

THIS ISN'T WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

By

Philip Gerson

2373 Broadway
Apartment 1422
New York, NY 10024
818-522-3822
Philip-gerson@usa.net

CAST:

HENRY
SUSAN, his wife
ALICE WORTH

ONE ACTOR and ONE ACTRESS play the rest of the parts, often changing roles quickly. There shouldn't be costume changes, but props and other devices can be used to help identify the parts they're playing.

PRODUCTION:

Henry never leaves the stage. The others come and go as the action swirls around him. There are times when we're not sure whether we are in a nightmare or reality.

The set pieces should be simple, so that the actors can rearrange them quickly to represent the rapid shifts of location. A table can create an office or a classroom or a cafeteria. Two chairs pushed together can be a couch in a living room.

The only set piece that should have any presence and remain stationary is a door that is closed almost all the time. It leads to the unseen bedroom of Henry and Susan's unseen teenaged son, Edward.

There is action that takes place on television, radio and other media. Characters should simply behave as if they are being filmed or recorded. If desired, multi-media can be added to dramatize these moments, but the characters themselves should always be present on stage.

(ALICE's body lies on the floor, face up. She is dead. HENRY is kneeling, stabbing her angrily with a chef's knife.)

(Suddenly, he becomes aware of us. Stops stabbing. Addresses us:)

HENRY

This isn't what it looks like. I'm a Democrat.
(drops the knife)
I don't even believe in the death penalty...

ALICE

Well I do.

(Alice stands, dusts herself off. Henry, surprised, backs away:)

HENRY

This is a nightmare, right? I mean that's how this all started so it's logical to assume that right now I'm having --

ALICE

Oh no this is real, my little enemy combatant, and you are in big --

HENRY

Shut up! You got your say, every day, every day of your life on TV, online, on the news, now it's my turn.

ALICE

(assesses us; then:)

Sure. Take your pathetic little off-off off-off-Broadway audience and run with it.

(She leaves.)

(The MAYOR enters:)

MAYOR

I've got good news and bad news...

HENRY

The Mayor, that was the first thing that happened -- wait, was that a nightmare or was it real?

MAYOR

Which first?

HENRY

The good news.

MAYOR

Your job has been outsourced.

HENRY
Outsourced? My job? That's absurd!

MAYOR
That kind of attitude doesn't bode well for your future here.

HENRY
My future here? You just told me that somebody in --

MAYOR
Nepal.

HENRY
-- Nepal -- Nepal?! Someone in Nepal is going to be the new City Manager?

MAYOR
He says his name is Shane.

HENRY
How can somebody in Nepal be our City Manager?

MAYOR
I know you Henry so I know you didn't mean that in a racist way, but... ssh.

(He points up, as if they're bugged.)

HENRY
I don't understand, my last review was excellent.

MAYOR
That's the problem, it bumped you up to a higher pay scale. We have to run this city at a profit.

HENRY
But I love this city, you'll never find anybody better for this job --

MAYOR
And that's why we need you to get Shane up to speed for maybe two weeks.

HENRY
You're only giving me two weeks notice?

MAYOR
You're management, we don't have to give you notice. I assumed you'd give us two weeks, you always do the right thing.

HENRY
That was the good news?

MAYOR
See? I knew you'd take this well.

HENRY

Then what's the bad news?

MAYOR

I just said that to make it easier.

HENRY

Well it didn't work.

MAYOR

I meant easier for me.

(He exits.)

(SUSAN, Henry's wife, appears in their apartment, getting dinner ready.)

SUSAN

(on phone:)

Can you look in the pill box and see if you took them? ...
The pill box, Mom, with the days of the week on it? ...
There's just one pill in it for the whole week?

(She shrugs to Henry, "This again".
Henry kisses her, goes to the closed door and knocks:)

HENRY

Edward?

SUSAN

No no no Mom don't cut the pill in half, promise me you won't
cut it in half, remember the last time you did that? We
don't want another trip to the emergency room, do we?

HENRY

Eddie? What'd you do today?

SUSAN

You have to call the number on the bottle to order more ...
Well where were you the last time you used your glasses?

