

End of Life Counseling

*A One-Act Comedy
by Robert Joseph Ahola*

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End of Life Counseling

Synopsis

Well, it's here: the future for all of us. A nice, warm friendly panel of specially trained government officials to help you select just the right plan—to get the hell off this dying planet, and quit taking up so much space! (Just be sure you make the right choice, and do it quickly.)

4 M/3F

Running Time: 28 minutes

Note: *End of Life Counseling* is one of a trilogy of one-act plays entitled "*Death the Musical.*"

End of Life Counseling

Cast of Characters

THE (Death) PANEL

MS. TOD (As in GOD): Chief Counselor, she is a young, very attractive panel chairperson who is there to help you in the most positive sense of the world. She sits in the middle and conducts the interview.

MR. BLACK: A middle-aged, rubber stamp panelist who only does as he is told. He is plain, gray and wears a gray suit. (But is he human?)

MRS. WHITE: An older, rubber stamp panelist who usually repeats what she is told. She is a senior, wears lots of lace and ruffles and looks like everyone's favorite grandmother.

THE INTERVIEWS

MRS. KNAPF. Intellectually curious and easily influenced, she is an octogenarian who has been summoned for an "interview."

MRS. WILLIAMSON. A fifty-something businesswoman who has MS.

MR. DRUDGE. A billionaire nonagenarian on a walker—with attitude.

MR. CUTLER. An angry man in his mid-forties diagnosed with HIV and terminal cancer.

End of Life Counseling

Production Considerations

The setting is any stark room with a plain table and three chairs, facing a single chair. It may be dressed-up or dressed-down according to house and budget availability. However, minimalist sets would serve quite nicely here.

Props and Costume Plot

Props. A plain table and three chairs—for the Panel, an opposing chair for the visitor or “interviewee.” A radio phone, a pistol and a set of contracts and/or listings.

Costume Plot. Very dull plain suits, looking almost uniform style and fashion.

End of Life Counseling

Scene: *A stark room with a table and three chairs, facing another single chair in the middle, pushed into the middle of the room under a slightly accented Godspot. Ms. Tod, a very attractive young thirty-something woman, is flanked by two older bureaucratic clones in gray suits. Mr. Black is a middle-aged man who wears spectacles. MRS. WHITE is a woman in her sixties with perfectly quaffed white hair. All are pleasant if a bit robotic in their behavior. Note: Whenever Ms. Tod speaks, the Counselors very quickly echo her thoughts.*

MS. TOD

Now, we must remember at all times...compassionate, but firm.

MR. BLACK

Compassionate but firm.

MRS. WHITE

Compassionate but firm.

MS. TOD

We are providing a profound public service.

MR. BLACK

Profound

MRS. WHITE

A real service...

MS. TOD

People who are coming to us genuinely need our help. And we are here to help them.

MR. BLACK

(nods)

Help them.

MRS. WHITE

By all means, help them.

MS. TOD

We are here to provide an invaluable service.

Valuable. **MR. BLACK** (*nods*)

In-valuable. **MRS. WHITE** (*corrects*)

TOD
Really, when you think about it, we're they're last best hope.

The very last. **MR. BLACK**

The very best. **MRS. WHITE**

So...shall we begin? **MS. TOD**

She doesn't wait for an answer but hits an intercom instead.

Please send in our first interview.

A woman in her eighties comes in. She is well-groomed with tight white hair and somewhat passive in her demeanor. Ms. Tod checks her list, then looks up with a warm smile, getting up to extend her hand. They shake and she sits back down, while Mrs. Knopf remains standing.

Mrs. Knopf.

Well yes... **MRS. KNAPF**

MS. TOD (*Very cordial*)
I'm Ms. Tod with End of Life Counseling. Thank you so much for coming today!
Won't you please have a seat?

MRS. KNAPF (*remains standing*)
I really don't know why you've sent for me. I'm fine. I feel just fine.

MS. TOD
Well, of course you do! And we're so glad of that! And we so very much appreciate your coming to visit us today. This is Mr. Black and Mrs. White. They're here to lend the illusion of caring and credibility.

Caring. **MRS. WHITE**

And Credibility. **MR. BLACK**

MS. TOD

Otherwise, they serve no useful purpose whatsoever.

MR. BLACK

None.

MRS. WHITE

None whatsoever.

MRS. KNAPF

Well, it says here on this form that this consultation is voluntary.

MS. TOD

Yes it is.

