

The Outhouse

A Play

by

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The Outhouse

Setting

The Stage is split between the development office and the swamp. The office, stage left, consists of a desk and two chairs and an obviously fake plant that looks rather dead. Construction sounds can be heard. There is a sign on the wall that looks expensive that says "Pave the World Development Company, Canmore, Alberta". There are a lot of phones on the desk, as well as a photo of a child and a old looking pistol. Lighting with warm gels to give a colour contrast with the swamp set.

The swamp, centre stage and stage right, by contrast, has lush green coloured plants (maybe) and has wonderful nature sounds happening. Lighting with a green gel, during the swamp scenes gives a feeling of outdoors and nature. There is an outhouse just right of centre stage, it's front is a parody of the old-style shit-house with a moon shape cut out of the door.

The Players

Harry (The Developer)

A forty-ish, slightly overweight man with tussled hair and the mouth of a construction worker. Wears sturdy boots, work pants and a light blue shirt and tie, and maybe a helmet. Carries his cell phone everywhere.

Mabel (The Environmentally Scientist)

35-year old university type, attractive but not beautiful. She wears no make-up. An environmentalist, she wears flannel shirt, fleece, jeans, hemp hat, hip waders or rubber boots and pack. She's serious, but with a soft cynical sense of humour. Fanatical about the swamp.

Raymond (The Investigator)

A 40-year-old well-dressed Englishman with trimmed hair and slim build. He oozes sarcasm and wit (his own brand of humour), but his humour tends to make people underestimate him.

Props/Wardrobe

Hip-waders, rubber boots, large coat, Mabel's shoulder bag, a bomb, a small cooler full of water, a desk, 2 chairs, a cell phone and 4 telephones, Colt 45 pistol, and some pieces of wood, sticky tape.

(Time: The Present --- Monday Morning)

Scene 1 - Harry's Office

Lights up on empty office set. There is the sound of a door slamming loudly.

Harry (off-stage, shouts) Marilyn, did you forget my coffee?

HARRY enters, he throws his mail and a pistol on the desk, sitting down heavily.

Cream and lots of sugar, if you don't mind! (*sotto voice*) Not the other way around. Dammit ... she thinks 60 words per minute disqualifies her from making the coffee.

He sorts through his mail. Phone1 rings.

God! I hate Mondays. It's only 5 to 7! Don't these people have any concept of time!

He answers the phone, dropping the receiver and having to struggle to recover it.

PaveTheWorld Development. Yes! I told you to order the concrete for 7:30! Deal with it, Dave - I'm busy.

He puts Phone1 down and it immediately rings.

(*loudly*) I told you to deal with it. (*he softens*) Oh, hi honey. Yes, daddy's fine.

He picks up the photo on the desk. (softly smiles)

Sorry I can't see you tomorrow ... No, I'm not always late ... Look, I'll cancel my meeting this afternoon ... That's right, sweetie. I'll meet you at you're mom's house. No daddy doesn't hate you, (*aside*) Just your mother. Yes, we can have pizza. Bye now. I love you, too, honey. Have fun at school.

He puts the picture down and hangs up Phone1 Pauses for a second. Phone2 rings. he picks it up the body of the phone falls off the desk dangling.

Yes sweetie? Oh, it's you again, Dave, ... no I don't go round calling men sweetie! What happened with the concrete? You didn't get the cheque yet? All right I'll call the bank, hang on a minute ...

As he speaks, phone1 rings. He picks up the new caller and tries to hang up angrily on Dave, but the body of the phone still dangles from the cord. He struggles with both phones, trying to answer one and retrieve the other. He gives up and throws the receiver of phone2 away.

PaveTheWorld Development. This is him. What? Hi Ted. (*angry*)

What?!! Shut up and listen to me-- (*shouts*) Listen to me! (*calmer, but still seething*) You tell them that if those goddamn driveways aren't poured today they'll be dealing with me directly! You understand! Ted, I'm counting on you here, so don't screw it up-- what? Look, you'll get paid when the job is done, right? You leave Mr. Teal at the bank to me. He won't foreclose, just do it ... hang on there's another call.

Phone 3 rings. *He tries to pick it up without looking and knocks it on the floor.*

Shit! (*shouts to Marilyn off-stage*) Marilyn!! (*answering phone3*) PaveTheWorld Development. Oh it's you, Mr. Teal. Yes, one more week. That's all I need. No, there's not going to be any problem over the swamp. I have it all under control. I know I owe you a lot of money... (*aside*) You're not the only one, but this deal is worth over 12 million. (*to phone*) Mr. Teal, just a minute ...(*picks up the phone1*) Yes I'm still here, Ted, yes you'll get your money, ... What? Of course I mean this year! Look, talk to Teal yourself ...