HENRY

Why don't you come out and have dinner with us?

SUSAN

(to Henry)

Don't plead, remember what the therapist said.

(back into phone)

Oh good, where were they? ... Well, no wonder they're cold
... Yes, that's right I did tell you to read the frozen-food
labels because of the -- that's right, the salt ... Okay,
love you too.

(She hangs up.)

HENRY

I've got some bad news, babe.

SUSAN

Me too, one of our chemistry teachers was killed.

HENRY

What??

SUSAN

They said it was a freak accident -- he was doing a demonstration, igniting methanol -- but I wouldn't put it past a kid adding something to it, tenth-graders are devious little shits. I'm just counting the days till I start subbing, all subs have to do is bring earplugs and a starter pistol.

(calling)

Edward! I made your favorite, ratatouille --

(whispering, to Henry)

Do not tell him the vegetables were frozen.

(She puts dinner on the table. Henry takes a plate and heads to Edward's door:)

SUSAN

Please don't do that -- the psychiatrist said he won't come out as long as we make it easy for him to stay in.

HENRY

Eighteen years old. We weren't much older than that when we met --

SUSAN

And we never would've met if you'd stayed in your room for six months and missed the first quarter of college.

(The door opens, a couple of video game boxes fly out, and the door slams shut.)

SUSAN

I am not your maid!

HENRY

Yelling at him isn't going to help --

SUSAN

What will help? Really. I want to know.

HENRY

I guess it's like everything -- we just have to try to understand.

(She picks up the video games, reads the titles:)

SUSAN

"Gladiator 4: The Impaler", "Serial Killer: Extreme Edition".
I don't think I want to understand that.

(ALICE WORTH, our stabbing victim from the beginning, enters. She addresses us, as Henry clears dishes, and Susan gets ready for bed:)

ALICE

It's a dangerous world, don't you think? And when we sense danger, you know the first thing we do? Lie to ourselves about it. That man with the knife coming towards you isn't dangerous, he just needs some understanding. Homosexuals don't really want to sodomize your son, they just need a hug. But here's the thing: You can lie to yourself all day long, but the danger is still there. So of course you feel anxious, anxiety is a way of covering your fear. But the fear still seeps out, only in ways that have nothing to do with its cause. You fight with your husband, you eat nothing but Oreos for a week, you find yourself tempted to vote for a Democrat. The first sane step, the first step to a congruent self, is to be honest about the danger that is out there, the danger to your way of life. Like the politicians who want to tell you how to educate your children, the radicals who want to take away your guns, the liberals who want you to be nice to everybody. Would you be nice to Adolf Hitler? Don't you think that might just encourage him? And isn't being nice just really gay? You have the right to be afraid, you have the right to feel threatened, you have the right to be mad about it. But be honest about the source. And then, Do Something About It.

(Henry talks on his cellphone as he takes out the garbage:)

HENRY

Dad? How're you tonight? ... You had your dinner? ... No, it's two hours later for me, Dad, we're just about to go to bed ... That's right, Susan and I ... Yeah, it was good, it was a good day ... I work for the city, Dad, remember? ... Yeah, I do like it, it's -- it makes me feel good to give back for all the stuff we got -- what? ... Sad? No no, I'm fine ...

(Susan is in bed, watching Alice, who we now realize is on Susan's TV:)

ALICE

Life isn't about hoping for the best, pleasing others, doing their slop-work. Life is about fulfilling your potential, getting what you deserve. So how do you shake things up?

(MORE)

ALICE (cont'd)

Start small. Just change one thing, one little tiny thing, it'll snowball. There have been studies about this, scientific studies that not even liberals can deny. Take a different route to work, eat lunch at a different time, vote Republican for just a little tiny office, like school board.

(Henry joins her. Susan quickly switches off the TV.)

HENRY

My Dad said, "You know who could help you feel better? My son."

SUSAN

We've got a lot to look forward to, don't we?

HENRY

To me you'll always be the freshman who staged a sit-in twenty years after anybody knew what they were. Even the Dean didn't have a clue what you were doing, he thought you were sick and got you a chair.

