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The Radio Play Disaster

A comedy in one-act

By Don Zolidis

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One-act comedy

5w, 5m, 3 any gender

Self-proclaimed genius Harlan Bean is ready to make history with his science-fiction radio masterpiece Battle of the Planets. But when the broadcast is in the hands of an ambitious actress with her own vision for her character, several terrified last-minute replacements jumping in, and a disgruntled sound engineer out for revenge, the mayhem in the studio makes an alien invasion look like a piece of cake. Radio goes hilariously off the rails in this flexible piece.

Cast of Characters

HARLAN BEAN: The host, and genius behind *Battle of the Planets.*

MAX: The stage manager. Highly stressed and overworked.

TRIXIE FLANDERS: Running the sound effects. She's a professional, but has creative differences.

OTIS SHERIDAN: playing the reporters. Very nervous.

SAMANTHA POWERS: playing the role of Dr. Mary Landrieu. An ingenue. Not terribly bright.

LARISSA JACKS: playing the assistant to Dr. Mary Landrieu. Wants a larger role.

SIR BRINSLEY CATAMOUNT: playing the roles of Cletus and Delilah. Strong British accent.

JOSIE O'CONNOR: playing the role of Josephine Maxwell, a reporter. Chews the scenery.

ADRIENNE LUCAS: playing the role of General Brianna Armitrage. Extremely nervous.

TONYA BRISTOW: playing the role of Patricia Dunbar, mayor of Elmo's Corners. Has her own vision for her character.

BRANFORD BRISTOW: Tonya's husband in real life, and playing the role of Tomothy Dubar. A terrible actor.

MARIA SPUMANTE: Playing the role of Press Secretary Tabitha Minions. Deathly ill.

FURIOUS HAMSTER: stunt-casting for the walk-on role of a soldier. This is his big break.

Otis plays all the reporters at the moment, but those roles may be divided up.
Additional actors may be added to provide crowd sounds.

Any role may be played by an actor of any gender, but the characters of Harlan, Max, and Trixie may be any gender as well.

Staging: This play is designed for both live and virtual performance. Alternate stage directions are included for theatres performing the shows virtually.

Lights up.
The studio performance room of KBAM, a struggling radio station.
MAX, the stage manager, is setting up microphone stands for everyone.
A bright "On Air" sign is illuminated.

HARLAN BEAN, genius, steps to the center microphone.

HARLAN

What you are about to witness tonight is real. The events of this broadcast are taking place in The United States of America, at this hour. There are no actors. There is no script. Everything you hear tonight is true.

MAX rushes up to HARLAN with a piece of paper {or lifts up a piece of paper that Harlan can see}

The role of Cletus will be played by Sir Brinsley Catamount, on loan to us from Cambridge, England.

MAX points to something else on the paper.

The role of Delilah will… also be played by Sir Brinsley Catamount, on loan from Cambridge.

He stops.

Is this correct? Where are Andrew and Julia?

MAX

They said they couldn't make it. Something about not being paid enough and feeling it wasn't worth it, and

He checks notes

Despising the ground you walk on, not acceding to their lists of demands –

HARLAN

All right, all right –

MAX

General dissatisfaction with the incompetence of the artistic director. Who is the artistic director?

HARLAN

I am the artistic director.

MAX

Seems they have a problem with you then.

TRIXIE enters and starts setting up the sound effects table.

HARLAN

Ah, Miss Flanders, I see you've decided to show up. I hope tonight's performance will go better than the dress rehearsal, in which you were a disaster.

TRIXIE

And good evening to you, Harlan.

HARLAN

Mr. Bean, please. Show a little respect, since you have no respect for the material. Did you fix the heat laser effect?

TRIXIE

I did.

HARLAN

Can I hear it?

Trixie sighs and plays the heat laser sound, which sounds more like a goat bleating.

That's terrible.

TRIXIE

It's a heat laser.

HARLAN

It sounds like a flatulent duck!

TRIXIE

What does heat sound like, Harlan?

HARLAN

Mr. Bean!

She makes the heat laser sound again.

TRIXIE

It sounds just like that.

MAX

Not to interrupt your argument, but why are you saying "there are no actors" and then announcing that one of the actors is going to be different tonight?

HARLAN

I don't understand.

MAX

Think about what you're saying. `Everything you see tonight is true. The role of Cletus will be played by Brinsley.'

BRINSLEY *(darting in)*

Sir Brinsley.

