) Oh well, now I see the joke.

JACK: (*Continuing*) But I...I was thinking maybe we could use the prototype code from last year. You know, SARAH? Maybe they wouldn't -

DONALD: SARAH?

JACK: Yes, sir. SARAH, sir.

DONALD: No. No good. SARAH doesn't do half of what ALICE does, you nitwit.

JACK: But, sir, I thought perhaps for the, you know, preview with Dean Burder?

DONALD: Preview?

JACK: With Dean Burder? In ten minutes? I don't think Dean's ever -

DONALD: Dean Burder's never seen this thing! Doesn't know what to expect! I may have something here...

JACK: I'll get SARAH spun up, sir -

DONALD: Jack, don't just stand there. Get SARAH spun up, for god's sake!

JACK: Yes, sir. Wanda! Wanda! (*EXITS SL calling for WANDA.*)

JENNY: Daddy, you shouldn't talk to Jack that way?

DONALD: Huh? Now look, Jenny, this is no time to discuss this. I'm very -

JENNY: But after all, what with the pregnancy and everything...

DONALD: The pregnancy?

JENNY: Yes, you know, the pregnancy?

FLETCH: The one you told the missus doctor about, Don.

DONALD turns to FLETCH, and in a rage pushes HIS rolling mop pail out the door SL.

FLETCH: Well now that wasn't -

Sound of crash, water, and screams. FLETCH EXITS after it.

DONALD: Now about the pregnancy, Jenny. Listen, your mother and I -

JENNY: Don't say anything horrible again, Daddy. It's no use pretending. I know you're happy about it. Jack said you were.

DONALD: Happy? Well, yes. No. Look, we've got to -

JENNY: Oh, I know, there's so much to talk about. It's so exciting! And now I won't be alone any more when you have Jack working late at night.

DONALD: Alone? Look, being an only child is not the worst thing in the world.

JENNY: Not an only child, silly - there'll be more!

DONALD: More? Just how young do you think your mother and I are?!

JENNY: Oh Daddy, isn't it exciting?

DONALD: Exciting just isn't the word.

JENNY: Imagine what she'll -

DONALD: Yes, yes, can we play 'imagine' later, hmm? Why don't you be a good girl and...and - (*Spots sandwiches.*)...and take some sandwiches to Tex Rider and his cronies, hmm? That'll keep his mouth busy doing something it knows how to do. (*HE moves to the computer screen, deep in thought.*)

JENNY: Sure Daddy. (*At table.*) Roast beef okay?

DONALD: Hmm?

JENNY: Roast beef?

DONALD: Fine, fine!

JENNY: Right. See you soon...grandpa!

SHE grabs box of roast beef sandwiches and EXITS. HE shoots HER a look of confusion. And in come JACK and WANDA, talking as THEY ENTER.

JACK: So it's just the old copy of SARAH we're looking for.

WANDA: So now that ALICE is dead he's bringing in her understudy.

JACK: Well - ha, ha - yes, in a manner of speaking.

WANDA: Wonder if he'll do the same thing with me.

JACK: Now Wanda, let's just concentrate on ALICE and SARAH.

WANDA: You know, even with hurricanes, every other one's named after a male.

JACK: Yes, well -

DONALD: (*Coming over to THEM.*) Well, that's all very interesting, Wanda, but none of it matters right now as we're TRYING to save the UNIVERSITY by getting a PROTOTYPE of SARAH up SO THAT DEAN BURDER CAN PREVIEW THE DARN THING, SO

THAT TEX RIDER CAN INVEST HIS PENNY-PINCHING MONEY INTO THIS COED 'HOUSE OF LEARNING'!!

WANDA: Wonder if there's a "Hurricane Don."

JACK: What I think she's -

DONALD: Just get SARAH running NOW. Please! Before I run after you!

FLETCH RE-ENTERS with rag and spray bottle.

WANDA: That's it. THAT is IT! I quit!

JACK: No, no you don't, Wanda! Please -

DONALD: You're not quitting until you get ALICE back up and running!

JACK: Sir, I -

WANDA: Oh I'm not, am I? Well you can have ALICE for all I care! I -

FLETCH: An affair with Alice? Didn't even know she worked here.

DONALD: Oh that's rich, Wanda. ALICE has been footing the bill for your paycheck for two years now!

FLETCH: So Wanda found out about you and Miss Alice, and now Alice is paying off Wanda?

DONALD: Fletch!

WANDA: Yeah? Well if she's footing the bill for my paycheck, she must have an awful small foot.

FLETCH: Don't be too hard on him. Found out he was pregnant today, you know.

WANDA: Really? (*Looking at HIS belly.*) And I always thought it was just lack of exercise.

DONALD: Jack, please - do something!

JACK: Please Wanda! Get us through today and, and I'll throw in another pound of Columbian! Wanda, do it for me, hmm?