He tapes phones1 and phone3 together

Now where was I? (*retrieves phone2 from the floor*) Yes, Dave ...Oh great, he's gone!(*puts phone2 down and it instantly rings*) What? (*instantly calms down, sucking up*) Oh, hello Ralph No, no, everything's fine. No, I asked my secretary for a coffee and I didn't realize she would make a career out of it. The phones are ringing off the hook. (*long pause*) Forty two double d.(*longer pause, laughs*) Yeah, that's pretty funny. IQ's about the same. Pretty funny. (*makes a mocking face*)

Thanks a lot for your gift. (*He picks up the pistol*) I realize that ... yes a working antique. Yeah, I have a few bullets for it. In fact I just loaded it ..Yeah, don't worry, I'll get a permit. I was going to try it out today at the range. So Ralphy baby, you got my token of appreciation? I couldn't send it to the premier's office-- (*pause*) Ah, yeah. (*pause*) Yes, very rare. The only two in Canada. (*pause*) That's right. Make sure you feed 'em regular. You don't want 'em nibbling at the grand children. (*pause, laughs, becomes serious*) Asian Whites. Yes, they're tigers.

In the middle of this, phone4 rings, he reaches over and picks it up

Pave the World Development Company - we're busy.

He hangs up without waiting for an answer.

From Asia. That's why they're called Asian Whites.(*hand over mouthpiece, aside*) Dammit, what an idiot.(*into phone, forgetting to remove his hand*) They have?

(*removes hand*) Sorry. They have? What, in the bathroom? He shouldn't really try to pet them. I thought that that would be fairly

obvious-- (*deep sigh*) I really am sorry. Can you take care of it?

Harry takes a deep breath and changes the subject.

Listen, Ralph, about that planning permit for the swamp...

*There is a long pause and Harry continues to nod periodically as **phone4** rings again and he simply lifts the receiver and hangs it up again.*

I can count on you playing big-brother with Canmore Town Council, then? They have? Okay, thanks Ralphy. ... Yes, as soon as the party fund raiser comes around. ...Bye for now.

Oh, if he only knew that I never voted for him.

*He tries to hang u **phone2** as he slowly pulls an envelope out of the pile. He misses the cradle, **phone4** rings again. He picks it up, still staring at the envelope.*

(*to envelope*) Oh, Dammit, not another one. (*into phone, softly, preoccupied*) I don't care if they haven't moved their furniture out, bull-doze it anyway.

*He absently hangs up **phone4** but misses the cradle and it falls on the desk. He doesn't realize that there are no more calls because the phones are all off the hook. He pulls the contents from the envelope and begins reading. He mouths the words that he is reading, getting more and more agitated as he gets up from the desk and walks around.*

(*mumbles, then reads*) um ... the swamp should be protected from cold-blooded half-wits ... pave the entire valley ... destroy them with whatever means is at our disposal! He should be shot!

(*wipes his forehead*) Dammit! (*points to paper as he reads*) His actions are reprehensible and he should be stopped, with violence, if necessary! (*shouts off stage, very distressed*) Marilyn! Where the hell are you?!!!

He throws the paper back on the desk pacing the floor.

(*under his breath*) That's the fourteenth article that that woman has mailed me! What the hell is she up to? What the hell does she mean "with violence, if necessary"?

*He paces for a few minutes then reaches for a phone, realizes that none of them have been hung up and tries to hang them up, tangling up the cords. He sweeps them all off of the desk, taking the child's picture with them. He quickly retrieves the picture and rubs it on his sleeve, then replaces it. He calls on the cell **phone**.*

Now listen Raymond, ... well get ... look, get off yer ass and get it here fast ... no, not tomorrow. Today! Understand? Five minutes ago! We are not going to let some whale cuddling, tree hugging enviro-harpy mess up a 12 million deal ... I don't care if she writes a gossip column for the Globe and Mail, just get over here !!

Puts **cell phone** in pocket but the **doorbell rings** and he takes out the phone again.

(shouts into phone) WHAT!!!! (He hits the phone on the desk)
(louder) WHAT!!!! What's wrong with this thing ...

Enter RAYMOND holding a cup of coffee. Harry looks up briefly, does a double take and jumps up in fright, drops the phone.

Harry Dammit, Raymond! Don't do that!

Raymond You wanted me to come right away.

Harry What, were you just outside or something?

Raymond I have my methods. (picks up **phones 1 & 3** taped together)
What's this phone sex?