MRS. KNAPF

Then it says here on Page 3 that if I fail to appear, a warrant will be issued for my arrest, including a \$10,000 fine and up to six months imprisonment.

MS. TOD

A formality—guidelines really! So many people were ignoring these things, we just sort of had to include that little injunction for people who were not cooperating. So, please do sit down. This will only take a moment.

MRS. KNAPF

Well, I really feel fine. I mean I'm quite healthy.

MS. TOD

Well, it does say here on your form, Janet. [May I call you Janet?] It says right here that you are 83 years-old.

MRS. KNAPF

Yes.

MS. TOD

(continues)

And as you know, as of the first of the year, we have a cutoff date at 75 for all seniors. No more Medicare. No more Social Security. All corporate pensions expire at 77. And it's "80-and-Out" for everyone. So we're really into plus territory here, Janet. And good for you!

MRS. KNAPF

Well I feel just fine...

MS. TOD

And I see here that your life-mate, Carl, passed away three years ago...and that you have no children or grandchildren. Must be very lonely for you...

MS. KNAPF

Well I have several friends my age: a real support group.

MS. TOD

Doesn't fit our parameters, I'm sorry to say. Has to be family.

MRS. KNAPF

I have a sister-in-law in Pomona.

MS. TOD

Doesn't fall under the new regulations. Needs to be immediate family in the same bloodline or marriage line. So we really need to find the right 'Exit Path' for you.

MRS. KNAPF

Exit path?

MS. TOD

Well, nobody lives forever. And you have to choose a time and date of termination. But that's okay too, because you've been 'grandfathered-in' so to speak. So, you get the super-senior termination rate and timetable. So you have at least...

Checks her charts.

Eighteen months! Isn't that wonderful?!

MRS. KNAPF

Eighteen months?

MS. TOD

Before you have to take your long walk home.

MRS. KNAPF

Long Walk?

MS. TOD

Home!

MRS. WHITE

Home!

MR. BLACK

Death and Taxes!

MS. TOD

We all have to go home sometime, Janet.

MRS. KNAPF

Well, it has been rather lonely since Carl made his transition.

MS. TOD (*jumps on it*)

Well, of course it has. And we have so many lovely options.

She flips open a pictorial log and turns it toward Mrs. Knapp, pointing to each option as she goes.

If you'd just care to examine our many termination plans... I personally recommend this final 48-hour option—the retreat, resort, complete makeover, musical final day, and simple injection special. You get your choice of three beautiful locations—in Kennebunkport, Maine, Sedona Arizona and Carmel California. You're well-fed, pampered, catered too with cordon bleu cooking. You get to take long walks for a day or two, get full-body massages. And on that special day, you're dressed in a final event gown of your choosing—all for only \$3995.

MRS. KNAPP

\$3995?! You mean, I have to pay for my last days?

MS. TOD

Well yes! Otherwise we just send someone to your house and shoot you.

MRS. KNAPP (*considering*)

Well...Charlie did leave me some money.

MS. TOD

Of course he did. And, when you think about it, you can't take it with you. Can you, Janet?

MRS. KNAPP

Well, I don't know. I think I'd like to spend it myself.

MS. TOD

Of course, if price is a consideration...For \$599, you can just come into one of our three thousand convenient locations. Relax for a few hours, listen to some lovely Vivaldi, and then we gas you.

MRS. KNAPP

Gas me?

MR. BLACK

Nitrous Oxide. NO₂. Delightful.

MRS. WHITE

Just delightful.

MS. TOD

Almost like a party, really. Well, it is a party—a farewell party.

MRS. KNAPP

Can I invite my friends?

MS. TOD

Well, of course. If you like, for an extra \$599, we'll have your memorial service before you...make your transition. And you'll get to hear how very much your friends really care for you. Most of these facilities have lovely little chapels.

MR. BLACK

Truly lovely.

MRS. WHITE

Just lovely.

MRS. KNAPF

Well this is an awful lot of information... Can I think about it for a few days?

MS. TOD

Oh, of course you can. Just be sure to get back to us in 90 days. Otherwise we go to our default codes.

MRS. KNAPF

Default?

MS. TOD

You know.

She points her finger like a pistol and fire.

Bang!

She remembers something.

Oh, I almost forgot...We can give you a six months extension if you enter our organ donor program. And you get a discount!

MRS. KNAPF

A discount?

MS. TOD

40% on any of our plans!

Thinks about it.

