

The first scene of The Redness Of The Woodpecker which won the Morton R. Sarett National Playwrighting Award in 2001.

THE REDNESS OF THE WOODPECKER

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IN THE DARK. SOUND OF BUS COMING. LIGHTS SWEEP ACROSS THE STAGE. BUS COMES TO STOP WITH AIR BRAKES. DOOR OPENS

WILLIAM PILOT

(IN THE DARK) Hey ! Don't ! What's going on. Leave the suitcase alone. You can't...This isn't a stop. I'm not getting out...keep your hands off...you can't leave me here...this is a hundred miles from nowhere. (SCUFFLE. DOOR CLOSES) You stupid bastard !! (BUS LEAVES AND DAWN BREAKS REVEALING A SWIRL OF DUST AND A LONE FIGURE STANDING WITH A SUITCASE FACING UPSTAGE. HE SLOWLY TURNS IN A CIRCLE. CONFUSED AND DROPS SUITCASE) Damn !!

ENTER EDGAR, VERY HUNCHED, OLD MAN, TATTERED SPORTS COAT HANGING OFF HIS FRAME. WALKING WITH QUICK LITTLE STEPS. A BIT CROOKED FROM ANY DIRECTION

EDGAR

Hey, hey, hey, hey. What's this ? A dried up pod or slippery seal. Old tin can by the side of the road ? Better git on, whatever you are. You can't stay here, you, you...Go on. Git. Git !

WILLIAM PILOT

Wait !

EDGAR

Git on.

WILLIAM PILOT

Wait, old man. Hold on a second.

EDGAR

(FREEZING IN PLACE FOR FIVE SECONDS) How's that ? About five seconds, I reckon. Now git on out of here or I'm gonna have to hurt you.

WILLIAM PILOT
You're kidding me.

EDGAR
Git.

WILLIAM PILOT
Who the hell are you ?

EDGAR
(INDIGNANT) You don't know ? Why that's cause for further violence right there !!

WILLIAM PILOT
How could I possibly know who you are.

EDGAR
Welllllll, you look halfway intelligent. Although that could just be the suit. I'll give you a hint.
But ya gotta think waaay back, waaay back. O.K. Here it is...the hint...ready....(PAUSE FOR EFFECT)...What famous Greek poet wrote about the Trojan War ?

WILLIAM PILOT
You mean Homer ?

EDGAR
Well, I'll be damned, it isn't the suit. Yes, my boy ! You got it!! Congratulations. That's me.

WILLIAM PILOT
That's you ? (LAUGHING) You don't look a couple of thousand years old.

EDGAR
So. Maybe I got a secret diet.

WILLIAM PILOT
And besides, you know, he was blind.

EDGAR
Blind ? Who said that ! Me, blind ? Do I look blind ? Then again, how do the blind look ? Ahhh, what do you know. History put my eyes out for its own reasons. But I saw what I saw, and wrote some of the greatest works of Western Literature. Know what they were, huh?

WILLIAM PILOT
Homer wrote, or is supposed to have written The Iliad and The Odyssey.

EDGAR
And...?

WILLIAM PILOT
And what ? That's it, I think.

EDGAR
Well, think again and listen up, buddy boy. Four other books flowed from my pen, snatched away by lousy literary Schliemanns and sold over the centuries to insecure hacks who published them as works of their own. "A Tale Of Two Cities" was my first novel.

WILLIAM PILOT
What ?

EDGAR
Second one was "Moby Dick".

WILLIAM PILOT
That's impossible.

EDGAR
What can I say, I love the ocean. "From Here To Eternity". Wrote that for my dear wife. And last but not least, "The Naked And The Dead". I don't know why I wrote that...kinda doubles back to earlier themes I suppose...

WILLIAM PILOT
Norman Mailer wrote...

EDGAR
But Norman sure as hell didn't !! (LOOKING OUT INTO THE VOID, SPEAKING INTENSELY BUT QUIETLY) Norman, Norman, you should have been ashamed of yourself, sitting there fat and happy in Brooklyn. (TURNING BACK TO WILLIAM) What is happiness anyway ? "Happiness"...no, let's not get into that...I can't stand "what is" questions. Can you ? What is this, what is that....I Can't stand people sitting around defining everything and not spending any time living it. Definition is the tail end of the dog, my boy. The tail gets your attention, gives you some idea of the nature of the beast, but that ain't the part you pet, is it ?