Harry Very funny. It's 8am and it's already been a hell of a day.

Raymond What can I do for you, Harry?

Harry It's that Mabel person again.

Raymond Ah yes. The one you call the Swamp Bitch?

Harry Yes, the Swamp Bitch. She's at it again. She's trying to re-zone my swamp.

He hands the papers to Raymond and Raymond hands him his coffee.

Raymond For duplex lilly pads? How terribly ingenious.

Harry You Brits think your so funny Look Raymond she's half way to ruining me.

Raymond Calm down, Harry old boy, you don't think Canmore Council takes her seriously?

Harry Violent, that's what she is. I told you, she is dangerous

Raymond Dangerous? Well I suppose it's all a matter of perspective.

Harry Perspective? You're so damn British. She's a lunatic!

Raymond Calm down.

Harry She's up to no good! We have to do something!

Raymond What do you suggest we do, Harry?

Harry (long pause and stares, then flustered) I don't know. You're the PR man, that's your job.

Raymond Why don't I follow her? See what she's up to?

Harry That's a start. How much are we talking here? Three hundred?

Raymond Four hundred a day, plus expenses, oh, and a new pair of shoes.

Harry Shoes?

Raymond Well, I'm sure to ruin these in the swamp.

Harry Fine. Whatever.

Raymond Oxfords.

After a beat, Harry almost says something, then -

Harry Just take care of this for me, will you?

Raymond You just leave everything to me. You don't have to know any details.

Harry (*anxiety ridden*) What will you do?

Raymond Pull yourself together, Harry. Nothing illegal.

Harry Speaking of illegal, get this thing licensed for me, will you?

He hands over the pistol.

Raymond You want me to shoot her? I don't do that kind of thing.

Harry It's an antique. A present. I just need a license for it.

Raymond License to kill? A very nice piece of ordnance, dangerous like you, Harry. See you later.

Raymond leaves, stuffing the article into one pocket and the gun into the other.

Harry Or-din-ance (*sic*) ? Does he walk around with a dictionary stuck up his arse or what?

He shakes his head and returns to work as the lights fade.

Scene 2 - Paradise Swamp
(Tuesday Afternoon)

The swamp features a large outhouse. The sounds of crickets and chirping and croaking frogs. For a few minutes MABEL takes a great deal of care stalking an invisible frog, then pounces missing her prey, landing on her belly on the ground.

Mabel Arrgghh!

She gets up and begins her stalking again. Raymond enters, trying desperately not to get his shoes full of mud. He notices her and quickly moves to stay out of her sight, forgetting his shoes. He then looks in disgust at his feet.

He watches Mabel make a number of other attempts to catch the frog. The last time, she lands at his feet and she jumps up surprised.

Mabel You really scared me.

Raymond I beg your pardon, madam. I didn't mean to startle you. I was just so entertained by your little pursuit, there, that I didn't want to interrupt.

(FX Ribbet - best done by the stage manager)

Mabel I was trying to catch that frog.

Raymond My name is Raymond. Whom do I have the honour of addressing?

Mabel I'm Mabel, Mabel Munroe

Raymond Mabel?

Mabel Yes, I am sure glad my parents didn't call me Marilyn.

Raymond So you live here then?

Mabel What? In the swamp? I'd get rheumatism.

Raymond No. Here in Canmore.

Mabel Yes. I live here in Canmore.

Raymond On your own?

Mabel *(assessing him for a beat)* Why do you ask?

Raymond *(a bit embarrassed)* I'm sorry. I didn't mean to pry.

Mabel I see. Well, if you must know, I live with my girlfriend up on Three Sister's Drive.

Raymond .. ah ... girlfriend?

Mabel She's my roommate, okay?

Raymond Oh, sorry. I didn't mean anything ...

Mabel Need some help getting your foot out of your mouth?

Raymond No, I can manage.

(Ribbet) Isn't that your frog?

Mabel That's a green garbage bag.

Raymond Oh. So it is. *(looks around)* You like working in all this mud?

Mabel I gave up a faculty position at the U of C to be here. This is my research project.

Raymond I see..

Mabel Do you? I mean, men always say they see when they don't really see anything. Half the time they don't even listen.

Raymond I see. *(realizes what he said, then defensively)* I'm sorry. That's a pretty general statement, isn't it?

Mabel General, but true.

(Ribbet)

Raymond I see your frog. *(points)*

Mabel Really?

Raymond Really. *(points again)* Over there?

There is a moment between them.

Oh, we missed him. *(sarcastically, checks his shoes)* Nice place you have here.

Mabel Now that's a very old pick up line - and before you ask, yes I do come here often.