Of course, you do have to have serviceable organs.

MRS. KNAPF

Well, I have some very nice breasts. And they're my own.

MS. TOD

Well, we need organs. You know: eyes, liver, kidney, heart... that sort of thing. And you'll have to have a medical exam, to determine.

MRS. KNAPF

Well, I have very good eyesight—for my age.

MS. TOD

See there! And you get an extra month for every good organ you donate, and six more for eyes.

MRS. KNAPF (*Delighted at the options*)

An extra six months!

MS. TOD

Guaranteed.

MR. BLACK

Guaranteed.

MRS. WHITE

Guaranteed.

MS. TOD

If you qualify, of course.

MRS. KNAPF

Of course.

Ms. Tod stands up and extends her hand.

MS. TOD

We know you'll make the decision that's right for you. And we do appreciate your courtesy.

MRS. KNAPF (*shakes hands absently*)

Well, it's a lot to think about.

MS. TOD

Thank you so much for coming!

Mrs. Knapf exits. Ms. Tod turns to the others.

MS. TOD

It's important that we make this as seamless and pain-free as possible.

MRS. WHITE(*echoes*)

Seamless. Absolutely seamless.

MR. BLACK

And pain-free.

Ms. Tod barks into the intercom on her table.

MS. TOD

Send in the next interview, please. 69514!

An attractive woman in her early forties comes into the room. She is well dressed and carries a brief case. She sits down. Ms. Tod goes over her dossier.

MS. TOD

Mrs. ... Williamson! *(checks and rechecks)* You're here on a dispensation review. But I'm not quite sure I understand...

MRS. WILLIAMSON

I'm here because I would like to die. And this is a "Death Panel."

MS. TOD

We're counselors, Mrs. Williamson. "Death Panel" is such an ugly term. Part of our National Health Care plan is to provide complete consideration to each individual. It's part of the Public Option.

MRS. WILLIAMSON

I want to die. I've been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. It's reached a secondary stage. I don't want to waste away. And I would like to die.

MS. TOD

(checks her files)

Well, it says here that you earn more than \$100,000 a year. And you have three dependents, including your sick mother in Greenwich [Now she might be an excellent candidate!] Besides you're only 52 years old. So, on paper, you're a vital part of our economy! You're just the kind of productive person who can help us keep this grand plan moving forward!

MRS. WHITE

Congratulations!

MR. BLACK

Just what we need!

MRS. WILLIAMSON

But I don't want to keep anything going any more. It's gotten to be too much. My children are going to be taken care of by my ex-husband. My mother has been set up with my 401-K. And it's getting to be a labor for me just to get out of bed in the morning. I'm already on your "Public Option." And I have to wait six months to get any treatment for my condition—which doesn't work anyway. Meanwhile, I'm falling apart!

MS. TOD

Well. Mrs...Williamson... *(reviews the options)* This doesn't really fall into any category where we can help you. Besides, we don't approve that sort of thing. The Appeal Board does. And I'm afraid they've declined your petition.

MRS. WILLIAMSON

Then what In God's name am I doing here?!

MS. TOD

Well, this is a formality. Someone had to tell you...in person.

MRS. WILLIAMSON

In Person?! In Person?!

MS. TOD

Yes! We're here to give the Illusion of...caring! And to encourage you to get on with your life. Believe me a lot of people would like to have your options. Besides, you might be able to continue for another three or four years. So, you just have to keep soldiering on...

MRS. WILLIAMSON

Soldiering on?! When I can't even get treatment for months on my Health Plan; when there some days when I can't even get out of bed. I may as well just kill myself.

MS. TOD

Oh, no!

MRS. WHITE (*echoes*)

Oh no!

MS. TOD

I wouldn't recommend that. Not a good idea.

MR. BLACK

Bad idea

MRS. WHITE

Not a good idea at all.

MS. TOD

You see, because you've petitioned for..."early termination," [and I'm afraid you've been declined] you can't kill yourself without getting hit with all kinds of fines and penalties.

MR. BLACK (*echoes*)

Fines!

MRS. WHITE (*repeats*)

And penalties!

MRS. WILLIAMSON

I'll be dead.

MS. TOD

But not your heirs. Things could get pretty tough for them.

MR. BLACK

Very tough.

MRS. WHITE

Oh dear, oh yes. Very tough.

MS. TOD

They could even confiscate your entire estate, and they could be fined as much as upwards of \$100,000, especially if you decide to die within the next two years.