HARLAN

Never underestimate the stupidity of the audience, Max. They will believe what I tell them to believe. I can't wait for this show tonight. Panic in the streets. Calls into police departments. Sure to get the highest ratings in the history of this station. `*Battle of the Planets* announces a new talent on the literary scene. The meteoric rise of Harlan Bean. The stage is set. The actors are prepared. Glory awaits.

Trixie plays the goat bleating-heat laser sound.

TRIXIE

Oh sorry I was trying to make a flatulent duck sound.

She tries it again.

HARLAN

I can have you replaced, you know. Actors, to your places!

The actors – BRINSLEY, OTIS, SAMANTHA, LARISSA, JOSIE, ADRIENNE, and TONYA and BRADFORD enter.

They begin setting up their scripts on music stands.

Samantha can't figure out how to get her stand to work. It keeps sliding down. She adjusts it to the wrong height. No one is helping her. She bangs on her music stand to get it to settle.

Tony and Bradford are mid-argument.

TONYA *(to Bradford)*

Did I ask for your opinion?

BRANFORD *(to Tonya)*

Honey –

TONYA *(to Bradford)*

Don't honey me! You don't understand my process! You don't care about my process! And you certainly don't care about cleaning out the litter box!

BRANFORD *(to Tonya)*

I cleaned out the litter box yesterday!

TONYA

Why do you lie?! When Mr. Boots doesn't have a clean litter box, he doesn't feel respected! And you know what he does when he doesn't feel respected?!

HARLAN

Ah, marital bliss.

TRIXIE *(to BRINSLEY)*

Hello.

BRINSLEY *(professional)*

Cheers.

TRIXIE

Cheers indeed. Very cheers.

BRINSLEY

I'm sorry?

TRIXIE

You heard what I said. Glad you're filling in tonight.

BRINSLEY

Thank you.

TRIXIE *(winking)*

Oh yeah.

HARLAN

Are we all assembled?

OTIS

Looks like we're missing a few-

HARLAN

Right. Yes, Charles, Deborah, Andrew, and Miley have all been fired.

OTIS

Oh.

HARLAN

You'll be playing all the reporter roles –

JOSIE

Excuse me?

HARLAN

Except for your role, Josie – you are, as always, truly magnificent in this show.

JOSIE

I know.

OTIS

So I'm playing five out of the six reporters?

HARLAN

The others were terrible.

OTIS

Um…

HARLAN

You'll be fine. I assume you've worked out most of your problems?

OTIS

Uh –

HARLAN

Where is that other person?

MAX

The guy who won the contest to be in the show? The rodent person?

HARLAN

Oh yes. Right.

FURIOUS HAMSTER enters, celebrating himself.

FURIOUS HAMSTER

Woooo! No need to worry, friends! I am here! Show must go on or whatnot! Hey does anyone have a script?

MAX

You're over here, Mr…. Hamster? Your last name is Hamster?

FURIOUS HAMSTER

It's my stage name. FURIOUS HAMSTER! Like it? I love it. So I was thinking – what if my character was more awesome? I'm loving this show, but I do not have a big enough part.

LARISSA

I'd like to second that, I also don't have a big enough part –

TONYA

You've kept all the best parts for the men.

LARISSA

THANK YOU. That's what I was going to say.

TONYA

It's sexist!

LARISSA

It's disgusting.

SAMANTHA

You can have some of my lines. I don't understand them anyway. Does my astronomer character need to say all those big words?

She's still having trouble with her music stand.

HARLAN

No! No one changes the lines!

Maria stumbles in, deathly ill.

MARIA

Sorry I'm late.

She puts a wet washcloth on her head.

Just spent a little time near death on the way here, I'm okay.

MAX

Are you feeling all right?

MARIA

Completely fine. So much better. I was sick earlier today but now I am perfect…

She's about to throw up, but doesn't.

So excited to be here.

She stares off into space, about to die.

MAX

Adrienne, Harlan rewrote your speech last night.

ADRIENNE

He what?

HARLAN

Difficult as it may be to believe, but I have it made even more incredible.

ADRIENNE

But I had the other one memorized.

MAX

You don't need to memorize your lines for a radio show – just read it from the script –

ADRIENNE

But I have that thing where I have problems when I read -

TONYA

Skipping Forward

BRANFORD

Real women cook!

HARLAN

Please. All of you. Read the script as I wrote it. It's completely perfect –

ADRIENNE

You rewrote my part last night. Which again I have a problem -

HARLAN

I made it even more perfect.

LARISSA

What about the ending?