Raymond Sorry, I was just looking at all the mud and everything.

Mabel It's so *beautiful*, isn't it?

Raymond It's a bloody great swamp!

Mabel *(not getting the sarcasm)* Yeah, it is great. Aren't I lucky that I got a grant to be here to do this study.

Raymond *(incredulous)* A grant? A grant from where? The Federal Frog Protection Agency?

Mabel *(still not acknowledging the sarcasm)* No. From the Town of Canmore.

Raymond Wait a minute. I thought the town was supporting Harry's development?

Mabel Sorry? *(Strong reaction to Harry's name.)*

Raymond Oh, nothing. Tell me something. What's so special about that frog?

Mabel Nothing. Except she's one of few of her kind left in the country.

Raymond *(shouts to her)* What will you do to him?

Mabel *(stops and turns)* Excuse me?

Raymond The frog? What will you do to him, when you catch him?

Mabel Do to him? Well I don't kiss them. Besides *he* is a *she*.

Raymond Then, where will you take him?

Mabel I'll study *her*, then I'll release *her*.

Raymond How can you tell he is a her?

Mabel Turn her upside down.

Raymond *(beat)* Can I help? I mean, I've always had an interest in little slimy creatures that live in mucky, wet swamps ...

Mabel You? *(incredulous)*

(There is a moment between them - they are both smitten.)

Raymond Sure, I love ... the swamp.

Mabel I'd really appreciate the help.

She spots the frog again and begins to stalk it. Raymond watches in amusement. She plops on her belly again, Raymond laughs.

Argggh! You clever frog! *(looks at Raymond)* You said you would help.

Raymond *(reluctantly)* Yes, I suppose I did, didn't I?.

He looks at his shoes, then reluctantly enters the chase. They go around the stage chasing the imaginary frog. Raymond is not very good at moving around on the soft ground.

Raymond chases it off stage (SR). A large splash is heard. Mabel can hardly control her laughter.

Mabel (doubled over) Are you okay?

After a moment Raymond enters, gingerly holding the frog, pretending(?) to be wet from the waist down. With great ceremony, he presents her with the frog. She looks him over, laughing.

Raymond (quietly) Your frog.

Mabel She's not mine. She just lives here. And not for long, if Harry builds that development.

Raymond You'll have to put a bomb under him if you want him to move.

Mabel I will? Thanks you for the help. Sorry about the ...

He checks out his wet trousers and shoes.

Raymond Well I did volunteer.

Mabel Why don't you come back to my place and get cleaned up?

Raymond I don't want to put you to any trouble.

Mabel It's no trouble. I live just down the road.

Raymond Well, if you are sure.

Mabel Just come, OK? My roommate is in Tibet.

Raymond I'd appreciate that, thanks!

They both walk off SR, Raymond trying to keep up with her and at the same time ineffectually trying not to land in any more mud.

Music showing an interval of time has passed.

Scene 3 - Paradise Swamp
(Wednesday Morning)

Harry enters, SL mumbling under his breath., there are noises of construction in the distance. Raymond is hiding behind the outhouse. Harry does not see him.

Harry Raymond! Where is that limey. Probably polishing his (*mocking a British accent*) Oxfords. Raymond!

Harry pulls out a cellular phone turns to SL and starts to speak quietly. Mabel sneaks in from the SR but does not see Harry. She obviously needs to pee quite badly. There is a lot of shouting and construction noise, but off in the distance. She checks around and quickly ducks into the out-house. Raymond sees her.

Those Brits have no sense of time, he's probably having high tea or visiting the queen!

Raymond appears from behind the outhouse. Harry turns and jumps back in surprise.

Goddamit Raymond, how do you manage to sneak up on me like that?

Raymond I'm just naturally talented, old boy. Good morning, Harry.

Harry Did you get anywhere? Is that woman leaving?

Raymond Well, yes and no.

Harry Look, I'm paying you good money ...

Mabel Gasp! (*makes a sound from the outhouse*).

They both look around for a second, not sure where the sound is coming from.

... good ... money

Raymond I know, I know.

Harry What is she up to?

Raymond Well, she is thinking about something, but I'm not convinced that she's going to hurt you specifically.

Harry Well then who, specifically, is she going to hurt? *I'm convinced* she's after me because she hates me enough to kill me. She's tried once already!

Mabel (*makes a sound from the outhouse*).

They look around again.

Raymond Kill you? Do you mean the time you tried to dismantle her frog

collection stand at the folk festival?

Harry She parked it right beside our Pave-A-Valley contest.

Raymond Sounds like just provocation?