(They laugh.)

HENRY

That's when I fell in love with you.

SUSAN

And look where that got us.

(She kisses him good-night on the cheek, turns to go to sleep.)

HENRY

When did you fall in love with me?

SUSAN

I can tell you when it wasn't, it wasn't when you said you looked forward to paying taxes.

HENRY

It's a duty of citizenship --

HENRY AND SUSAN

(at the same time, by rote)

-- to pay your fair share --

HENRY

I mean where do people think the money comes from for their police and fire, schools and roads and --

SUSAN

I know I know --

HENRY

Everyone thinks someone else should pay for things they use --

SUSAN

Good-night Henry.

HENRY

On the up side, I don't have to set the alarm.

SUSAN

You're going in to the office, right?

HENRY

Susan. They want me to work for nothing.

SUSAN

You don't want to piss them off.

HENRY

Piss them off? They fired me, what more can they do?

SUSAN

You don't want to burn any bridges.

HENRY

They burnt the bridges -- !

SUSAN

It's just -- this isn't what we planned --

HENRY

It's not my fault.

SUSAN

You were supposed to get a raise, I was going to start subbing...

HENRY

I can get another job.

SUSAN

Course you can.

HENRY

You don't think I can?

SUSAN

Of course you can.

HENRY

You don't think I can.

SUSAN

Of - course - you - can. God. Go to sleep.

Fat chance now.

HENRY

(Henry closes his eyes, and A PERSONNEL DIRECTOR appears as if on a TV show. Henry jumps out of bed:)

PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

Welcome to "Get That Job"! Round One: Complete the following sentence. Poverty is...

HENRY

Bad.

(A BUZZER sounds.)

PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

I'm sorry, no. Poverty is profitable. Next sentence: Growth requires...?

HENRY

... profit?

PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

Close -- Judges? ...

(DING!)

PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

We can accept that, but the exact answer is "Growth requires a permanently impoverished underclass."

HENRY

NO!!

(That wakes Susan up:)

SUSAN

Another nightmare?

(Henry returns to her at the bed:)

HENRY

Another nightmare... ?

SUSAN

Why don't you take a xanax --

HENRY

A xanax... ?

SUSAN

The doctor said it was okay.

HENRY

What Doctor?

(But Susan is asleep. Henry lies back down, closes his eyes...)

(A SECOND PERSONNEL DIRECTOR enters:)

SECOND PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

Henry? I ran you past the boss and -- can you start today?

HENRY

Sure, great!

SECOND PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

I just need to ensure that you understand our employment policies.

HENRY

Okay.

SECOND PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

We work with a new economic model here.

HENRY

Excellent.

SECOND PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

First off, we don't believe we should dictate what kind of health care you choose.

HENRY

Fantastic.

SECOND PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

A fund tied to the length of time you worked here will be deducted from your pay and set aside for your health care. You can access it for any one of several health problems --

HENRY

"Several"?

SECOND PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

Band-aids, for example, are fully covered.

HENRY

(trying to understand)

Ookay... and if I don't use the money in the account...?

SECOND PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

It flows into another account which benefits the health of the whole company.

HENRY

Like a major medical account?

SECOND PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

In the sense that it is never used.

HENRY

But if it's never used, what happens to my money?

SECOND PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

Your money?

HENRY

That wasn't used, that flowed into the fund.

SECOND PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

It's not your money, it's the company's money, and as I said, it benefits the health of the entire company, the financial health. And speaking of remuneration, we don't believe in the old-fashioned profit-oriented model.

HENRY

Cool.

SECOND PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

Good, I'm glad we're on the same page. All I need is your signature here, initials here and here and thumb-scan here.

(Henry inspects the document:)

HENRY

I don't quite get this -- my wages are provided in "credit"?

SECOND PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

Right.

HENRY

Oh you mean you don't give me a paycheck, you automatically credit it, deposit it to my bank account.

SECOND PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

No. Credit. You know... "Attaboy".

HENRY

Wait, let me get this straight: no pay, no benefits -- explain to me why I should take this job?