WILLIAM PILOT
(CONFUSED) Pardon ?

EDGAR
The tail. The dog's tail. You don't pet a dog's tail.

WILLIAM PILOT

No.

EDGAR

“No” is right ! “No sir” would be better. So let’s, you and I, consider the whole hound then. Start at the tip of the whiskers, rush back through the moist hallways of the nose, the the elevator to the brain, pop those bushy eyebrows skyward, cock the ears to attention, get that canine, like Argos, ageless at any age, standing on tippy-toe pads, asshole slammed shut with excitement, ELECTRIFIED ! (PAUSE) What’s your name son.

WILLIAM PILOT

What the hell is going on ?

EDGAR

Oh, an Indian name. Is that hyphenated ?

WILLIAM PILOT

(PICKING UP SUITCASE. BEGINS TO LEAVE) I’m leaving.

EDGAR

Wait, Chief. No one starts out wanting to be here, not in the beginning anyway. You’re all of a sudden just here, and you got to deal with it. (WILLIAM STOPS) You got places to go ?

WILLIAM PILOT

Damn right I do, and as soon as the next bus comes through here, believe me, I...

EDGAR

Next bus ? What next bus ? This ain’t a bus stop.

WILLIAM PILOT

I’ve been trying to tell you I got thrown off the bus here.

EDGAR

Here ?

WILLIAM PILOT

Yes!

EDGAR

You musta done something awfully nasty.

WILLIAM PILOT

I was sleeping...

EDGAR

Is that so...

WILLIAM PILOT

The driver just threw me off.

EDGAR

Driver ?

WILLIAM PILOT

The bus driver.

EDGAR

You came on a bus ?

WILLIAM PILOT

I just said that!

EDGAR

I don't recall...

WILLIAM PILOT

I just did. Just now !

EDGAR

Alright, alright. Keep your shirt on. (TAKES SMALL BOOK FROM HIS JACKET POCKET. LEAFS THROUGH IT) Maybe it's the gum.

WILLIAM PILOT

What's the book for ?

EDGAR

Never you mind. (FINDS HIS PAGE) No, you're right. You said that.(PUTS BOOK AWAY)

WILLIAM PILOT

Of course I did.

EDGAR

A bit offhandedly, but you said it. Big guy ?

WILLIAM PILOT

Who?

EDGAR

The bus driver.

WILLIAM PILOT

Big enough. Half drunk bastard.

EDGAR

Half drunk ?! I can't stand people who do things half way. When I git drunk, I git 100 percent shit-faced or I don't even exercise my wrist!

WILLIAM PILOT

Where am I ?

EDGAR

How would I know. I got thrown off that same bus myself. (wistfully) Seems like yesterday. Want a piece of gum ?

WILLIAM PILOT

What?

EDGAR

Stick of gum.

WILLIAM PILOT

You were thrown off that bus yesterday?

EDGAR

Seems like it.....I had a ticket here somewhere. Never mind. Have a stick of gum (OFFERS GUM) The gum's real good here. Chemicals in it tend to twist the 'ol body right up, but makes you want to fight like a tiger !

WILLIAM PILOT

I just want out of here.

EDGAR

Me too!! (grabbing onto William)

WILLIAM PILOT

Hey, let go. Get away from me.

EDGAR

Have a stick of gum.

WILLIAM PILOT

Get away !

EDGAR

Relax, I'm only kidding about the gum.

WILLIAM PILOT

I don't like gum.

EDGAR

That's what they all said.

WILLIAM PILOT

What? Who?

EDGAR

(CACKLING) Nobody. Just pulling your leg. Well, no use standing around here.(TURNING TO GO) Come on into town. If you want to get out you usually got to go through, Mr.....?

WILLIAM PILOT

Pilot. William Pilot.(RETRIEVING HIS SUITCASE) Wait, Mr....