Harry I want to squash her like one of the frogs she likes to play with! You've been following that swamp bitch for days and you've got nothing!

Raymond Well, I've got *something*. I'm having dinner with her tonight --

Mabel (*makes a sound from the outhouse*).

They ignore it. Harry is speechless.

Harry What?

Raymond I'll know more tonight. I've also agreed to help her with the frogs down in the East end this afternoon.

Starts leading Harry out.

Harry You didn't forget my gun license, did you?

Raymond Yes I've got it. You'll get it later today.

Harry exits SR, followed by Raymond, but Raymond doubles back a few seconds later and hides behind the out-house, visible to the audience. A few seconds pass Mabel exits from the out-house. She is very angry.

Mabel Swamp bitch! How dare he call me a swamp bitch! What does swamp bitch mean, anyway? You can't trust anyone any more! I'll fix Harry! I'll give him something to worry about. Arrrggg!!! I'll kill him. I'll blow up their out-house! I'll run him over! I'll shoot him! I'll rip him apart!!! I'll drown him in the swamp and feed him to the frogs.

She stops in her tracks, calming down and a look of purpose on her face.

(*smiles*) No ... no ... the out-house is a much better idea. I'll blow him up in the out-house. That's much more appropriate. That will get rid of Harry for good.. And Raymond. Why is Harry paying Raymond? He's got a lot of fast talking to do if I am to consider *sleeping* with him!

She stomps off into the swamp, laughing maniacally. Raymond comes out of hiding to centre stage, watching her go.

Raymond Wow! (*turns head to audience*) She wants to sleep with me!

Scene 4 - Paradise Swamp
(Wednesday Afternoon)

Raymond and Mabel are examining a frog inside a picnic cooler full of water. Both their hands are in the cooler and the water splashes every once and a while. Raymond is enjoying the opportunity to be this close to her. She occasionally looks at the audience and rolls her eyes heavenward. They discuss the frog in low tones.

Mabel (to frog) Oh, you're so beautiful...

Raymond Oh, thank y-

He realizes that she is talking to the frog and his smile fades.

Mabel (not noticing) Here we go!

She triumphantly holds up the imaginary frog. She looks it carefully in the face and then kisses it on the nose. There is a moment of expectation.

(shrugs) Guess he wasn't a prince, either.

Raymond Ribbet ... ribbet ...

Mabel I only kiss frogs, Raymond.

Raymond Have any turned into princes for you?

Mabel No. Besides, these frogs turn out to be a lot less slimy than most princes anyway.

Raymond So, is that why you moved here? To find a prince?

Mabel That would be too simple. No, I just couldn't handle the people or the politics in the city.

Raymond And so you moved into this political mess?

Mabel Yeah, I know. I can't win. I'd just like to be left alone to do my work.

Raymond I wish it could be that simple.

They both move to front and centre and release the frog carefully.

Mabel (crouching, to frog) Oh, yeah, you really like it there, don't you. I bet you do. Lots of water for you to play in. Lots of food (pause as she straightens up) For now, at least. I can't believe that Harry wants to destroy all this.

Raymond Why do you hate him so much?

Mabel (looks at him) I've encountered him before. He forced me to move

an entire population of frogs out of the North Swamp because he built a development up there.

Raymond The entire population? Tadpoles too?

Mabel The whole population. It took me months to catch them all and move them.

Raymond How do you know you found them all?

Mabel I know them all by name! (*loudly*) How do you think? I counted them. Every last bloody one of them! I know everything about them. These creatures are my life! You don't understand this any better than Harry!

Raymond I thought I did understand. I suppose not.

Mabel I see.

Raymond I suppose I have a lot to learn.

Mabel You and Harry, both. (*stands facing him, quietly*) Do you think I would go to this much trouble over something that wasn't important? Do you think I am so unaware of how the world works? If Harry has his way these frogs will be extinct soon. I won't let that happen, even if I have to move them ten more times.

Raymond Don't make the mistake of thinking that Harry is stupid. He owes a lot of people money. Developing this swamp is probably the only way to save himself from financial ruin. He has no choice in the matter.

Mabel (*folding her arms*) Let him develop another swamp.

Raymond Which swamp would you have him develop?

Mabel (*There is a long pause*) I don't know. Just not this one. I'll kill him first. Blow his brains out.

Raymond You wouldn't, would you?

Mabel Just watch me. I'll destroy him ...(sternly, getting her momentum back) and anyone who helps him.

Raymond (*laughs nervously*) Oh, really...

Mabel Really. You've been helping him, haven't you?

Raymond I ...

Mabel Don't try and deny it, I overheard you plotting against me.