MRS. WILLIAMSON

I won't live another two years!

MS. TOD

Oh, dear. Oh dear! Well that does pose a problem. I mean your children and your mother might get a hearing from the Appeals Board.

MRS. WILLIAMSON

Nobody ever wins appeals!

MS. TOD

(thinks about it)

Well, it is difficult.
But... there is a way around this.

MRS. WILLIAMSON

There is?

MS. TOD

If you join our Organ Donor Program, we waive all fines and penalties.

MRS. WHITE

And you get extensions!

MRS. WILLIAMSON

Extensions.

MR. BLACK

For each organ!

MS. TOD

We have a priority list of organs. And since some are in more demand than others, we give extensions. A heart gets you four months. A liver or kidney ...six. And eyes. Well the eyes have it, as they say! They can get you up to one more year.

WILLIAMSON

One more year?!

MS. TOD

Before we...help you make your transition.

MRS. WILLIAMSON

But you just said, I couldn't die...I mean that soon. Fines and Penalties! Remember?

MS. TOD

Well, that's true. Unless...

MRS. WILLIAMSON

Unless I sign up as an organ donor.

MS. WHITE

Lovely gesture.

MR. BLACK

The humanitarian thing to do.

MS. TOD

Then you can die any time you want to.

MRS. WILLIAMSON

Even when I'm supposed to.

MS. TOD

(double checks her data)

Even that.

Of course, you have to die of your original disease or something related to it. You can't die of anything else. And you certainly can't die by your own hand. Then there would be repercussions. Serious ones.

MR. BLACK

Serious.

MRS. WHITE

Very serious.

MRS. WILLIAMSON

Like what serious?

MS. TOD

Well, they would be in a position to confiscate your entire estate as repayment for a post-mortem criminal act.

MRS. WILLIAMSON

Post mortem criminal act?! But I'll be dead.

MS. TOD

But not forgotten. And they will go after your estate.

MRS. WILLIAMSON

They?

MS. TOD

The IRS. And then your heirs and children would be criminally liable for any overcharges and fines...

MRS. WILLIAMSON

I get it. I get it! Jesus!

MS. TOD (*closes her ledger*)

But let's not dwell on the negative. Let's focus on all your positive options: all the choices. So many when you think of it. Just think of each body part as a key to life extension. And let's face it. You won't be needing them where you're going.

MRS. WHITE

Not really!

MR. BLACK

Not at all!

MRS. WILLIAMSON

Unbelievable!

Mrs. Williamson regards them with a sense of disbelief, then thinks about it.

Where do I sign?

Ms. Tod immediately slides a legal length paper across the table and motions to the proper places.

MS. TOD

Pages two and five...on both copies.

Mrs. Williamson signs and shoves the documents back across the table. She immediately turns to exit Stage Center without looking back. Ms. Tod calls out cheerily.

Thank you for your service to your country!

MRS. WHITE

Thank you.

MR. BLACK

...So much!

The comments utterly appall Mrs. Williamson.

MRS. WILLIAMSON

My what?!

MS. TOD

Your service...to your country. Such a noble thing.

WHITE

Noble. Very noble!

MR. BLACK

Downright patriotic!

MRS. WILLIAMSON

Noble?! Noble?! As if I had a real choice.

MS. TOD

Oh, you always have a choice. You'd be amazed at the decisions some people make.

MR. BLACK

Amazed.

MRS. WHITE

So disappointing sometimes...

MRS. WILLIAMSON (*Disbelieving*)

Un-fucking-believable!

She turns around and exits.

MS. TOD

Well, that went well enough...considering.

MRS. WHITE

Very well, I thought.

MR. BLACK

All things considered.

Ms. Tod calls over the intercom .

MS. TOD

Send in our next case please. 69515!

As the three "Counselors" look up a nonagenarian man—Mr. Drudge—enters on a walker. Leaning heavily on the rails, he is barely able to get across the room. Still, he is impeccably attired in a very expensive tailored suit and tie. Finally, he stops in front of the table. Ms. Tod reads from his dossier.

MS. TOD (*Continuing*)

Mr. Drudge! Very interesting name...

She rises from her seat to shake his hand. Somewhat bemused, he accepts it.

Mr. Drudge, I'm Ms. Tod! And let me be the first to congratulate you! You just turned 90 years of age. 90! Quite an accomplishment! You must be proud.

MR. BLACK

Indeed.

MRS. WHITE

Very proud.