HARLAN

The end is even more perfect than the rest of this perfect play. Think of it. In the din of war, a single solitary voice asks, `is anyone out there?' and the answer? Is silence. Devastating. Simple. Elegant. Award-winning, I daresay.

TONYA

Kind of a downer.

HARLAN

A downer?! It is devastating.

ADRIENNE

I'm with Tonya. What if we blow up their spaceship?

HARLAN

No! Absolutely not. This is not hack-work, this is art. Humanity must be destroyed.

OTIS

What if humanity is only partially destroyed?

HARLAN

Completely destroyed! What is wrong with you? This is the script! Stick to it! I have more talent in my pinky finger than the rest of you simpletons combined! Do your job. Our performance tonight will be the stuff of legend. Trust my genius. *Battle of the Planets* will be remembered forever. Clap for yourselves. Clap.

Samantha claps, drops her script.
Maria tries to clap, then runs off-stage to throw up.
Trixie claps at Brinsley.
Furious hamster is really into it.

Finally, Harlan decides to clap for himself.
Yes. Be bold. Be brave. Be resolute. Our glorious play marches into history. Ready?

MAX
Hey um… why is the "On Air" sign on?
HARLAN spots the sign for the first time.

HARLAN
The "On Air" sign is on because…
He runs to his microphone, scrambles to get his script right.
Please ignore the previous moments – apparently a gang of hoodlums broke into the station and started talking.
Ahem.
What you are about to witness tonight is real. The events of this broadcast are taking place in The United States of America, at this hour. There are no actors. There is no script. Everything you hear tonight is true.
Max points to the paper.
The role of Cletus will be… interpreted by Sir Brinsley Catamount, even though the person of Cletus is a real person and the events involving Cletus have not yet occurred but we have on good faith that they will occur soon. Sir Brinsley will also be playing Delilah.
We take you now to the ballroom at the Grand Season Hotel, where we will be listening to the complex melodies of Chip Verdunn's twelve piece orchestra.
He points to TRIXIE.

TRIXIE plays "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" on a xylophone.
I meant of course the emotionally devastating spare harmonies of Chip Verdunn and his neo-futuristic experimental ensemble.
TRIXIE plays "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" again.
HARLAN motions for her to stop.
Delightful. Listeners we have a breaking news bulletin.
TRIXIE starts the "breaking news bulletin" music –
Yes we have a –
TRIXIE interrupts with the breaking news bulletin music again –
We take you now –
TRIXIE interrupts again. Harlan shouts over the music -
WE TAKE YOU TO THE OBSERVATORY
Realizes the music has stopped and he's shouting for no reason.
At Brown University in Rhode Island.
Harlan points to OTIS.
OTIS takes a deep breath and steadies himself.

OTIS
Yesthankyoumynameis…
Takes a deep breath, looks around terrified.
My name is Charles Towerbridge, reporterforradiostationKAABlocatedsomewhere.

Takes another breath.

AndIhavecometothisobservatorytodiscussshockingdevelopmentsontheplanetVenus. Standing with me is Dr. Mary Landrieu, chiefastronomerattheBrownObservatory.

SAMANTHA smiles and shakes her hair, mugging for a non-existent camera.

SAMANTHA

Hi.

OTIS

Dr. Landrieu, with your forty-seven years of experience at this observatory, can you please inform our listeners what you witnessed tonight?

SAMANTHA

Okay. Um…

LARISSA points her to the right spot in the script.

Oh. Thank you. Yes, this powerful telescope was trained – trained, it can be trained right? – pointed at the surface of the planet Venus. And tonight, we saw an amazing occur…occur… thing. Good question, but I think they're just atmospheric disturbances.

LARISSA points her to another place in the script.

Whoops. No – We saw an amazing occurrence. Regular explosions on the surface of Venus at …consistent …intervals.

OTIS

And what do you make of these explosions?

SAMANTHA

Good question, but I think they're just atmospheric disturbances.

Samantha's music stand falls down.

LARISSA

If I might interject, Doctor.

OTIS

Please state your name for our radio audience.

LARISSA

I am the assistant to Doctor Mary Landrieu. I have no name because I was not considered to be important. Let's call me Bobbi.

OTIS

Very well, what is it you were going to say?

SAMANTHA

Good question, but I think they're just atmospheric disturbances.

LARISSA

These explosions are not consistent with any known phenomena on the planet Venus. I don't know what is going on, but I am frightened!

SAMANTHA

There's no need to be frightened, assistant. These phenomenal happen all the time.

LARISSA

Phenomena.

SAMANTHA

I'm sorry?