SECOND PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

Think how great it will look on your resume.

HENRY

I'm ready to wake up now.

SECOND PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

Sorry?

HENRY

Not you... Hello? I'm ready to wake up now?

(The Director stares at him. Henry pinches himself. Nothing.)

Slaps himself. Nothing. The Director backs away from this crazy man and leaves.)

(Susan meanwhile has been putting dinner on the table:)

SUSAN
You turned it down?

HENRY
Turned what down?

SUSAN
The job!

HENRY
I did? Oh -- yeah -- there was no money --

SUSAN
Maybe you're asking for too much --

HENRY
When I say no money, I don't mean not enough money, I mean no money --

SUSAN
Edward! Dinner!
(to Henry)
Are you taking the paxil the doctor gave you?

HENRY
Paxil?!

SUSAN
Please Henry, please don't fall apart on me, I'm already doing extra tutoring to bring in more money -- Edward, get out here now!

HENRY
Don't yell at --

SUSAN
You can't reason everything, it's been seven months! And now he won't eat...

(The doorbell rings.)

SUSAN
I asked someone to join us, someone who can help us.

HENRY
Help us what?

SUSAN
We're at a perilous passage in our marriage --

HENRY

"Perilous passage"...? What does that even mean?

(She lets in Alice, who is followed by a crew carrying camera and boom.)

ALICE

Susan, and you must be Henry. Alice Worth.

SUSAN

(starstruck)

It's such an honor to have you take a personal interest in --

HENRY

You're that TV political shrink.

ALICE

I prefer to think of myself as a warrior for mental and societal health. I don't believe in wasting time, Henry -- some therapists are hand-holders, I'm more of a face-slapper. You know --

(her catchphrase:)

"You've been slapped!"

(From around us, we hear AUDIENCE APPLAUSE, as if she's on TV. Henry responds: What the hell was that? He takes Susan aside:)

HENRY

What's this about?

SUSAN

We need help --

HENRY

(to Alice:)

Tonight really isn't the best --

ALICE

Take it from me, the best time to change your life is the time that's not the best time. And don't blame your wife, coming here was my idea. Susan wrote to me, and I told her that your marriage is at a perilous passage, one that is so typical of American families today --

HENRY

(accusingly, to Susan)

"Perilous passage."

ALICE

Look where you two started -- you were in love, you were all juiced up and ready to take on the world, right? And like so many young people, you fell in with the wrong crowd, a crowd that co-opted you with wild, destructive ideas.

(MORE)

ALICE (cont'd)

I mean, where's the value in do-gooding if you end up not-having? Am I right?

(Henry hears more APPLAUSE -- where's it coming from??)

HENRY

Excuse me, I don't want to be rude, but why are you here?

ALICE

Direct, that's good -- not what I would've expected from a warm, soft fuzzie like you. You want to "do good", right?

HENRY

Yes but what does that --

ALICE

You can help me do good. Together we can give people hope, we can show them how to navigate this perilous passage.

HENRY

Show them?

ALICE

On TV.

HENRY

(to Susan)

She just wants to use us to get her ratings up --

ALICE

Of course I want good ratings, I believe in my approach, I want to spread it as far as I can so I can do the most good. Your marriage isn't the only one with a suicide bomb strapped around its waist --

(Surprised, Henry looks at Susan. She holds his gaze.)

ALICE

And the fact that you are surprised by this indicates just how much trouble it's in. You love Susan, don't you?

HENRY

Of course --

ALICE

And you want her to feel secure, right?

HENRY

(to Susan)

Let's talk about this alone --

ALICE

I'll help you work through this, and in the process we'll help others who aren't as lucky as you.

Lucky?
HENRY

To have me.
ALICE

(She and her crew exit.)

Sweetheart --
HENRY

SUSAN
I love you Henry, I don't want that to go away like everything else.

Everything else?
HENRY

SUSAN
Teaching was my mission, it was sacred, now I'm just a cop. And I don't want to end up like my parents -- they spent their whole lives paying into the system and then the money was gone when they really needed it. All the causes, Henry, all the marches, demonstrations, actions, everything we worked for, they didn't accomplish anything --

I understand...
HENRY

SUSAN
I don't. I don't believe any more either.