MS. TOD

(sits back down)

This is Mrs. White and Mr. Black, Mr. Drudge, and we're all here to help you make your transition.

DRUDGE

My transition!? Is that what you call it?! My transition?!

MS. TOD

Well, we do have an 80-and-out policy for all our senior citizens—in place since January. And well...you are well into your final chapters. A real bonus, I'd say. And obviously, you're having some difficulty getting around already. Must be very painful for you.

MRS. WHITE

Painful.

MR. BLACK

Very...

DRUDGE

Cut the crap and get to the point.

MS. TOD

I beg your pardon?

DRUDGE

I said, "Cut the crap." Are you hard of hearing?! Get to the point!

MS. TOD

You've been brought in to discuss your options.

DRUDGE

Fuck my options. What's it going to take?

MRS. WHITE

Take?

DRUDGE

\$20 Million?! \$30 Million?! What?! Look I've set up each of my three kids with a living trust. [Even though I know the worthless little shits will run through them in no time.] And I'm richer than God. And I don't feel like checking out of here any time soon. So how much?

MRS. WHITE

Oh, we can't do...

Ms. Tod holds up her hand to stay the comment.

MS. TOD

We do have a Life Extension Package...

MRS. WHITE

We do?

MS. TOD *(as if reading from a charter)*

...for Outstanding Citizens who have made major contributions to society.

DRUDGE

Major contributions?! Major contributions?! Is that what you're calling it, these days? Jesus People! Let's cut to the chase, shall we? How much?

MS. TOD

Well, that depends.

DRUDGE

Depends!? Depends?! Anyone here speak English.

MS. TOD

It depends upon how much longer you want to live.

DRUDGE

Be specific!

MS. TOD

Five million!

DRUDGE

Five million...

MS TOD

A year.

DRUDGE

A year.

MS. TOD

...That you want to stay alive.

DRUDGE

So, I'm basically paying a surcharge for every year after 90 that I want to stay alive.

MS. TOD

After 80 actually... But since we just enacted that rider to our Final Days Qualification system, you've been grandfathered-in...as it were.

DRUDGE

So, if I want to live for the next five years, I cough up \$25 Million.

MS. TOD

Or we can do year-to-year. But if you do purchase five years in advance, you're protected from any financial downturns.

DRUDGE

(amused at the irony)

A long-term fiscal horizon, I like that! That's the first fucking thing you people have done right.

MS. TOD

We aim to please. And if you pay for five years in advance, you get the sixth year for free!

DRUDGE

Contract?

MS. TOD

Right here.

She produces a long legal-sized document. He looks around the room.

DRUDGE

Get me a pen and get me out of here!

Standing up, Mr. Black presents Drudge with a pen. The old man yanks it out of his hand and signs two copies, tossing them back across the table.

The inmates have taken over the fucking asylum,

Drudge turns to wheel himself out.

MS. TOD *(Calls out.)*

Thank you for all your years of service to this great nation of ours!

DRUDGE *(over his shoulder)*

Fuck you.

Ms. Tod sits back down and turns to the others.

MS. TOD

Well, each case is unique.

MRS. WHITE

Oh, absolutely!

MR. BLACK

No Doubt!

MS. TOD

And we have to treat each one individually, and with some semblance of sensitivity. And I think that, so far, we've done a pretty decent job of that.

MR. BLACK

Very decent.

MRS. WHITE

Commendable, I'd say.

Ms. Tod checks her dossier, shaking her head.

MS. TOD

Well, I see the next case is a Lottery Winner—always a mixed blessing.

MR. BLACK.

More mixed than blessing.

MRS. WHITE

You can say that again.

MS. TOD

And yet it is a blessing. And we have to look upon it that way. These people are being given an epiphany—a state of grace. And we have to let them know it. So...

MR. BLACK

So, it's Showtime folks!

MS. TOD

Oh, Mr. Black. You are so clever!

MRS. WHITE

Very! Very clever!

Mrs. Tod hits the intercom, calling out.

MS. TOD

Send in the next interview. Case Number...717671! Joseph Cutler.

As she looks up, Joseph Cutler, a handsome young man in his mid forties enters stage center. Once again, she puts on a happy face and rises to greet him, extending her hand.

Mr. Joseph Cutler! Welcome to End of Life Counseling.

CUTLER

Death Panels.

MS. TOD *(corrects him)*

“End of Life Counseling.” And we are here to counsel you and answer any questions you might have. These are my associates, Mrs. White, and Mr. Black.