WANDA: I'd rather do it to him!

JACK: Please!

SHE is reluctantly led to the computer by JACK.

DONALD: (*To HIMSELF.*) God, fifteen minutes 'til Dean Burder gets here for the preview. Only another fifty-five minutes 'til my career ends.

TERRI bursts in.

TERRI: Oh there you are, Donald! I've been looking all over.

DONALD: Not now, honey, I -

TERRI: What has happened to Jenny?

DONALD: What's happened to...?

TERRI: I heard about the crash, Don. How is she? Is it bad?

DONALD: The crash? (*Dawning on HIM.*) Oh the...who told you about the crash?

TERRI: Jack did. He was very upset. So am I. How is she?

DONALD: Just a minute, dear. (*Walking back to JACK.*) Ja--ck?

JACK: Yes, Professor?

DON smacks HIM on the head, and walks back to TERRI. JACK immediately has to pee and runs off USR. WANDA EXITS SL to examine computer tapes.

DONALD: Now darling, it's all a big misunderstanding.

TERRI: Oh, thank goodness. So Jenny is...?

DONALD: Nothing to worry about, darling. She's absolutely -

TEX RIDER ENTERS finishing a sandwich.

TEX: Boy, I woofed this puppy! I am dad-gum stuffed like a prize pig. Wanted to thank you there Donald. Not the fanciest food I've ever had but this here roast beef sandwich hit the spot.

DONALD: Glad to hear it, Mr. Rider. Now --

TEX: Came back to see if you had any more. The rest of the herd in there is as hungry as a one-toothed horse at a feeding trough.

TERRI: Hello again, Mr. Rider.

DONALD: Darling, not -

TEX: Hey there, li'l lady, you call me Tex. Now how is your daughter, ma'am? Alice, right? Doing better after that crash?

TERRI: Well Tex, Donald was just saying that Jenny -

DONALD: - is immaterial because our daughter is recovering slowly, you know.

TERRI: Donald!

DONALD: (*Ushering HIM to DSR EXIT.*) Limping, hard to breathe, thanks for asking, good-bye—good-bye---good-bye.

TERRI: Donald, really! I am going to find Jack. Maybe he'll tell me what's happened to our daughter.

DONALD: Terri!

SHE EXITS USR. JENNY ENTERS SR smiling.

TEX: Poor Alice.

DONALD: Huh?

TEX: (*Wincing with indigestion.*) Woah! That sandwich is starting to bottom out.

JENNY: Well, Daddy, they are all fed and quiet.

TEX: There's the li'l girl that saved me with the sandwich. "Daddy"?
You must be his daughter, Alice.

JENNY: (*Chuckling, and indicating stomach.*) Oh, no, no, Alice is my

TEX: Fast recovery, huh?

JENNY: Recovery...?

DONALD discreetly steps on HER foot hard. SHE bends over in pain, limping around, and breathing hard.

JENNY: Ahh!

TEX: Oh dear.

DONALD: Pain comes and goes, comes and goes. Has good spells and bad spells, you know.

TEX: Pity. (*Grabs stomach.*)...ooh. Guess I musta ate too fast.

MEL ENTERS in a whirl, USR, pie box in hand.

DONALD: I'll have Jack try to find you some Pepto -

MEL: (*Drops pie box on table and runs to THEM.*) DON'T!!!

FLETCH: I always liked "G'day" much better, Mel.

DONALD: Mel, not now!

MEL: But the sandwiches -

TEX: (*Winces again, clutching stomach.*) Woah, them doggies are restless.

DONALD: Mel, please!

MEL: You mustn't eat the roast beef sandwiches, Professor! We just found out!

TEX moans and doubles over.

DONALD: (*Grabbing a chair for HIM.*) What?!

MEL: The roast beef - it's got some kind of fungus!

FLETCH: In the mushroom family, is it?

MEL: I've got customers heading to the hospital in herds right now!

TEX plops down moaning on floor next to DONALD's offered chair.

DONALD: OH MY GOD!

JENNY recovers and punches DONALD in arm.

DONALD: Ow!

JENNY: You stamped on my -

DONALD: I'll explain later

MEL: Did you give 'im the roast beef, then?

JENNY: Yes, I...what's wrong with him?

DONALD: (*Starts to go after MEL.*) Nothing a little game of 'Kill the Waiter' wouldn't cure!

DEAN: (*Calling from OFF SR.*) Rice! Donald! It's time! Where is that blasted...?

DONALD: Oh my god, Dean Burder's coming.

FLETCH: Oh good. He'll know what to do with Mr. Rider.

JENNY: Daddy, this is all my fault!

DONALD: (*To JENNY and MEL, indicating USL.*) Quick, you and you put old Tex here into...into my office.

MEL: But...?

DONALD: NOW!