EDGAR

(LEAVING, SINGING) "Sing, O goddess, the anger of Achilles, son of Peleus...

WILLIAM PILOT

O.K. Homer. Homer, not so fast !

EDGAR

Gotta get moving. The days fly by. (TURNS TO WILLIAM) How do you like it out here, anyway.

WILLIAM PILOT

How am I supposed to know...

EDGAR

Yes ?

WILLIAM PILOT

It's....it's...flat.

EDGAR

It is! But don't let the flat bother you too much. It lets your eyes stretch and makes a small rise mean something. Ha-ha. Let's go. THEY EXIT STAGE LEFT IMMEDIATELY FROM THE STAGE RIGHT, TWO INDIVIDUALS ENTER DRESSED THE SAME AS EDGAR AND WILLIAM. AS THEY MOVE ACROSS THE STAGE LIGHTS SLOWLY COME UP ON THE "WOODPECKER" THE SHELL OF A 1954 FIVE WINDOW CHEVY PICKUP. SOME SENSE OF SKITTERING WITHIN THE SHELL. IMPOSTERS MOVE TOWARD STAGE LEFT OF THE "WOODPECKER" AS WILLIAM AND EDGAR ENTER STAGE RIGHT. A PARALLEL CROSS

WILLIAM PILOT

Hey. Who are those two.

EDGAR

Harbingers. The place is full of them.(HARBINGERS EXIT STAGE LEFT)

WILLIAM PILOT

Harbingers?

EDGAR

Tell you about it later. How about that truck, huh?

WILLIAM PILOT

Man.

EDGAR

54 Chevy five window half-ton. I call it the "Woodpecker". Bright red a long time ago, bit faded now. "All but one fire out", as Mr. Thomas would say.

WILLIAM PILOT

I'd say it's ready for the scrap heap.

EDGAR

Don't let me hear you say that. There's a ton of miles left in this baby. After all, it's my home.

WILLIAM PILOT

Your...

EDGAR

Home.

WILLIAM PILOT

Home. Then where do you sleep ?

EDGAR

Wherever it's comfortable.

WILLIAM PILOT

O.K. Fine. Just take me into town, will you.

EDGAR

This is town.

WILLIAM PILOT

Here?

EDGAR
Here.

WILLIAM PILOT
This is town?

EDGAR
You bet.

WILLIAM PILOT
There's no town here. It's a broken down, rusted out hunk of metal.

EDGAR
Lotta towns look that way, son.

WILLIAM PILOT
No.

EDGAR
Tight little community.

WILLIAM PILOT
You're not serious.

EDGAR
Oil change every two thousand miles.

WILLIAM PILOT
Not this wreck.

EDGAR
C'mon, boy. Look closer, son. That's just the tip of the iceberg. Know what I mean?

WILLIAM PILOT
No, I don't.

EDGAR
Well, then you're always gonna be left with just the tip, ain't ya.(TO THE PICKUP)
Hallooooo ! (TO WILLIAM) That's a nice suitcase you got there. Italian leather?

WILLIAM PILOT
Just leave it alone.

EDGAR

Fine. No need to get touchy. (TO THE PICKUP) Halllooooo.(TO WILLIAM) What are you anyway, young doctor, legal eagle on the prowl. That suit wasn't made out of a sack.

WILLIAM PILOT
I...

EDGAR
(TO PICKUP) Wake up in there. (TO WILLIAM) A young Telemachus you are, if I ever saw one.

WILLIAM PILOT
Look, I have to go.

EDGAR
Of course you do. Everybody's on their way. A journey not unlike your daddy's.

WILLIAM PILOT
What's my father got to do with this ? What are you babbling about. If you stop for a moment I'll tell you who I am.

EDGAR
(LAUGHING FROM THE PICKUP. EDGAR LAUGHS AS A CONTINUANCE.) If you stop for a moment, you might find out who you are. Who are you. Doesn't much matter now, this is a new reality. Hallloooo in there. (HEAD STICKS UP IN THE CAB)

CLIFF
Who is it?