LARISSA

Phenomena. That was the word you were looking for, Doctor.

SAMANTHA

Sure.

OTIS

Very well.

Samantha tries to get her script right.

SAMANTHA

Thank you. Yes, this powerful telescope was trained – oh shoot um…

She skips forward.

LARISSA

I'd like to say one more thing, since you may not hear from me again.

She prepares a dramatic speech

There are dark times, with alien intelligences capable of toying with humanity as a child plays with a spider. We know not what sinister designs other planets may –

HARLAN

And we're back. Thank you for that insightful interview. Once again we return you to the simple, almost childlike sounds of Chip Verdunn and his solo xylophone.

He sends it back to Trixie.

Trixie plays a recording of "Ode to Joy" or "Carmina Burana" with full choir.

We interrupt this broadcast with a follow-up to – That's enough, Chip. Chip go ahead and fade out your extensive choir of sixty or seventy souls that has squeezed itself into the ballroom at the Grand Season Hotel.

Trixie turns off the music. Plays the "breaking news" sound.

Yes once again we are interrupting to –

Continues to play the breaking news sound.

Harlan waits. It's over.

Harlan starts to speak again.
Trixie plays it again.
We take you now to Chief of the National Meteorological Society, Andrew Chessup.
OTIS looks panicked again.

OTIS
Yes, Hello, this is reporter David… Davidson, coming to you now from the National Meteorological Society. With me is Andrew Chessup, a grizzled veteran of numerous foreign wars and meteorologist.
Everyone looks around. The person who is supposed to play Andrew isn't around.
Yes he will be here any moment. Any moment when he realizes that he's supposed to be on the radio right now.
Max runs off-stage.
Harlan motions for Otis to "vamp."
Otis has no idea what Harlan is signaling.
Harlan makes a vampire sign with his fingers.
In the meantime, I will be… growing teeth?
Harlan shakes his head no.
I will not be growing teeth. I will be… a vampire? I'm a vampire? I'm a vampire! I'm vamping! Oh!
Harlan nods his head vigorously.
Max runs back in – he hasn't found anyone.
Larissa takes the mic and speaks in a gruff, manly tone.

LARISSA
This is Andrew Chessup.

MAX *(half a second late, overlapping)*
This is Andrew Chessup.
Max and Larissa stare each other down. Neither one wants to give up their new role.

OTIS
Right. Yes. Could you please describe what you have observed happening in the upper atmosphere.
Larissa and Max both say their lines like a game of chicken.

LARISSA and MAX
Welp. At just over eight p.m. this evening, SHORTLY AFTER THE MYSTERIOUS PHENOMENA *ON THE PLANET VENUS* -

SAMANTHA *(whispering loudly)*
Phenomenals.

LARISSA

We tracked several intrusions into our upper atmosphere consistent with natural meteorological phenomenals.

MAX *(a half step late now, starting on "intrusions")*
We tracked several intrusions into our upper atmosphere consistent with natural meteorological phenomenals.

LARISSA
I tracked them.

MAX
I actually tracked them.

LARISSA
Sorry to be confusing to you, but I have trained a pet seal to mimic my words moments after I say them.

MAX
I have trained a pet seal to mimic my words before I say them. I will put him in his cage now.

LARISSA
If anyone is going in the cage, it is the pet seal that got here moments too late because I am first.

MAX
Okay, *Andrew,* grizzled manly man.

LARISSA
I am more of a grizzled manly man than you'll ever be.

OTIS
Okay. Um. Could you speculate as to what these phenomena are?
Larissa and Max jump on his line to answer as quickly as possible.

LARISSA and MAX
Nothingtobeworriedabout!
Max jumps on the line again.

MAX
Nothing to be worried about!

LARISSA *(overlapping)*
Nothing to be worried about!

MAX *(overlapping, louder)*
NOTHING TO BE WORRIED ABOUT!

LARISSA *(overlapping, even louder)*
NOTHING TO BE WORRIED ABOUT!

HARLAN
Thank you very much, Mr. Chessup… and his trained seal. We return you now to the… music at the Grand Season ballroom.

Looks over. Trixie isn't there {or isn't paying attention}. She's flirting with Sir Brinsley.

TRIXIE
I'm free later.

SIR BRINSLEY
I never mix business with pleasure, I'm afraid.

TRIXIE
Oh it won't be pleasurable.

SIR BRINSLEY
Then you have my undivided attention.

HARLAN snaps his fingers at her.

TRIXIE runs to her station. Bangs on some things.

HARLAN
Ah yes the… sounds of… music. In these troubled times they truly are a balm for the soul.