(checks her notes)

And from what I can see, congratulations are in order!

MRS. WHITE *(Parrots)*

Yes, congratulations!

MR. BLACK

Indeed.

MS. TOD

You’re a winner!

MRS. WHITE

Yay!!

CUTLER

A winner?! A winner?! You’ll have to excuse me. But I’ve been targeted for elimination.

MS. TOD

Hardly ‘targeted,’ as you put it. You’ve won—The Lottery! And that means you get our Deluxe Exit Package worth more than \$100,000! Or prizes of equivalent value!

CUTLER

Is that what you’re calling this!

MS. TOD

Oh, absolutely! It’s a great prize.

MR. BLACK

Great Prize. Great Prize!

MRS. WHITE

Just wonderful!

MR. TOD

Otherwise, they'd just shoot you. Or send for you to report to one of our disposal centers.

CUTLER

But I'm only 47 years old.

He holds up the paper.

And I get this notice!

MS. TOD (*joyously interrupts*)

That you've won! Isn't that grand?!

She checks his dossier.

I mean you have been diagnosed with HIV. And you have been reviewed by three confirming physicians. And they've all agreed that you have this chronic debilitating condition. [Must be terribly unpleasant for you.]

MRS. WHITE

Terribly.

MS. TOD

And there is no prognosis for recovery. And well...it is a socially undesirable condition. And contagious!

CUTLER

But I got it from a blood-transfusion.

MS. TOD

I'm sure you did.

CUTLER

And we have it under control. The drug cocktail we're using is...

MS. TOD

Quite expensive. And all socially "marginal" conditions that are chronic in nature, cross-contagious and potentially fatal have been targeted for "Early consideration."

CUTLER

"Early Consideration! A euphemism if there ever was one. Jesus, people! I got it from a transfusion at one of your lousy snake-pit hospitals.

MS. TOD

Source is not at issue here, Mr. Cutler. Outcome is. And your three physicians—required by state review, I might add—are all in accord. And of course, you now have a "condition" that is socially inconvenient.

CUTLER

"Socially inconvenient." I'm socially inconvenient? I'm doing just fine. The medication is working.

MS. TOD

Not relevant I'm afraid. But Cost Accounting is. And well...it's just too expensive to keep you around.

CUTLER

So, you're just going to kill me.

MS. TOD

Well not really. I mean, you're a winner! You're a lottery winner! And there are only 2500 National Winners a year! It's like a nonstop party being thrown in your honor. First, it means you get...

(She clears her throat to read from the list)

Six full months to clear up your business!

MRS. WHITE

Six months!

MR. BLACK

To clear up your business.

They nod to one another in proud confirmation. Ms. Tod continues.

MS. TOD

...A dream vacation for two for two weeks in one of three locations: Lovely Las Jadas resort in Mexico! Incomparable Aruba in the Caribbean! And scenic Cartagena, Colombia!

CUTLER

All places where tourists are known to mysteriously disappear...and many have since this "lottery" system began.

MS. TOD

Ah, but you'll be in all Five-Star accommodations! Hardly anything to worry about. And it will round out the first two weeks of the last three weeks of your life. Because once you return, you'll get to spend the final fantasy week of your life in any one of our 2000 Final Chapter, DeLuxe Locations! All free of charge!

MRS. WHITE

It's free!

MR. BLACK

Free of Charge.

CUTLER

My God! You people are serious!

MS. TOD

I could rattle off an entire list of options. But don't take my word for it. Instead, why don't you just sit back and relax, and listen to this little presentation my associates have prepared.

Aghast, Cutler plops back down in his chair while Mr. Black and Mrs. White stand up and clear their throats they come around the interview table to do a little dance routine which they sing in tandem...to the melody of "Tea for Two."

MRS. WHITE *(singing)*

Picture you in gown of blue.

MR. BLACK *(Picks it up.)*

Or Green or White. We do things right.

MRS. WHITE

You'll have so much fun.
You won't even know you're done, Hon!

MR. BLACK

There's banquets and parties.
And friends worth befriending.

MRS. WHITE

And you'll get massages
With a happy ending.

BOTH

We'll greet you and treat you.
Fantasies complete. You know, Joe!

Ms. Tod gets inspired to join them.

MS. TOD

There's champagne mimosas
And sex on our sofas.
And hits from a bong.
So you'll break into song.