EDGAR
Who else is it going to be, Cliff.

CLIFF
I can dream, can't I ?

EDGAR
He's always hoping one of those pin-ups will hop off the shop wall and into his lap.

WILLIAM PILOT
Edgar? He...he called you Edgar.

EDGAR
Hah, forget it. Corinthian nickname.

CLIFF
Who's the fella next to you, Edgar.

EDGAR

Came in on the bus, CLiff.

CLIFF

I'll be. On the bus. How do you do, mister. (OFFERS PIECE OF GUM) Have a piece of gum?

WILLIAM PILOT

(JUMPING BACK) I'm not having any of that.

CLIFF

You already got him jittery, I see.

EDGAR

I think it's genetic.

CLIFF

Don't pay him any attention. What's your name?

WILLIAM PILOT

William. Bill.

CLIFF

Bill it is. Welcome to town, Bill. I'm Cliff. (LOOKING INTO THE BOWELS OF THE TRUCK) Folks, we got company. (PEOPLE POP UP ALL OVER THE TRUCK)

TOWNSPEOPLE

(SINGING) Helloworld, Bill !!! (ALL DISAPPEAR)

CLIFF

Little loud, folks. Scared him half to death. Sorry, boy. We don't get visitors that often and the enthusiasm just builds and builds I guess. Thirsty at all, son? Offer you something to drink? Water, soda, a beer, maybe ?

WILLIAM PILOT

Thanks, I just need a phone, if you...

CLIFF

A phone? Did he say phone?(CLIFF AND EDGAR LAUGH)

EDGAR

Dig a trench, lay a cable, send up your very own satellite.

TUFF-TUFF TWINS ENTER. ONE FROM EACH END OF THE PICK-UP

FIRST TUFF

Hey you. Hey you. Yeah, I'm talking to you. Come over here, will ya. C'mere. Yeah.

LAST TUFF

(FROM THE OTHER END OF THE TRUCK) Yeah.

FIRST TUFF

(WILLIAM APPROACHES FIRST TUFF) You see that guy over there?

WILLIAM PILOT

Which one?

FIRST TUFF

The big one.(POINTING TO SECOND TUFF) Yeah.

LAST TUFF

Yeah.

WILLIAM PILOT

Yes.

FIRST TUFF

He just told me he wants to kick your butt. (LOOKING AT SECOND TUFF) Yeah ?

LAST TUFF

Yeah.

WILLIAM PILOT

What for?

FIRST TUFF

I don't know.

WILLIAM PILOT

He can't mean me. I don't even know him.

FIRST TUFF

So.

WILLIAM PILOT

I just got into town. It must be some mistake.

FIRST TUFF

Well, I don't know. How 'bout I go ask him.

WILLIAM PILOT

Please, it's not me. I'm sure.

FIRST TUFF

Yeah?

WILLIAM PILOT

Yeah.

LAST TUFF

(FIRST TUFF WALKS OVER TO SECOND TUFF. THEY CONFER) Yeah.

WILLIAM PILOT

(TO EDGAR) Do you know those guys? (EDGAR SHRUGS. FIRST TUFF RETURNS)

FIRST TUFF

No, it's you alright.

WILLIAM PILOT

What?

FIRST TUFF

He says you make him itch.

WILLIAM PILOT

I what?

FIRST TUFF

You make him itch. Look at him.(SECOND TUFF SCRATCHING)

WILLIAM PILOT

That's ridiculous. It's not me. It...It....could be anything. Maybe he's allergic to something he ate. Or pollen. Or maybe its poison ivy.

FIRST TUFF

Huh, never thought of that.

WILLIAM PILOT

Well, ask him, will you ?

FIRST TUFF

Alright, I will.(WALKS OVER TO LAST TUFF, CONFERS, RETURNS) No, he says it's definitely you.(LAST TUFF SCRATCHING INTENSIFIES)

LAST TUFF

Now I'm breakin' out in a rash, dammit.(STARTS TO MOVE TOWARD WILLIAM.FIRST TUFF RUNS OVER TO RESTRAIN HIM)

WILLIAM PILOT
GEEZ!