TRIXIE motions to Sir Brinsley to come over. {or she blows kisses at him} He does.

But once again, I'm afraid we have a breaking news bulletin – word has come to our station that there has been an explosion at a small farm just outside of Elmo's Corners, New York. We take you now to a reporter who has just arrived on the scene.

Otis is completely flummoxed and grabs his script, not realizing this is his part too.

OTIS
Thankyou this is David Davidson… reporter – not to be confused with my twin brother, David also Davidson, who was reporting on conditions at the observatory nearly one thousand miles away. I am standing in a field…

Trixie makes the sound of a cow.

With a cow and –

Trixie makes chicken sounds

Several chickens but –

Trixie goes through a series of jungle animal sounds.

And also a menagerie of tropical creatures

Trixie makes the sound of an animal dying.

Who have just died.

Trixie makes the sound of the animals waking back up.

Correction: The animals have been grievously injured, but seem to be recovering quickly. What I am looking at is an ordinary cornfield rent by a smoking crater. Located within the crater is a dark metallic cylinder approximately one hundred feet tall. And I am speaking now with Cletus Jones, a local farmer who witnessed the strange occurrence.

SIR BRINSLEY *(with a strong British accent)*

Yes, quite right.

OTIS

Cletus, though you are an uneducated bumpkin, could you please describe what you saw?

SIR BRINSLEY

But of course. I was standing in my field of corn when I saw a flash of illumination

Harlan is waving at him.

One moment.

HARLAN *(whispering)*

Accent!

SIR BRINSLEY *(trying a very poor southern accent)*

I mean, I was over here and I saw something.

OTIS

What did it look like?

SIR BRINSLEY

A massive cylinder – I mean, rocket-like shape, which shot out of the sky like a meteor. And then it, I wanta say, descended in a controlled manner, to my field of corn. And it darn near blew the doors off my house, I mean shack, where I live, in poverty. Oh here comes my wife.

SIR BRINSLEY assumes the high-pitched voice of Delilah, who also has a British accent.

OTIS

Ma'am were you also a witness to the landing?

SIR BRINSLEY *(as Delilah)*

I was. I was scared cause I'm a lady.

OTIS

These are truly frightening times.

SIR BRINSLEY *(as Delilah)*

I'd like to add that all our animals were scared too.

Trixie makes a lot of animal sounds – Cow, Chickens, Seagulls, wild screeches.

Especially the hippopotami.

Trixie tires to think of a sound of a hippo makes. Decides on a roar.

Skipping Forward

FURIOUS HAMSTER

I'M ABOUT TO INVESTIGATE.

OTIS

A brilliant suggestion. But – oh my goodness, something is happening. A metallic panel is opening in the side of the cylinder –

Trixie makes the sound of a door opening.

And, emerging from the darkness within appears to be tubular appendage.

FURIOUS HAMSTER

Hey! Hey you! We don't appreciate your tubular appendage! Woo!

OTIS

No response from the cylinder.

FURIOUS HAMSTER

I'M GONNA APPROACH THE CYLINDER NOW.

OTIS

With the extreme manly confidence of America's fighting men –

Trixie makes the sound of high-heeled shoes again.

The American soldier is only twenty or thirty paces from the device and – oh no! Oh no! I can barely describe what I'm seeing now!

Trixie makes the heat laser sound – which sounds like a bleating goat.

Everyone is confused.

FURIOUS HAMSTER

Did I step on a duck?

OTIS

Um…

Trixie makes the heat laser sound again.

SIR BRINSLEY *(with his British accent)*

I'm not sure what that is.

Trixie makes the sound again.

OTIS

Oh it's a laser!

FURIOUS HAMSTER

OH! Oh! Aaaaaaah! Arrrrrrrghghhg!

OTIS

It appears to be some kind of concentrated heat ray –
Trixie makes more violent sounds.
FURIOUS HAMSTER does a lot of screaming.
Our brave soldier completely disintegrated by the –

FURIOUS HAMSTER
AAAAAAAAAAAAH!

OTIS
And yet the echoes of his final screams remain in the air.

SIR BRINSLEY *(as Cletus)*
Did you see that?!

OTIS
It's coming right for us!

FURIOUS HAMSTER
Aaaaaaaaah! Aaaaaaah this hurts! Aaaaaaaaaaaah!

SIR BRINSLEY *(As Delilah)*
Run for it!

OTIS
Listeners, I must now relate that the cylinder appears to have grown legs – rising up in the air like a tripod –

FURIOUS HAMSTER
I'm okay! Though! I'm okay!