HENRY
(worried)
Sweetheart --

SUSAN
I'm tired Henry, I'm tired of worrying whether the car will start every morning, I want a new one, I want an automatic with leather seats and air conditioning and I want shoes that aren't practical, I want to go to a spa! I want all the things I'm not supposed to want -- and I want a son who comes out of his room.

HENRY
(now really alarmed)
... Okay.

SUSAN
Okay?

HENRY
I'll do her show with you.

SUSAN

Thank you.

(She kisses him gratefully, goes to bed.)

(A TELEPHONE OPERATOR appears:)

TELEPHONE OPERATOR

9-1-1 operator, what is the nature of your emergency?

HENRY

My son, there's something really wrong, he doesn't come out of his room, now he won't eat --

TELEPHONE OPERATOR

Won't or can't?

HENRY

Just send an ambulance -- !

TELEPHONE OPERATOR

Oh sir, I can't do that until I have more information, that would be a waste of taxpayers' money.

HENRY

I'm a taxpayer!

TELEPHONE OPERATOR

Your taxes can't begin to cover the costs of an ambulance, the E.M.T.s, not to mention the gas, have you seen the prices lately? Now in a true emergency, of course, society bands together to help the individual. So if you'll just permit me to ask you a few questions, I can evaluate if that's the case here. How is your relationship with your wife?

HENRY

Excuse me??

TELEPHONE OPERATOR

I'm trying to ascertain the nature of the home environment.

HENRY

Well to be honest we are having some minor problems -- very minor, it's just sometimes I don't recognize her any more --

TELEPHONE OPERATOR

I'll bet she doesn't recognize you either.

HENRY

Excuse me?!

TELEPHONE OPERATOR

Well you've put on some weight --

HENRY

No way, I still run, I eat right --

TELEPHONE OPERATOR

Do you have reason to believe your wife is an alien?

HENRY

No of course not!

TELEPHONE OPERATOR

Was she born in this country?

HENRY

What -- ? Oh you mean, illegal alien --

TELEPHONE OPERATOR

You thought I meant an alien from outer space? Oh sir, that would be absurd.

HENRY

Hey hey hey, what difference would it make if she was an illegal alien?!

TELEPHONE OPERATOR

I would definitely not be able to send an ambulance.

HENRY

That's disgraceful! and the ambulance is for my son!

TELEPHONE OPERATOR

If your son can't eat, that's one thing -- but if he won't eat, that's another. Has he been indulging in this behavior for more than twenty-three hours and fifty-nine minutes?

HENRY

Yes but --

TELEPHONE OPERATOR

Won't eat. In that case, you need to call --

(TELEPHONE OPERATOR TWO answers:)

TELEPHONE OPERATOR TWO

Department of Welfare, Division of Willful Children.

HENRY

My boy, he's starving to death --

TELEPHONE OPERATOR TWO

I'm sorry sir, you need to contact --

(TELEPHONE OPERATOR THREE appears:)

TELEPHONE OPERATOR THREE

Department of Health.

HENRY

My son, he's blue!

TELEPHONE OPERATOR THREE

You're wasting my time sir, there are many sad children.

HENRY

You don't understand, he's starving, he's hungry -- !

TELEPHONE OPERATOR THREE

We don't use those terms any more, nobody in this great country of ours dies of hunger or starvation -- there are those who face Low Food Security, but we never actually hear from them.

HENRY

You don't understand, he's dying!

TELEPHONE OPERATOR THREE

Then you should call 9-1-1.

HENRY

I did! Hello? Hello?! Shit!

(His cellphone rings in his pocket. He answers it. TELEPHONE OPERATOR FOUR appears:)

TELEPHONE OPERATOR FOUR

This is the Department of Admissions. Is Edward Warren there?

HENRY

Oh hello, yes, he's... unavailable.

TELEPHONE OPERATOR FOUR

He should've been here at college ten weeks ago, sir.