FIRST TUFF
(RUNNING BACK TO WILLIAM) I can't stop him no more.(STARTS ITCHING) Now you got me started. Ah. Ah. Ah. Oh my god. (BOTH TUFFS ITCHING, WHICH SPREADS TO EDGAR AND CLIFF)

EDGAR
Well, now you've done it.

WILLIAM PILOT
I didn't do anything.

EDGAR
For someone doin' nothing, you sure got a lot of people doing something. Keep it up, you could be the head of a religious organization.(LAUGHTER FROM TRUCK. ALL DISAPPEAR BUT EDGAR)

WILLIAM PILOT
(GOING FOR SUITCASE) I'm outta here, Homer, Edgar, whatever the hell your name is. I'm going back to where the bus left me.

EDGAR
(GETTING TO SUITCASE FIRST) You can't leave yet, you haven't met everybody.(CAN'T PICK IT UP) Boy, what are you carrying in this ?

WILLIAM PILOT
Give me the suitcase.

EDGAR
You got a baseball team in here?

WILLIAM PILOT
Give it to me.

EDGAR
You sell encyclopedias?

WILLIAM PILOT
(CAN'T PICK IT UP EITHER) What's going on. Get away from me, you and your crazy friends.

EDGAR
They're not crazy, they're focused.

WILLIAM PILOT

I'm leaving. (STILL TRYING TO MOVE THE SUITCASE)

CLIFF

(POPPING UP AT ONE END OF THE TRUCK) Hey, Bill, leave the suitcase. C'mon over here and looky here. C'mon. Over here.

WILLIAM PILOT

Oh no.

CLIFF

C'mon. You gotta see this, you really do. It's the dangdest thing.(WILLIAM APPROACHES) Lookit right here. Right down this here big hole.

WILLIAM PILOT

Is there a bus in it? I could use a bus right now.

CLIFF

Bus? Bus down this hole? (LAUGHS UPROARIOUSLY, EDGAR JOINS IN) That's the craziest thing I ever heard.(MYSTERIOUSLY) But it's deep alright. Real deep. Deeper'n the day is long. Deeper'n the night is dark. You can see down this here hole all the way to China.

WILLIAM PILOT

Yeah, sure.(TURNING TO EDGAR) Crazy.

CLIFF

You don't believe me ? No ? Looky here. In't China always at the other end of a deep hole.

WILLIAM PILOT

I don't know.

CLIFF

Well, think about it for a second. That's what they say, in't? Well?

WILLIAM PILOT

That's what they say.

CLIFF

Yep. So...

WILLIAM PILOT

So I guess you're right.

CLIFF

Course I'm right. We're both right. You like wonton soup?

WILLIAM PILOT

Never tried it.

CLIFF

(YELLING DOWN THE HOLE) Two soups!!

WILLIAM PILOT

(BREAKING AWAY) I have to go right now, Cliff. (HEADS BACK TOWARD EDGAR BUT INTERCEPTED BY OLD MAN COMING OUT OF NOWHERE WHO DRAGS HIM STAGE RIGHT)

BERTIE

Ahhh, ahhhh, ahhhh. Listen. Listen to me. Forget him. I don't know if I've got enough strength to say this more than once.(DEEP RACKING COUGH. LOOKS IN WILLIAM'S FACE) I'm dying, son...dying, dying, slipping away. Look at my eyes. You see it? No, no, no, in the corners. Wait, I'll pull the skin back. I can't pull the skin back, my hands are shaking too much. You pull the skin back...in the corners...see that color? Awful, isn't it. Ahhhh. It's a pallet of chaos, boy, absolute chaos.

WILLIAM PILOT

(LOOKING FOR HELP) I'm....

BERTIE

Total chaos.

WILLIAM PILOT

I'm just...why don't you sit down here and rest.