SIR BRINSLEY *(as Cletus)*
Run fer yer lives!

OTIS
Wait, its cannons are rotating, aiming for me, but I will continue to broadcast and –
Trixie makes more heat laser – bleating goat sounds.

HARLAN
We have lost communication with the reporter in Elmo's Corners. I can only hope that he has survived the terrible ordeal transpiring there. We now return you to the music of Chip Verdunn's impertinent orchestra at the ballroom of the Grand Seasons Hotel.
Trixie plays chopsticks on her piano.
Harlan approaches her {or speaks to her from the side}

HARLAN *(whispering)*

What in art's name are you doing?!

TRIXIE *(whispering)*
Don't bother me, I'm concentrating. This song is hard.

HARLAN *(whispering)*
You're ruining the entire show!

TRIXIE *(whispering)*
You think you can do this job?

HARLAN *(whispering)*
I could train a seal to do your job!

TRIXIE *(whispering)*
Seals don't talk! Why does everyone think seals can talk!?
She speaks into the microphone.
Hey there hep-cats, this is Chip Verdunn. We're gonna take a little break right now until our craft can be respected.

HARLAN *(into the microphone)*
Ha ha ha, oh Chip – by the way this is Amos Frunkfather, the manager here at the Grand Season Ballroom, and I want you to know Chip that you're fired.

TRIXIE *(as CHIP)*
You've crossed me for the last time, Frunkfather! Especially since you never paid me for my work!

HARLAN
I paid you for your work!

TRIXIE
Not enough!
Trixie starts messing with the sound table.
She makes animal sounds

HARLAN
Hey! Hey! Stop that! Stop releasing those live chickens!

TRIXIE
You never respected my chickens!
She makes a cow sound.

HARLAN
Out out out out!

He pushes Trixie off-stage. {or Trixie finally gives up and leaves}
She messes with her sound effects one more time.
Harlan takes her place at the sound effects table {or uses a makeshift sound effects table in his own room}
Harlan finds the shoes and makes the sounds of Chip walking away.
Sorry about that, gentle listeners. I know you're all more concerned with the startling developments happening across the country right now, and we will get you to a reporter as soon as we can. In the meantime, um… oh wait
He finds his place in the script.
We interrupt the soothing music at the Grand Season Ballroom to take you to a special press conference.
Josie has been waiting this whole time. She's ready to go, and she loves chewing the scenery. .

JOSIE
This is Josephine Maxwell, and I am standing in the Rose Garden of the White House for a special briefing from Three Star General Brianna Armitrage. At any moment, she will emerge from those doors on this beautiful, sunny day. In fact, the chirping birds bely a growing sense of dread from around the country.
She waits.
Chirping birds.
She waits again.
The sound of chirping birds.
Harlan realizes she's talking to him. He rushes to the sound table and looks through it.
Very quiet chirping birds, almost as if they realize the serious nature of this present moment –
Harlan tries a chirping bird sound and comes up with something that sounds like the gobbling of a turkey.
And the turkeys. Who could forget the joyful sounds of the Presidential turkeys, who have been spared from execution on Thanksgiving. Now they gather here, with the chirping birds, in the Rose Garden, awaiting the entrance of the general on this very lovely –
Thunder.
Stormy day. Yes, here she comes now.
Harlan looks for shoes. Finds the high-heeled shoes. Uses those again.
ADRIENNE takes a deep breath and enters.

ADRIENNE
Thank you, repoters. My name is general Braina Arm-a…
She looks at her name carefully in the script.
Amr-i-strange. Armistrange. Brianna Something. And I'm here to inform the pubic about the extraordinary events we've whiteness over the past few hours. At approximately 1400 hours we observed a series of expositions on the plate Venus. Although we init--individually considered these to be… reg-u-lar… atmospheres… fentanyl, they were in fact the signs of alien spicecraft. At present, we have tracked fourteen supper landings on the Eastern Smorgasbord of the Untied States. I will now be taping questions.

JOSIE

General, are these… spicecraft dangerous?

ADRIENNE

We must assume these invaders cone in pace. Come in pace. Peace. Come in peace.

JOSIE

Is that a wise assumption?

ADRIENNE

Quit pounding me, woman! Hounding. Quit hounding me, woman.

JOSIE

Why are you getting defensive, Ma'am?

ADRIENNE

We do not know the inventions of these chips.
But I do not see the use of startling an interpretory war with an alien seabreeze.

JOSIE

And if they are starting a war with us?