Raymond But, I ...

Mabel I want a straight answer.. Are you on Harry's side or mine?

Raymond How do you mean, straight?

Mabel I mean the truth. Whose side are you on?

Raymond *(trying to be cute)* I always tell the truth, I'm British.

Mabel Well my two-timing friend. You have to make a decision here. Either me or Harry's pay cheque?

Raymond Well, Mabel, I am very attracted to you.

Mabel I know. And you're probably pretty fond of the pay cheque, too.

Raymond Harry can make life very difficult for me in this town, especially if I let him down.

Mabel Raymond, I am not going to let him down, I'm going to blow him up!

Raymond You wouldn't really, would you? It would destroy everything you've been working for all these years.

Mabel You're right, it would be safer to shoot him.

Raymond No! I don't mean that either.

Mabel Well how would *you* do it then?

Raymond Can't you just reason with him?

Mabel He is beyond reason. His only motivation is greed.

Raymond Come on, even Harry has a good side.

Mabel The only good developer is a dead developer.

Raymond Isn't that a little extreme?

Mabel And paving the Bow Valley is not?

Raymond Harry has a lot of influence. We could ask him to lean on the premier. Get the place declared a park. If you compromise, he may be willing to see your side of it.

She begins collecting her belongings, Raymond helping her. There is a long period of silence. She sounds remarkably like Harry.

Mabel Don't be so far fetched, we'll just blow him up instead. I've got to go now and get my fuses and things in order. *(mocking British accent)* Be a dear and buy 3lbs of dynamite at the Hunting Fishing

and Weapons of mass destruction store would you?

Raymond *(laughs nervously)* You're not serious are you?

She thinks about this for a second.

Mabel No, I made my own bomb already. What do you think?

She hands Raymond an obviously home made bomb. He inspects the bomb, turning slightly away from Mabel pulling something off of it. He gives it back to her, pocketing the stolen fuse.

Raymond You made this?

Mabel Of course! I got a plan off the internet. WWW.BombsRus.com. You know, they're an American company based in Libya.

Raymond Where are you going to plant it?

Mabel I can't say, but we'll goad Harry into a meeting. I want you to get him here tomorrow afternoon. *(beat)* Are you with me or not?

Raymond Yeh, I'm with you. *(touches her hand)* Okay?

Mabel Okay.

They stand and face each other. Raymond rocks on the balls of his feet, a bit awkward.

Raymond Well ...

Mabel Well ...

Raymond I'll see you tonight, then?

Mabel Right. Tonight.

Raymond reaches up and touches her cheek. There is a pause before he kisses her. Both seem surprised.

Raymond Tonight.

He puts his arms round Mabel, she returns the hug. They turn so that Mabel is facing the audience. She finds the gun in Raymond's pocket and her eyes get really big. Before Raymond can kiss her again she jumps back, sliding the gun into her shoulder bag.

Mabel Right. Tonight.

Exit Raymond walking backwards, SR, smiling at her. Making sure he is gone, Mabel holds up the bomb and smiles.

For you, Harry!

She closely inspects the bomb and realizes that Raymond has taken the fuse.

Oh! He's taken the fuse! I can't believe him. Never mind. Now I have a better way, (*she pats her bag*) now where did I put that string.

She pulls the gun from her purse and a length of string, moving toward the outhouse door, opens it. Raymond re-enters.

Raymond Oh Mabel! What time would you like me to come ... over?

She scrambles to put the gun back in her purse before Raymond sees it. He misses the movement but looks puzzled at the string she holds in her hand.

Mabel Oh, ah ... eight ... o'clock is fine.

Raymond Okay. I'll see you then.

*Mabel belatedly hides the string. She bolts past Raymond and exits **SR**.*

Bye, now.

Raymond backs out to centre stage and looks out where she had exited.

She won't get far without the fuse.

He holds up the missing fuse and rolls it in his fingers. He looks at the audience and does a double take.

Well *of course* I'm still going to sleep with her. She's not trying to blow *me* up, is she?

Black out.

Scene 5 - Paradise Swamp
(Thursday Morning)

A loud banging is heard from the outhouse. Mabel is fixing the gun pointing at the door, a piece of string is fastened to the trigger, a trip-wire is positioned so that opening the door will cause the gun to fire in the direction of the person entering the outhouse. the door is facing SL so little of this can be see by the audience.

Mabel *(from inside the outhouse)* Ow! Damn! *(More banging)* Owow!! There! Finished the darn thing. *(she exits the out-house)* Where the heck is Raymond. He promised he would bring Harry over first thing this morning. Where did I put my thermos of coffee?

