



w'basket

W'Basket #8, March 1964, from Calvin Demmon, 1002 East 66th Street, Inglewood, California, 90302 (this is the correct address; we have left New York since WAKE UP STUPID, which is also in this Shadow FAPA mailing). W'Basket #8 is *Press* Publication #63, Copyright 1964 by Calvin Demmon. Labor donated.

A fool's paradise is better than none. -- Ray Nelson

UNTITLED ONE-ACT PLAY

CHARACTERS:

IRENE: A well-dressed, long-legged blonde, about twenty, sexy as hell, quite stupid. She is the familiar Hollywood Starlet.

BUTCH: Well-dressed male, thirty-two, dark, with a receding hairline.

GORDON: Another well-dressed male, thirty-two, light, with a receding hairline.

No sets are required.

As the curtain rises, Gordon, Butch, and Irene are standing on bare stage, facing audience, Gordon slightly forward.

(Curtain rises)

GORDON (to audience): Hello. My name is Gordon, and these are my two friends. ((Indicates Butch and Irene.)) That's Butch, and that's Irene.

BUTCH: 'Lo. ((Smiles shyly, nods at audience.))

IRENE: Hi! ((Smiles stupidly.))

GORDON: We are going to do a play for you, and it will be as Absurd as Hell. We hope you won't understand it.

BUTCH (considering): Yes, I suppose that is very true.

IRENE: Hi!

GORDON: Well, Butch and Irene, why don't you kiss each other, sort of to get things started, and then curse a little?

Butch nods and advances towards the willing Irene; they embrace and kiss, then suddenly separate.

BUTCH (yelling and angry): You bitch! ((Slaps Irene, Turns to Gordon, grinning sheepishly.)) Was that any good?

GORDON (patronizingly): That was very fine.

IRENE (smiling stupidly, rubbing cheek where slapped with back of her hand):
I have slept with every producer in this town and I have never been in a movie in my entire career.

GORDON: And that's your whole trouble, too.

BUTCH: And now what shall we do?

GORDON: Well, Death usually goes over pretty well. ((Reaches into inside coat pocket, removes shiny policeman's automatic, tosses it to Butch.))

Butch turns gun in hand, sights off over audience, then, turning suddenly, fires twice at Irene. She crumples clumsily to floor, he drops revolver.

GORDON: Not bad. Not bad at all.

Irene stands up, smiles, brushes herself off.

GORDON: Well, that's Love and Violence and Death. What else do you suppose we need?

IRENE: How about Sex? ((Smiling sexily.))

GORDON: In your case, baby, Love and Sex are one and the same thing. No, we need something Spectacular here, something to keep the audience awake and coming back for more.

BUTCH: How about a Plot?

GORDON (very excited): You're absolutely right! A Plot! My God, a Plot!
((Dancing around wildly.)) A Plot! ((Stops, finger outstretched, pointing at Butch.)) A Plot! The Eternal Triangle! You, me, her. How about it? Hasn't missed in the history of the stage!

Gordon advances towards the willing Irene, embraces her, kisses her roughly.

BUTCH (angrily): Say, mister! That's my wife! This is my house! I get home from work and I find you here with my wife in my own house. Nobody's pulling anything on my wife in my own house.

Butch jerks Gordon away from Irene. Irene rubs her mouth with the back of her hand, smiling stupidly. Butch hits Gordon on his chin, Gordon falls back awkwardly to stage floor. Butch scoops up revolver from floor, points it unsteadily at Gordon.

BUTCH: Get up, you coward.

Gordon gets up, rubs chin with back of hand.

Butch, glowing, turns to face audience, smiles suddenly, puts revolver to own head, pulls trigger. Falls to stage floor, quite dead. Irene sneezes.

GORDON (smiling happily at audience): What do you know! A Surprise Ending!

CURTAIN

Captain VD! He turns into a toilet seat and gives you a social disease.

DOUGLAS AND THE NUMBERS GAME

Douglas descended the stairs slowly and unsteadily, holding onto the bannister with both hands. He was seventeen years old today, and he had just drunk two quarts of beer, by himself, in his bedroom.

He always bought his beer from the Japanese Food Clerk at Sandy's Market, because he couldn't tell how old the Japanese Food clerk was, and, he decided, the Japanese food clerk couldn't tell how old he was, especially since he also always bought a package of cheese or a loaf of bread, so it would look like he was shopping for the "family."

It was eleven p.m. He opened the front door slowly and looked back, down the hall, to the bedroom where his parents slept. There was no light under the door. He stepped outside; the air was damp and cool on his face. He stumbled down the porch steps and onto the lawn, where he immediately sat down.

"I feel like a million bucks," he said solemnly. "I am totally and completely stoned--gassed--out of my mind." Then, to test himself, to discover the extent of his drunkenness, he began to recite the multiplication tables.

"This is a test," he said. "One times one is one." The multiplication tables represented to Douglas at this particular moment all the foundations of reality. He was, he felt, supremely safe from death and parents and every other sort of violence so long as he could remember the tables. "Three times seven is twenty-one." He finished the threes and went through the fours and fives in order, with growing satisfaction; then he began choosing numbers at random, trying to fool himself.

"Nine times seven is sixty-three and eight times eight is sixty-four. Five times nine is forty-five, and six times seven is forty-two." He grinned, stood up quickly, and walked with long heavy strides around the house to the side of the garage. He entered the garage through the side door and found his bicycle by groping around for it in the dark. He turned the bicycle towards the door, swung his leg over the bar, sat on the seat, and rode out around the side of the garage. The front wheel missed the cement of the driveway; the bicycle jerked along in the dirt until it reached the street.

Up towards town he pedalled, faster and faster, shifting his three-speed gear change from first to second, then to third, and pumping downward, downward, downward, lifting his opposite foot up so that each stroke could propel the bicycle better. Up towards town he pedalled, up towards the parking structure.

The parking structure, dark in the night, had three levels. One was beneath the level of the street (Douglas seldom went down there), one was slightly elevated,

and one was roof high. When he reached the parking structure he rode around the perimeter slowly, examining the cars parked inside.

"Six times six is thirty-six," he said, after assuring himself that there was no one inside, and he pedalled wildly up the driveway onto the second level and headed for the banked ramp, built on the outside of the structure, which would take him to the top.

He rode around and around on top. He rode between cars parked overnight, barely missing fenders and tailfins, and he leaned into turns as he swished past the maintenance trucks and firehoses and stairwells. He couldn't see the street directly below, but beyond the railing lay the city, lighted in patches by street lights and headlights and business signs. A massive brick apartment house sat across the street; only a few lights remained on behind the windows, and as he glanced at the apartment house one of the lights went out. "Eight times six is forty-eight," he yelled at the lights in the apartment house, smiling and waving with both hands.

Around and around he went, warming up for that climactic moment when he would swoop down the banked exit ramp, the uncovered ramp on the side of the structure, and, turning sharply, plunge back into the second level.

Faster and faster, in high gear, until he could hear the wind whistling through his hair, and the rims of his nostrils were dry.

Faster, until at last he rounded the corner at the far side of the lot and leaned forward, pumping, pumping, pushing, leaning forward, his face close to the handlebars, his eyes on the entrance to the ramp. Faster, faster, and when he hit the banked curve and the handlebars twisted out of his hands and the front wheel turned under him and he sailed out over the guardrail, over the street, he saw the last light in the brick apartment house go out.

"Nine times nine is eighty-one," Douglas heard himself saying, with supreme confidence, one second before he smashed headfirst into the asphalt of the street below.

Let's put the Thor back in Thursday. -- Ray Nelson