HENRY

We called a couple of weeks ago to tell you that he --

TELEPHONE OPERATOR FOUR

Who is this "we", sir?

HENRY

Me, my wife actually --

TELEPHONE OPERATOR FOUR

Then may I speak with her, sir?

HENRY

She's working.

TELEPHONE OPERATOR FOUR

And you're not?

HENRY

Excuse me??!!

TELEPHONE OPERATOR FOUR

Why hasn't your son been in touch with us himself?

HENRY

He won't come out of his room.

(TELEPHONE OPERATOR FIVE appears.)

TELEPHONE OPERATOR FIVE

Department of Departments, how may I assist you?

HENRY

I'm trying to talk with somebody about this problem with my son --

TELEPHONE OPERATOR FIVE

That's why I'm here, sir, to direct you to the correct department.

HENRY

Oh. Well the problem is --

TELEPHONE OPERATOR FIVE

Yes sir, I've been made aware of the problem.

HENRY

How?

TELEPHONE OPERATOR FIVE

Didn't you hear that recording while you were on hold, here let me play it again for you --

HENRY

No wait -- !

(moving to Edward's door)

Eddie! Edward! You really need to come to the phone.

(Nothing from Edward's door.)

HENRY

Look you can talk to them from your room ... I'll leave the phone by your door and walk away, this notice says that if you don't show up at school within ten days your scholarship will be rescinded --

(reading from a letter)

... and that you'll have to pay a fine? what the hell --

(An UNEMPLOYMENT CLERK sits at a desk.)

UNEMPLOYMENT CLERK

Next!

(Henry recognizes the Clerk, rushes over:)

HENRY

Chris! thank God, a familiar face --

UNEMPLOYMENT CLERK

Sorry sir --

HENRY

It's me, Henry!

UNEMPLOYMENT CLERK

Mr. Warren, this is my professional habitat.

HENRY

You mean your cubicle.

UNEMPLOYMENT CLERK

(gesturing up, warning that they are being monitored:)

The company specifically prohibits being personal in our professional habitats.

HENRY

The "company"? You work for the state! We work in the same building --

UNEMPLOYMENT CLERK

I have your request for unemployment insurance here but in order to obtain unemployment insurance you must have been fired, your job was transferred --

HENRY

It was outsourced to --

UNEMPLOYMENT CLERK

-- and you elected to not transfer with it.

HENRY

My job was outsourced to K-2, and I was never given the chance to --

UNEMPLOYMENT CLERK

I'm sorry, that's not what it says here. Next!

HENRY

Wait wait, there's a mistake in my record --

UNEMPLOYMENT CLERK

That's impossible, sir, our system does not make mistakes.

HENRY

How can you be so sure?

UNEMPLOYMENT CLERK

The system would tell us.

HENRY

Chris please --

UNEMPLOYMENT CLERK

I am not Chris, I am your Continuing Pay Consultant.

HENRY

Whatever, what would you do if you lost your job and they said you just walked away from it?

UNEMPLOYMENT CLERK

Do you want that to happen to me -- Henry?

(Henry sighs. Swings out his
cellphone, dials a number:)

HENRY

Is he in? ... What do you mean, he's been outsourced? He's the Mayor!

(Alice enters:)

ALICE

Ignore the camera and talk to me as if we're in your home.

HENRY

We are in my home.

ALICE

What do you think is the most important thing in marriage?

HENRY

Support, honesty, kindness --

ALICE

That's three things, I asked for one, don't show off.

HENRY

I guess love covers it all.

ALICE

Love covers it up, Henry -- aren't you even a little bit mad?

HENRY

Sure, yeah, but not at Susan --

ALICE

So there's no resentment at all that she's the one bringing home the bacon?

HENRY

I'm trying to get a job.

ALICE
You can try or you can do it.

HENRY
That's just semantics --

(She slaps him across the face. He's shocked. Voices from around us yell out, as if we are in her TV audience:)

AUDIENCE
"You've Been Slapped!"

(Applause and hoots from the audience.)

HENRY
This isn't my fault!

