

ACT I  
SCENE 1

(The Eternal Woods. Galloping is heard offstage. It rains. Thunder claps. Lightning strikes nearby. Horses whinny.)

BARNEY (OS)

Surely, I imagine this horror! I beg of you! Not me horses! Away from me, beast! To Hell, from whence you came! Oh dear. Spare me, please! No! Nooo!

(A BABY laughs. End scene.)

## SCENE 2

(In the Mother's Bosom, the local tavern and inn. A storm rages outside. DOT is tending bar, SILAS is at the piano, WALTER is sitting, and PEOPLE are drinking and chatting. FRANCISCO enters, wet and harried. He pulls out his pad and quill as he approaches the bar to sit.)

FRANCISCO

Good evening. Might I trouble you for a glass of sherry?

DOT

You might. You a writer?

(DOT pours a sherry and gives it to FRANCISCO.)

FRANCISCO

My eloquent rhetoric has given me away yet again.

DOT

No. The tacky quill did.

FRANCISCO

Ah, yes. My feather. The Peacock. One of many exotic, flightless birds I am in the process of cataloguing.

DOT

Flightless birds?

FRANCISCO

Yes. The flying birds always flit away before I have a chance to catalogue them.

SILAS

But all birds fly.

FRANCISCO

Not all birds. There are avian oddities. Ground-bound fowl. Stuck ducks, feathered and tethered.

DOT

So injured birds.

FRANCISCO

No...

SILAS

Are you some sort of bird doctor?

WALTER

This town needs a veterinarian!

FRANCISCO

I'm not...

(There is a massive THUNDERCLAP.  
FRANCISCO looks outside.)

FRANCISCO

It seems I shall require shelter from this tempest. Are any  
of your rooms vacant?

DOT

Silas's room has an extra bed.

(DOT pencils FRANCISCO's information  
onto a pad.)

DOT (CONT'D)

Under employment, should I put "flightless bird  
cataloguer," or is that mostly a hobby?

FRANCISCO

It is a hobby, but...

DOT

So veterinarian. Your name?

FRANCISCO

Francisco Sputum. Enchanted.

(FRANCISCO puts his hand out to shake.  
DOT ignores it and continues writing.)

DOT

Francisco? What's that, Chinese?

FRANCISCO

Why no, it's...

(BARNEY bursts into the tavern.)

BARNEY

Me horses! Oh Heavenly Father, me horses! They're gone!

DOT

Barney! What happened?

BARNEY

I had to haul the carriage here all by meself, Dot.

FRANCISCO

Your horses, where have they gone?

WALTER

See? Asking about the horses. I knew he was a veterinarian.

FRANCISCO

I am not...

BARNEY

Alas, me horses are no longer with me.

FRANCISCO

Ah, their spirits have galloped on to the next world. My condolences, friend.

BARNEY

No, when last I saw them, they was napping.

FRANCISCO

Napping.

DOT

He's in denial. Your horses are dead, Barney.

BARNEY

No, they was napping. See, there were fluids everywhere...

DOT

Not fluids. Blood. Blood from your dead horses, Barney.

BARNEY

No. Not blood. Twas feces and spit-up.

DOT

Your horses vomited and shit themselves after they died. That's what dead horses do, Barney. They vomit and shit themselves.

WALTER

It's true. Ask the veterinarian.

BARNEY

They was napping I tells ya! See, we was riding through the Eternal Woods, the ones behind the Bob's Big Boy...

SILAS

Oh, I've been meaning to try that place!

BARNEY

And that's when I saw her.

FRANCISCO

Saw who?

BARNEY

The, the, the...

DOT

Oh, spit it out, Barney!

(BARNEY spits a bolus of chewed meat onto the floor.)

BARNEY

Sorry, I still had some Bob's Big Boy in me teeth. Grizzle.

SILAS

That's where all the flavor is.

FRANCISCO

Barney, who did you see in the Eternal Forest?

BARNEY

I saw... It was... the babywoman!

DOT

Oh, here we go.

BARNEY

Dot, it's true!

DOT

There's no such thing as the babywoman, Barney.

BARNEY

I saw her with me own two eyes I did!

FRANCISCO

Tell me about this babywoman, Barney. My name is Francisco Sputum, esquire.

BARNEY

Francisco? What's that, Chinese?

FRANCISCO

No, it's...

BARNEY

First, I smelled her. Thought it was me leftovers in the back of the carriage. Then I remembered I didn't have any leftovers. The food at Bob's Big Boy is just too scrumptious not to finish.

SILAS

I wonder if they deliver...

FRANCISCO

Barney, the babywoman.

BARNEY

Right. The odor... It was something reminiscent of apple juice and stale breast milk. Distracted me horses it did. They paused from their trotting to get some whiffs in. Then I heard the sound of diaper crinkling. That's when I saw it toddling over.

FRANCISCO

The babywoman.

BARNEY

The babywoman.

DOT

Barney, There is no such thing as the babywomen.

BARNEY

Then explain to me why my horses is napping with her, Dot!

WALTER

Maybe the veterinarian can explain. Do horses generally like to take naps?

FRANCISCO

Barney, describe this babywoman.

BARNEY

She was horrible. Hairless, with skin as soft as whispers in a graveyard. Virtually no muscle definition. Just a gelatinous mass of body fat. Her disproportionate head kind of wobbled like she couldn't support it on her own. And she had this dull look in her eyes, like she hadn't really learned nuffin' yet. Also she was about five foot seven.

FRANCISCO

Five foot seven.

BARNEY

Aye. It was terrifying. After seeing her up close, I wet meself. And so did she. Me horses got the brunt of it. Lord, she gummed 'em both.

FRANCISCO

She gummed them?

BARNEY

Aye. She didn't have no teeth. Just gums. For gumming. After she got me horses, well, she turned to me and smiled. But you can't really call it a smile. Just a toothless, black pit where hope goes to die. Like staring into the mouth of Hell itself.

SILAS

And you had succulent Bob's Big Boy stuck in your teeth this entire time?

BARNEY

I tried to run, but I tripped and fell. The babywoman crawled closer. If she had any motor skills, she'd have been able to grab me then and there. I thought I was done for, so I put me hands up in front of me face and waited for the worst to be over. Then, the babywoman froze. And I waited. But nothing happened. I peeked out, and she started laughing.

(EVERYONE shudders.)

BARNEY (CONT'D)

A ghastly noise to be sure, but I endured. Again I hid. And again I peeked. Each time she found it as amusing as the last. It was as if she thought I vanished every time I hid behind me hands. Like she had no notion of object permanence. When I got the chance, I grabbed the carriage and ran straight here.

FRANCISCO

You ran here with your carriage.

BARNEY

Well, I wasn't gonna walk; the babywoman was after me! Mind if I stay in the Mother's Bosom tonight, Dot? I don't want to go back out there, what with the storm and the babywoman toddling about.

DOT

There's no such thing as ghosts, goblins, gremlins, or babywomen!

FRANCISCO

Please Dot, the man has clearly been through much ado tonight.

DOT

You just showed up here, Chinese man!

FRANCISCO

But I'm not...

SILAS

She always gets like this when other people drink. Come Francisco, I'll show you to our quarters. Is it true that in your home country of China, people eat with tiny sticks instead of their bare hands?

(SILAS produces a large key ring. He and FRANCISCO exit. BARNEY nervously checks his neck and rubs it. A BABY laughs and thunder claps. End scene.)