ADRIENNE

Then Dog help us all.

JOSIE

Dog help us all indeed. With that, the General turned her heel and returned to the briefing room at the White House, where a response to these aliens is being devised.

ADRIENNE

Do I just walk off now?

JOSIE

Yes she is walking off.

ADRIENNE

Now?

JOSIE

Exactly now. There she goes. You can hear the sounds of her retreating steps.
Harlan scrambles to find the shoes again. He succeeds in finding a pair of tap shoes. Shrugs and makes it sound like they are walking away.
We return you now… to the station…

HARLAN

Thank you for that report. We would return you to the music of Chip Verdunn and his band of musical armadillos, but Chip has been removed from the Grand Season Ballroom in a straightjacket and will never work in this town again.

TRIXIE darts in and grabs a microphone.

TRIXIE

You'll never work in this town again!

HARLAN

Apologies, one of her musical armadillos has broken free from its harness and has savaged a staff member at the Grand Season. We are in the process of putting the creature down.

Harlan looks for an appropriate sound. Tries something. Turns out to be a cow.

With a cow. A cow has sat upon the armadillo, flattening it into a pancake. Now – we return to our tale with an important update from a reporter in Elmo's Corners.

Lights shift to Otis.

OTIS

Thank you, Harlan. This is David… Davidson the third, not to be confused with either of my twin brothers, reporting once again for the first time from Elmo's Corners since I just arrived here moments ago. I am standing with the mayor of Elmo's Corners, Patricia Dunbar.

Tonya blows a bubble. She doesn't bother with the script.

TONYA

Thank you, David.

OTIS

What can you tell us about the developments on the outskirts of town?

Tonya takes her script and tosses it to the ground nonchalantly.

TONYA

Is that really the question you want to ask?

OTIS

Um…

TONYA

I unsettle you, don't I? Because I'm as tough-as-nails young woman and I'm here to clean up this town. I was elected to mayor when I was twenty-three, and I don't take guff from anyone. Especially not you.

OTIS

Um…

Otis tries to follow along in the script, but can't.

I'm not sure how that relates to –

TONYA

Let me help you with my signature catchphrase. "That's a lot of bacon."

OTIS

What does that mean?

TONYA

It means there's a lot of bacon. Now if you'll excuse me, it's time to clean up those aliens…

She mimes cocking a shotgun.

Chk-chk.

That's my sawed-off shotgun in case you were wondering. You might also let people know that I'm wearing sunglasses and a tank top, which shows off my wiry muscles.

OTIS

Right. Yes. I should let you know that the mayor is wearing a –

TONYA

Kick-butt pony tail –

OTIS

Kick-butt pony tail, sunglasses, and has rock-hard muscles.

TONYA

Don't objectify me.

OTIS

Sorry.

TONYA

All right then. Time to go kick some butt.

She mimes cocking her shotgun again.

I'm riding off on my motorcycle, by the way.

Vrrrrrrrrrm.

Otis finds the next spot in the script.

OTIS

Right well yes we have here the mayor's husband, Tomothy Dunbar.

HARLON

Timothy –

OTIS

It says Tomothy.

HARLON

Skipping Forward

Harlan realizes he has to make a stomping sound. Finds the thunder sheet.

Yes! Sounding almost like thunder.

Harlan roils the thunder sheet again. He's loving this. He finally got something right.

I am stepping outside to get a better look at it.

Harlan drops the thunder sheet with a clang and uses tap shoes to show Otis running outside.

It is an awesome sight to behold, terrifying in its monstrous intelligence.

Harlan looks for a sound to show how terrifying it is – he rings the little bell.

But also strangely chipper. I am on the street now, as throngs of frightened Elmo's Corners Citizens – Elmoians, flee before the encroaching titan.

Harlan looks around at the other actors.

People grab microphones.

OTHERS

Ah! Flee! Everyone flee! Flee! I'm fleeing! Ah! Help! Ah! Et cetera!

Tonya grabs her microphone.

TONYA

Stop right there you metal monster.

Otis looks at his script. This is not in his script.

I'm the mayor of this town, and I've got a bone to pick with you.

She motions for Otis to go along with her. Otis shrugs helplessly.

And good thing the press is here to cover this moment.

OTIS

Yes, um… yes the press is here. What I see now is a…

Tonya motions for him to keep going.

scene of astonishing bravery.

TONYA

Yes.

OTIS

A single woman, smeared with dust and dirt, standing in front of a colossus of death, armed with only –

Tonya mimes having a rocket launcher.