ALL *(to a crescendo)*

We'll poison you sweetly.
You won't even feel a thing!

CUTLER

Jesus God!

Caught up in their routine, the Panel of Three reprise the close.

ALL (*reprise*)

There's fun and games.
It's all a shame.
You'll have to go.
That's life you know.
We'll poison you sweetly
You won't even feel a thing

All three gesture with their hands extended to Cutler who look back astonished. The panelists all sit back down.

MS. TOD (*Business-like*)

So...what do you think?

CUTLER

I won't feel a thing, huh?

MS. TOD

Just going over my list of "solutions..." There's Helium. [Very pleasant.] NO2. [I mean you literally die laughing.] And we have a wonderful new experimental drug where you just fall asleep and don't wake up. Quite remarkable. But there are possible side effects. So you'll have to sign a release.

CUTLER

Side effects?!

MS. TOD (*reads like a laundry list*)

Side effects can lead to vomiting, spasms, swallowing your tongue, simultaneous expulsion of all body fluids, foaming at the mouth, hallucinations, and prolonged involuntarily screaming for periods of half an hour or more. But this only happens on rare occasion.

MR. BLACK

Rare.

MRS. WHITE

Very rare.

MS. TOD

So, what do you say to all these incredible options we've presented to you this morning?

CUTLER (*horrified*)

What do I say?! What do I say?! I say, I can't believe this is happening. I'm being told I'm targeted for elimination because I have an inconvenient condition!? I'm a lottery winner in Shirley Jackson's lottery?! This is a Republic. This is America, land of the free! This is supposed to be a democracy!

MS. TOD

Oh, dear me no, Mr. Cutler. Let me disabuse you of that illusion. This isn't a democracy, and it hasn't been one for about 50 years now. This is a socialist state. The government does everything now. The State is Everything.

MR. BLACK

Everything.

MS. TOD

The State is All.

MRS. WHITE (sweetly)

It's all there is.

MS. TOD

And remember Rule Number 1: For every degree of Government Involvement there is a proportionate loss of personal liberty. Besides, you voted for this.

CUTLER

I didn't vote for this.

MS. TOD

No, but most people did. And majority rules! So, what do you say? Shall we all get along here? Accept your fate? Make the most of it? Could be worse, you know. I mean, The Lottery! What a way to go! So, what do you say?

CUTLER

I say this is Kafkaesque nightmare! I say this isn't happening! I say you fucking people aren't even real! I think you're androids! You're not even human! Human beings don't even act like this!! What the hell is wrong with you!??

MS. TOD

Mr. Cutler, you're overreacting.

CUTLER

Overreacting!!? You soulless bitch!! You tell me I'm inconvenient—that I have to die because I'm "inconvenient!" You and these fucking robots! They're not even real human beings! Look at 'em!! Look at 'em!!!

Cutler reaches across the table to take a swipe at Mr. Black who leans back in his chair to get away.

MS. TOD (*Very calm as if talking to a child.*)

Mr. Cutler please stop. If you don't stop, we'll have to call security.

CUTLER

I'll stop! I'll stop when I've kicked somebody's ass!!

He reaches out for Mr. Black who now steps behind his chair, pulls a pistol from his coat and fires it into Cutler's chest. Cutler falls over dead. Ms. Tod reacts in horror while, Mr. Black steps around the table to bend over Cutler.

MS. TOD

Is he dead?

MR. BLACK

Quite dead.

MS. TOD

Oh, dear!

MR. BLACK

Well, he was going to die anyway. And he was out of control.

MS. TOD

I know. But not this way! You know what this means?! The paperwork! My God the paperwork! I do wish you hadn't done that.

Ms. Tod buries her head in her hands.

MR. BLACK

Well, he was getting aggressive. And he called me a robot. I'm not a robot.

MS. TOD

Of course, you're not.

(looks at her watch)

Well there's only one thing to do now...Let's break for lunch.

MR. BLACK

Good idea!

Ms. Tod and Mrs. White get up to join Mr Black.

MRS. WHITE

Chinese! I feel like Chinese!

MR. BLACK

We had that yesterday.

MRS. WHITE

Italian then.

MS. TOD

Italian it is. My treat.

MRS. WHITE

Oh, Ms. Tod! You're the best! The absolute best!

MR. BLACK

The best!

They start to exit when Ms. Tod remembers and returns to the table. She hits the intercom.

MS. TOD

Clean up!!

Blackout.

Curtain.