Cross fade to Harry's office. Harry sits at his desk. Raymond knocks and enters.

Harry Well? Is she leaving?

Raymond Not exactly. She wants to blow you up.

Harry See? I told you that woman is capable of murder! What am I going to do? I have a daughter!

Raymond Don't worry. She was bluffing. Besides I took the fuse out of the bomb.

Harry Thank God. We have enough evidence to go to the cops, don't we?

Raymond What? You mean Shiela?

Harry Very funny. I mean the police.

Raymond No, no we don't need to do that, besides we have no proof.

Harry That fuse seems like pretty good proof to me! I built a house for Constable Smith from the local barracks. He owes me one.

Raymond You know, Harry, you could find a compromise. Give her the East end of the swamp. You can lean on your friends in the legislature and get it reserved as a park. That way you still get a sizable chunk of land and no more trouble.

Harry *(incredulous)* I don't believe I'm hearing this. I hired you to do a job, Raymond!

Raymond All right. All right! I had to ask. I just wanted you to consider the options before things get out of hand.

Harry Well, that ship has already sailed, hasn't it!

Raymond Okay, fine. Let's go and find Mabel and talk this out like civilized human beings ...

Harry ... that want to kill each other. Yes, let's go.

Cross fade to the swamp. Raymond and Harry enter from the office. Mabel and Harry confront each other uncomfortably. There is a long pause.

Mabel (*hesitantly*) Can I offer you some coffee?

Raymond (*enthusiastically*) That sounds great Mabel, I just need to use the loo.

Mabel scrambles quickly to intercept Raymond.

Mabel Raymond, can you get Harry some coffee.

Raymond Oh, righto.

Harry You said you want to discuss the swamp situation.

Raymond offers the coffee to Harry.

Mabel Yes, I do. Have some coffee, Harry. I can call you Harry, can't I?

Harry Yeah, sure. Thanks.

He takes the coffee but does not drink.

Mabel Are you ready to discuss a compromise, Harry?

Raymond pours himself a coffee and sips from the cup.

Harry Compromise? Sure. I'll tell you what ... I'll give you ... ah... ten thousand dollars if you move your research to another bog.

Raymond again moves to the outhouse but Mabel blocks him again.

Mabel He is trying to bribe me!

She leads Raymond back to the coffee and starts pouring more. Raymond tries to keep the peace between them.

Raymond Come on Harry, drink your coffee.

Harry (*he takes a sip*) Bribe you? What I'm suggesting is a research grant. That's all ...

Raymond (*To Mabel*) I really must go ...

Mabel (*hisses*) Raymond, he's trying to buy me off. What's next? Strong-arm tactics?

Harry I don't understand what is so great about this swamp. There are dozens of other bogs around here! (*drinks the rest of his cup*)

Raymond (to Mabel) He doesn't understand ...

Mabel (loudly) I know! I know! He doesn't understand! He doesn't want to understand!

Harry I need to take a leak.

Harry walks over to the outhouse door and grabs the handle as Mabel blocks Raymond from getting over to stop him.

Mabel (loudly) Well, he thinks that this place is only worth a pitiful ten thousand dollars!

Harry lets go of the door handle to retaliate. Mabel backs away from him as he approaches her.

Harry Pitiful? That's more than your lousy grant is worth!

Raymond Harry, that's not the point! (to Mabel) That's not the point is it?

Mabel (attacking) You don't see the value --

Harry Okay, then ... fifteen thousand.

Mabel (flustered) Oh! Oh! You just don't understand anything. You're such a jerk!

They argue as Raymond throws up his hands and goes to the outhouse.

Raymond I've got to go ...

Harry Raymond, help me. She's being unreasonable!

Raymond lets go of the outhouse door and comes back to the group.

Raymond Harry, try to see it from her point of view. She's simply not able to put a monetary value on the land as easily as you can. For her it has nothing to do with money.

Mabel (sigh)

Harry turns away from her and drinks more coffee.

Harry, if you kill these frogs, they're gone. *Forever!*

Harry So what?

Mabel Well, for one thing we'd be overrun with insects.

Harry Insects?

Raymond Yes, and local restaurant owners would be up in arms without legs.

Mabel & Harry What?

Raymond Frog's legs!

Mabel & Harry Shut up Raymond.

Harry Why don't you move the darn frogs like you did last time? I'll give you fifteen thousand dollars to move them to a different swamp.

Mabel You forced me to move them **here** in the first place, you idiot! If you keep moving them they'll die! If you keep this up there will be no swamps left to move them to --

Raymond intercepts her as she moves toward Harry, who cringes away from her.