MEL and JENNY drag TEX USL and EXIT through door into RICE's office. BURDER ENTERS USR.

DONALD: Dean Burder, how nice of --

DEAN: What are you running here, Rice, a zoo? The whole school is hanging on these investors and you can't even keep a 10-minute appointment with me! Now I want to see a preview, and I want to see it now!

JENNY ENTERS in a lather, going to DONALD.

DONALD: Don't you worry, Dean Burder. Everything is under control.

JENNY: Mr. Rider is unconscious!

DEAN: Unconscious?!

DONALD: Yes, yes, he's...unconsciously wild about our ALICE.

DEAN: Young lady, has something happened to our chief investor?

DONALD: (*Simultaneous.*) No!

JENNY: (*Simultaneous.*) Yes!

DEAN: I'll hold you personally responsible for this, Rice.

DONALD: (*Simultaneous.*) He's fine.

JENNY: (*Simultaneous.*) He's sick.

DONALD: Sick. Yes, sick of waiting around for the demo. But no need to worry, Dean, just one more hour.

JENNY: But -

DONALD: Jenny here was just - have you met my daughter Jenny? Jenny, this is -

DEAN: Donald! If Tex Rider is fine, where is he? I want to see him.

DONALD: You...want to see him?

DEAN: Yes!

DONALD: And see him you shall, after the demo. So just -

DEAN: NOW!

DONALD: Yes, now, well...Well! *(With an idea, to JENNY with meaning.)* He was just eating a sandwich from Mel's Deli. He's from Texas, you know, a drawl and a cowboy hat which I'm sure would fit Mel. I'm sure we can find HIM Jenny, hmm?

DEAN: Rice!

DONALD: Yes, well it so happens he's resting in my office. Jenny? Would you please get him down here?

JENNY: But...but he needs to get to a hosp -

DONALD: Yes, yes, we'll worry about that in a moment, dear. Just get "Tex" and his hat and his drawl down here to talk to Dean now. Just for a moment. Then I can go and straighten up the rest of my office.

JENNY: But...

DONALD: Do it!

SHE EXITS USL to get MEL ready as the stand-in for TEX. WANDA ENTERS DSL.

DEAN: Now about that preview, Rice...

DONALD: Yes, Dean, well I'm afraid there's been a slight -

WANDA: - delay, Dean Burder. Delay, but now we're ready.

DONALD: Wanda, what are you talking about? We're not -

WANDA: It's SARAH, your worship.

DONALD: Sarah?

WANDA: SARAH. She's loaded and ready to go.

DONALD: *(Excited.)* Loaded!

DEAN: Who the devil is Sarah? And why is she drunk on the premises?

WANDA: Drunk?

DONALD: SARAH is loaded! Terrific! Splendid!

DEAN: You approve of this behavior?

DONALD: Dean Burder, I believe we're ready to show you a preview of ALICE. *(To HIMSELF, as HE checks HIS watch.)* Where the devil is Jack?

WANDA: He's still looking for pieces of ALICE, oh great one.

DONALD: Wanda! *(To DEAN.)* Now, if you'll step this way, Dean...

DEAN: Wait a minute! I do want to meet Tex Rider. I do insist on seeing a preview. But I do not want some floozy on the premises drunk in the middle of the most important investment briefing this school has ever had! Now who is Sarah? *(Pause.)*

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DONALD: Who is Sarah? Who is Sarah. Sounds like a song, doesn't it? *(Singing.)* "QUE SARAH, SARAH..."

DEAN: Rice!

DONALD: Yes, well, you see she's...well she's...*(Pause.)*

WANDA: She's my evil twin sister.

DONALD: She is?!

WANDA: Yeah, what the heck.

DEAN: Your evil...well get her off the premises now, unless you want to lose your job!

DONALD: Bad choice of threats, Dean. Wanda, pl-ease!

WANDA: *(Exasperated, turns to DSR. With sarcasm.)* Oh look. There's Sarah, my evil twin sister now. Sarah, you drunken twit - can I bum a cigarette? *(SHE EXITS DSR.)*

DONALD: Now for the preview, sir...I do wish Jack were here.

DEAN: Dr. Rice. I will see your preview. But I am telling you now that if I don't see this mythical investor Tex Rider - alive and well - in five seconds, the only Rice there'll be at this university is the converted kind in the school cafeteria! Five, four, three, two -

MEL bursts in from DSL, being pushed in by JENNY. HE wears a cowboy hat that is too big, and TEX's clunky boots. HE still has HIS apron on. Trying desperately to play a cowboy, HE swaggers to CS.

DEAN: Are you...Tex Rider?

MEL: *(In Cockney.)* G'day...

DEAN squints at MEL. DON glares at MEL who makes amends quickly in HIS best attempt at a southern accent.

MEL: ...y'awl!

BLACKOUT. *End of Act One.*

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