ALICE
Good Henry, you are mad. There are three steps to a congruent, angry, healthy life --
(to us, her TV audience)
-- as you'll discover in my book, "Three Steps to A Congruent, Angry, Healthy Life." Step one: Own Your Anger.

(A MODEL IN A BIKINI crosses the stage, showcasing the book.)

(Alice turns to Susan, who enters on the opposite side of her from Henry.)

(NOTE: During the following, Alice swings back and forth between Henry and Susan as if recording them in different places at different times; the effect is that we are watching an edited TV show:)

ALICE
Susan, pretend you're talking just to me, ignore the camera.

SUSAN
A camera in my classroom? Where is it?

ALICE
Up there, hidden in the portrait of Ronald Reagan. You were telling me that you're mad at your school, right? For putting so many students in your class?

SUSAN
It's not their fault --

ALICE
Then whose fault is it? Yours?

SUSAN
No!

ALICE
Then what changed?

SUSAN
Well, the classes got bigger --

ALICE
You work in a public school, don't you?

SUSAN
Yes --

ALICE
Because the classes at private schools, church schools, home schools -- they're smaller, right?

SUSAN
I guess...

ALICE
So whose fault is it that the public schools are so crowded?

SUSAN
It's complicated, there isn't enough money, and --

ALICE
You're the one complicating it by making excuses -- it's very "nice" of you but it's got to be somebody's fault.

SUSAN
(breaking, getting mad:)
The school, the district, the parents -- they make it impossible!

ALICE
Wow, what a breakthrough.
(to us:)
Isn't she brave? to admit the truth?

(She applauds Susan. We hear applause from around us.)

ALICE
Good work! That was step two: Find The True Source Of Your Anger. And step three, audience? You've been downloading it in record numbers as a ringtone from my website and tweeting it all across the globe...

AUDIENCE
(from all around us)
Do Something About It!

ALICE

Take action to make your life better. Why are our public schools so bad? Because the liberal elite who run this country spend your tax money teaching English to people who weren't born here, not to mention paying for their abortions and their gay marriages. Nobody's going to change the world for you, you have to do it yourself. Run for your school board or teach your children at home -- or even better, run for school board and teach your children at home, cover all the bases. And don't let the "Jivey League" pundits fool you: This isn't politics, this is a prescription for National Mental Health.

(turning back to Henry)

Do you want to support your family?

HENRY

Of course I do.

ALICE

What have you been doing about it?

HENRY

I've applied for unemployment --

ALICE

How about getting a real job instead of a hand out? Who pays in so you can take out?

(to us, her TV audience)

We do, taxes.

(back to Henry)

You want our money.

HENRY

I paid in too, all those deductions from my paychecks --

ALICE

But you're not working now, can't deduct nothing from nothing. I pay for me and mine, telling me to pay for you, well I don't like French, but that's bull-merde, right?

(Applause and hoots from around us.)

ALICE

Have you been looking for a job?

HENRY

Of course --

ALICE

You really want to get a job?

HENRY

Yes!

ALICE

Then I'm going to help you, I'm going to go with you and find out what you're doing wrong.

(She hands Susan a DVD:)

ALICE

Watch this.

SUSAN

"Our Bodies, Our Weapons"?

ALICE

You wouldn't go into battle with a gun you hadn't cleaned and oiled, would you? It's the same with our bodies. This series -- which is available in stores, online, on your smart-phone, and, for the hard of hearing, via a direct satellite link to your hearing aid --

(A MALE MODEL IN A SPEEDO crosses the stage, showcasing a DVD set.)

ALICE

This will help you cook, exercise, make love, and what's more you'll feel great and ready for battle, I guarantee it.

(Susan heads off, dazed, with the DVD.)

(A THIRD PERSONNEL DIRECTOR appears:)

HENRY

Hello, I'm Henry Warr--

THIRD PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

You're late --

(sees Alice, pushes past Henry:)

Alice Worth! I love your show! "You've been slapped!"

(The Director slaps Henry across the face --)

HENRY

What the hell -- !

(The Director and Alice high-five.)