Raymond Mabel, calm down. He won't listen if you scream at him. You have to be reasonable.

Harry is flustered and goes toward the outhouse.

Harry I need to take a leak.

Mabel Go ahead!

Harry begins to open the outhouse door.

How much is the swamp worth to you, Harry?

Letting go of the door and accepting her challenge.

Harry This is a twelve million dollar project! There are hundreds of jobs depending on this --

Mabel *(attacking)* Twelve million and hundreds of jobs. Ha! And you're offering me a lousy fifteen thousand dollars to just walk away?

Raymond circles them slowly as this transpires.

Harry All right! Twenty five thousand! I'll pay you twenty five thousand dollars to move those goddamn frogs out of my swamp --

Mabel *(attacking)* Your swamp! *Your* swamp! This is *my* swamp! I'm going to save this swamp for the frogs!

Raymond has made his way to the outhouse door by this point.

Harry and Mabel *(simultaneously)* Who the hell do you think you are!

At that moment Raymond begins opening the door

Raymond *(loudly)* I have to use the loo.

Mabel rushes forward but is partly blocked by Harry.

Mabel No! Stop! Raymond, don't!

Raymond pushes open the door, there is a loud bang and he falls to the floor.

Harry What have you done?!!! You stupid woman! Raymond!

Harry rushes to Raymond, finds the string and extracts his own gun from the outhouse. Mabel pushes past Harry, some banging is heard and she emerges with a couple of pieces of wood that previously held the gun.

Harry is meanwhile standing over Raymond searching for signs of life.

Raymond ... , speak to me, buddy.

Mabel I think he's ... he's ... dead.

She tosses the wood behind the outhouse. Harry gets up holding the gun in his hand. Mabel moves between Harry and Raymond so that she can distract him from getting a closer look at him.

Harry You've killed him.

Mabel I've killed him? *You're* the one holding the gun, and I do believe it is your gun, isn't it?

Harry (*confused*)What?

Mabel It's going to be hard for you to explain this to the police. (*beat*) Your men have stopped work. They're looking over this way. Shall I call them?

Harry What about **your** booby trap in the outhouse?

Mabel I don't think those few pieces of wood would convince the police of anything. Besides, Raymond was helping me and you killed him because he betrayed you.

Harry This is not happening. Say it's not happening.

Mabel Of course, it could all have all been a dreadful accident.

Harry (*hopefully*) What do you mean?

Mabel Raymond could have been playing with your gun. Of course, since he's British, he knows nothing about guns. It went off. Very sad.

Harry Yes, that's possible. Is that what you'll tell them?

Mabel That depends.

Harry On what? What do I have to do?

Mabel I believe you have some influence at the premier's office.

Harry I'm owed a few favours, yeah. What do you want?

Mabel If you can get the swamp declared a nature reserve, then maybe I could be convinced to say that Raymond died accidentally.

Harry That's blackmail!

Mabel Yeah, it is, isn't it.

Harry That's illegal!

Mabel And killing Raymond? What's that?

Harry But, I didn't kill Raymond! (*confronts her*) You planned this didn't you? It was Raymond that you wanted to kill, just to frame me! You never meant to get me in there. Killing me wouldn't stop this development. You needed *me* to stop it for you! Well, I won't!

Mabel If I scream now, I bet those workers of yours will be over here in less than a minute. How many of them have you paid recently?

Harry You'll ruin me.

Mabel Harry you are a smart guy, you'll find something else to destroy for money!

Harry But I didn't kill him!

Mabel (*she waves at the workers*) Hello !!! Isn't that Dave? I didn't know Dave worked for you, hello Dave!

Harry Okay, okay. You win! Come over to my office, I have to use the phone there. I don't want anyone to hear this.

Mabel Harry, I knew you would see reason.

They exit to the office, the light focuses down onto Raymond's body.

Scene 6 - Epilogue

Raymond slowly rises. Enter Mabel from the office and helps him up.

Mabel Are you all right?

Raymond (loudly) Yes, yes I'm fine. Wow, those blanks can really hurt!

Mabel It's just a lot of hot air. I learned about it in my gun course.

Raymond brushes himself off.

Raymond Did he buy it?

Mabel Yes. He just phoned his *friend* at the legislature. The whole swamp will become a nature reserve in perpetuity. Meanwhile, I'll just keep you in hiding for a while ... at my apartment.

Raymond (*smiles*) Mabel, you are a genius.

They hold each other.

Mabel I know. You'll have plenty of opportunity to show your appreciation.

They kiss.

I finally kissed a prince who turned into a frog!

Fade to Black

END