Only her –

She tries to show a rocket launcher.

Baguette.

TONYA

Fear me! Fear my baked goods!

Tonya mimes swinging the baguette.

OTIS

I can't believe what I'm seeing! She leaps into battle and –

Harlan, annoyed, creates the goat bleating laser sound.

Oh my goodness, there's a goat here and –

HARLAN *(whispering)*

Heat laser! It's a heat laser!

He makes the sound again.

TONYA

Missed!

OTIS

Which misses the –

Harlan makes another laser sound.

TONYA

What's wrong with yer aim!

Harlan makes seven or eight laser sounds in a row.

OTIS

The alien ship appears incapable of hitting her with its weapons of death!

Harlan tries everything. Stomping sounds. Lasers. Explosions. Cows. Jingling bells.

TONYA

You tried your best, alien ship. Now it's time for me to try my best. I'm tossing aside this baguette and picking up –

OTIS

It appears to be strudel.

TONYA

This strudel, which is well-known to be toxic to alien and human life. If I manage to place the strudel into the weak point in your armor, it's curtains for you. And that's a lot of bacon.

OTIS

Leaping onto its feet with the agility of a jungle cat, the mayor of Elmo's Corners clambers up the –

Harlan cuts off their mics.

Tonya and Otis are disappointed.

HARLAN

I'm afraid we have lost the feed from Elmo's Corners. Surely they are all dead now. We are just now receiving some audio from another transponder nearby.

Harlan makes laser sounds and faint screams.

`ah ah I'm dying ah I'm completely dead.'

More laser sounds.

Haunting. Listeners, events continue to transpire at a dizzying speed. Faster than I can relate. Reports are coming in of more than two dozen of the strange alien craft descending from the sky all over the eastern seaboard. Landings in Connecticut, New Jersey, and Staten Island. It seems New York City is their inevitable target. We take you now to a reporter embedded with the U.S. Military as they develop a response to this civilization-threatening event.

Harlan points at Josie –

OTIS

This is David… Davidson the fourth -

Josie jumps to her mic.

JOSIE

This is actually Josephine Maxwell –

OTIS

Oh thank goodness. I'm not here.

JOSIE

This is Josephine Maxwell reporting from the cockpit of the flagship of the third armored battalion. That sound you hear is the whirring engine of American know-how, unleashing the full fury of eighteen hundred horsepower.

Harlan can't find the right engine sound. Josie decides to elaborate.

With me are the brave men and women of our military forces, clad in loose-fitting dungarees with matching camouflage sashes. Their belts and boots gleam like the hardened shells of so many monstrous beetles, tamed by technology and harnessed to the service of destructive power. I am sitting next to a young woman, her brown eyes wide with the enormity of her task, and her lovely dimples belying a seriousness of purpose that could only be matched by the ancient armies of Sparta.

Maria, who has been ill this entire time, gets up and stands in front of the microphone. She blows her nose and looks around, disoriented.

MARIA

Hi.

JOSIE

How does it feel to come face to face with certain death?

MARIA

Um… not good. Ohhh. I feel terrible. I want to die.

JOSIE

Brave words in these turbulent times. Our progress slows to a halt as we reach the reported site of another landing craft. I will now exit this armored vehicle to give you, the listeners, an evocative visual description of what is transpiring. As one, the soldiers rise to ready themselves.

MARIA

Okay we're getting out now.

Harlan makes the sound of a hatch opening.

JOSIE

Thick with the scent of fear and body odor, the soldiers scramble out of their vehicles, resembling nothing so much as a horde of ants before a terrifying foe from another planet. This, listeners, is nothing less than a struggle of the continued dominion of humankind on the planet Earth. If these brave men and women fail, we may very well look upon these days as the last dying gasps of human civilization.

MARIA

Yeah it's a doozy.

JOSIE

I am in awe of the fierce determination of these soldiers. They are ready for anything.

Maria blows her nose loudly.

MARIA

Anyone have a lozenge? I need a lozenge.

JOSIE

Nothing will stop them.

MARIA

I seriously can't do this unless I have a lozenge.

Max hands her a cough drop {or Maria fishes one out of her pocket}

She takes a moment unwraps it loudly.

Hold it's kind of stuck to the wrapper. You know what I'm talking about? When it melts a little bit and then it's stuck to the paper? Awful.

She keeps unwrapping it.

This is the worst.

She finally gets it free and puts it into her mouth noisily.

Oh that's better. Ohhhhhh…

End of Excerpt.
To purchase this play, visit www.concordtheatricals.com