BERTIE

Don't make me bend down, son. My skin tears if I bend too far. Ahhh, my gums, ahhh, look at my gums. Wait, wait. Are they bleeding again? Are they? Tell me if they're bleeding again. Tell me the truth. It's Niagra Falls in there ain't it. Ahhhh.(BEGINS TO FALL OVER) HELP!! Catch me quick. Hold me, hold me up, up. Careful, careful, not too tight on the arm. You want to break every damn blood vessel I got left?!(CLUTCHES HIS CHEST) Don't get me excited. My heart's screaming like a Ford Pinto in second gear at the red line. It's going to explode like a fat tick under an elephant's ass. Ahhhhhh, Jesus save me. Let go. Let go. I gotta contract for a minute(CONTRACTS HANDS ON KNEES FOR A MOMENT) Ahh, that's it, that's it. Gotta get real tiny. Gotta..find..the...first position...the original...first...position. Ahhh, my back. I got so many slipped disks, I got so many slipped disks, I...got so many slipped disks, I...got so many slipped disks(HITS HIMSELF) Hit me when that happens, son! Dammit, boy, life ain't no box lunch. Ahhh, this stomach of mine. I wish I could hand it to you and just walk away. It's bad, real bad. Get me some bread, white bread, really cheap white bread. The kind

that balls up real easy. Hurry up. Ahhh, bread to soak up the juices of this life and squeeze them into the next.

WILLIAM PILOT

Oh my god.

EDGAR

William, come over here, son.

WILLIAM PILOT

I can't...he's just about to....

EDGAR

Aww, leave him. Bertie'll be just fine.

WILLIAM PILOT

(WILLIAM RELEASES BERTIE WHO IMMEDIATELY COLLAPSES TO THE GROUND)

Oh, no.

EDGAR

Leave him, boy.

BERTIE

It's alright, it's alright. I'll be....ahhhh.(CRAWLS OVER TO THE HOLE)

EDGAR

He'll rise like a phoenix.

BERTIE

(YELLING DOWN THE HOLE) Ground up some horn. Get out them needles, I'm coming down !!

WILLIAM PILOT

This is a madhouse.

EDGAR

Naww, it's just Saturday. Start of the weekend. Everything's a little crazy on the weekend.

BERTIE

Have a piece a gum.

WILLIAM PILOT

I'm out of here. (BEGINS TO EXIT)

UNCLE JACK

Don't you be pounding around here like a herd of buffalo.(WILLIAM FREEZES)

EDGAR

Careful, he's got good ears.

WILLIAM PILOT

Who is he?

UNCLE JACK

Uncle Jack, that's who. And when you want to know something about someone, why don't you just ask them straight to their face.

CASEY

(GIRL RAISES HEAD UP FROM PICKUP BED) Ask me, young fella, come on over and ask me. You'll see how firm they are and how the skin flows to the milk-white softness rising in my darkness.

UNCLE JACK

Quiet, girl! Look here, boy, I'm talking to you.

WILLIAM PILOT

Sorry, I...

UNCLE JACK

Listen. The earth is just about to heave something up. Pushing up the past for pondering, offering echoes of the future.

CASEY

Pushing and pushing.

UNCLE JACK

Quiet, girl! Ah, hear it now? Bubbling up like a spring, a wintered spring creaking into consciousness again.

EDGAR

(QUIETLY) A town is under our town.

TOWNSPEOPLE

(RISING SLOWLY FROM THE PICKUP) A town is under our town.

UNCLE JACK

Don't talk. It's heaving up right now, not more than fifty feet from where we stand. Yes. A sod house, cut from the earth

TOWNSPEOPLE

Cut from the earth.

UNCLE JACK

Stacked up into the cutting wind in the year 1889.

TOWNSPEOPLE

1889.

EDGAR

Could've been yesterday.

MARTHA BOWERS

Could've been yesterday.

UNCLE JACK

A little girl was born...no...two little girls...no....damn....triplets were born...of course they were triplets. I hear it clear now, in the autumn of that year, 1889. They were early coming. So tiny. Tiny little teacups their momma said, and so sickly from the start in the cut of the cold wind. (TOWNSPEOPLE BECOME THE WIND) Two didn't last, died before a week. Buried out behind, too small for coffins, buried in wooden bread boxes in the windy grass. New dough sent back to rise again. Same wind that struck them down, moaned while the hole was dug, while they were buried in the scattering grass, dried their momma's tears watchin' them put back, pressed back into the earth. Barely formed, returned to clay. Little teacups...bone china...bones to be coming up next frost...little bones....size Of bird bones, almost as hollowed. Make a whistle from the bones and whistle for the children, make their eyes dance to the piercing call above the wind. Whistle in the wind and push it off, off behind the horizon. Make the grass stand up still, and the ears not roar for a change. Whistle loud and sharp, it says. Heavin' up first frost. (SOBBING FROM PICKUP BED) Ah yes, and now you have something real to clutch to your heart.

WILLIAM PILOT

What's happening here?

EDGAR

It's already happened, boy, and will happen again.

CLAIRE

(FROM WITHIN THE PICKUP) Edgar. Edgar. You out there? Get in here, you old troublemaker.

EDGAR

Whoops, come on, that's my wife calling. We better get to my place while I still got one. You know, I was one of eleven children and I never slept alone...till I got married. (HEADS FOR THE BACK OF THE PICKUP)

CASEY

Pssst. Psssst. Hey, you. Yes, you. What's your name?

EDGAR

Not now. No time now.(PULLS WILLIAM OUT OF SIGHT BEHIND THE PICKUP)

FIRST TUFF

A city will just swallow you up.

LAST TUFF

Yep.

FIRST TUFF

You walk in and all of a sudden you're gone, vanished.

LAST TUFF

Yep.

FIRST TUFF

A small town just nibbles you to death.

LAST TUFF

Shore does.

FIRST TUFF

Can't very well disappear in a town that's only got one street, one light, and it just a blinkin' yellow.

LAST TUFF

Nope.

FIRST TUFF

It takes tiny bites out of ya, a small town does.

LAST TUFF

Yep.

FIRST TUFF

While you're walking to the store.

LAST TUFF

Yep.

FIRST TUFF

As you leave the house and git in the car.

LAST TUFF

Yep.

FIRST TUFF

It takes the tiniest little bites, like a dog after a belly flea.

LAST TUFF

That's right.

FIRST TUFF

A nip here, a nip there.

LAST TUFF

That's right.

FIRST TUFF

Until one morning, you look in the mirror, and there's nothing left to see.

LAST TUFF

Uh-huh.

FIRST TUFF

Absolutely nothing. You don't even have any eyeballs to look at yourself with.

LAST TUFF

Dawg!

FIRST TUFF

All that's left is...

LAST TUFF

...a feeling that you belong.

FIRST TUFF

(WEIGHTED) Uh-huh.

LAST TUFF

Yep, and it's a great feelin'.

FIRST TUFF

Sure 'nuff.

LAST TUFF

You is like a canary whats gone down a cat's throat. One moment you were a free flying little bird and WHOMP, you're hurtling down a dark slippery pipe.

FIRST TUFF

Yep, quite a ride.

LAST TUFF

And what you were is gone and what you have become...are you ready?

FIRST TUFF

I am ...you bet.

LAST TUFF

What you have become is, is the smile on that cat's face.

FIRST TUFF

Right.

LAST TUFF

You are his smile, with its teeth sharp, it's paws licked and it's tail a swishin'.

FIRST TUFF

You surely are.

LAST TUFF

You have transcended living and become happiness. (BOTH SMILE)

FIRST TUFF

But...

LAST TUFF

But it's not your happiness, at least that's what you're thinkin'.

FIRST TUFF

Yep.

LAST TUFF

You all along thought you would be that cat and own that smile.

FIRST TUFF

Uh-huh.

LAST TUFF

You thought you'd be the one swallowing that bird, feelin' it kickin' all the way down, ploppin' in your belly, adding a little weight to your existence.

FIRST TUFF

Mmmm-Hmmm. Tell 'em.

LAST TUFF

But you're not that cat.

FIRST TUFF

No sir.

LAST TUFF

You're that small moistened bird.

FIRST TUFF

Yep.

LAST TUFF

What become the smile, stretched across another face.

FIRST TUFF

That's it. (PAUSE) Death might be like that.

LAST TUFF

Uh huh.

END SCENE ONE