

CANDIDE DOES AMERICA

by
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Time

The Present

Setting

Abstract set with a few props suggesting a park, torture chamber, office, bar, hospital room, red light district, sports stadium, a three-seat row of airline seats, Silicon Valley computer lab, city street, Antarctica shelf

Characters

Candide, 27, looks young for his years

Pangloss, wizard of a man in his 60s or 70s

Cunegonde, early 20s, the most beautiful woman in the world

Clown, man or woman of no particular age

Cacambo, 30s, worn-out arty type

Mr. Smiley, in his 30s or 40s, who is also

Iraqi torturer

Disreputable lawyer

Air Marshal

NRA official

Oil executive

Desperate mother, in her 20s or 30s, who is also

Stewardess

Computer manual obfuscation chief

Fox TV news helicopter voice

Dungeon guard, 30s, who is also

Second disreputable lawyer

NRA henchman

Coast Guard voice

ACT I

SCENE 1

The narrator, a clown, is revealed by a spot.

CLOWN

In the state of Texas, in the mansion of ex-president Baron Thunderhead, lives a youth whom nature has endowed with a most innocent and trusting nature. His name is Candide. He is an industrious youth, living and working as a houseboy in the ex-president's house and mentored by Master Pangloss, professor of positive thinking at Sam Smith University.

Lights come up elsewhere on the stage, revealing a country setting, suggested, as all scenes are, by one or two simple props. Candide, who is 27, is being instructed by Professor Pangloss, a man of advanced years and almost a comically dignified stance. Next to Candide is a stuffed knapsack and suitcase. Pangloss stands with a pointer and a chart, illustrating the theory of evolution. Sitting nearby but separately, listening to music on her I-Pod, is Cunegunde, Thunderhead's daughter, a sophisticated young woman. Somewhere on the stage is a lone flower.

CLOWN (CONT'D)

President Thunderhead is the most powerful and moral man in Texas. He opposes abortion, pre-marital sex and any kind of intimacy between males and females unless they are married. And even with marriage there are limitations.

The clown directs the audience's attention to Candide and Pangloss. Candide is breathing in deeply, feeling the wonder of the day.

CANDIDE

Today is such a beautiful day, Professor.

PANGLOSS

Never will there be a more beautiful day.

CANDIDE

That's what you said yesterday.

PANGLOSS

And it's what I will say tomorrow. Always there is the sun to warm you, the wind to cool you off and the clouds to remind you that there is much to reach for.

CANDIDE

Today I leave Texas, you and all I love to go up north to start my life as an adult. I am afraid.

PANGLOSS

It's time that you start pursuing the American Dream. You're 27 years old. You have worked long enough as the ex-president's house boy. Though the mansion is still his house, you are no longer a boy.

CANDIDE

So much you have taught me as I grew and became an adult man. Even today, our last time together, I have learned much.

PANGLOSS

It is good that we have ended our studies reviewing evolution. A truly beautiful thing to behold. Billions of life forms competing, like runners in a majestic marathon, with only the fittest crossing the finish line and holding the gold medal of survival high above their heads in victory.

CANDIDE

Some see not a marathon but a design that is intelligent.

PANGLOSS

Could any design be more intelligent than this theory, which explains everything in the universe. Companies compete and only the best survive. Politicians run for office and only the best are elected. Countries fight wars and only the best win. This theory, more than anything else, explains why this is the best of all possible countries in the best of all possible worlds.

Pangloss takes down the chart and prepares to leave. He hugs Candide.

PANGLOSS (CONT'D)

(continuing; indicating the knapsack and luggage)

I see you are already packed.

CANDIDE

In six hours I will be 30,000 feet in the air, headed for Philadelphia and my first job as a writer for Greeting Cards Without Borders. I am proud to be working for a company that sends poetic messages of hope and inspiration to refugees huddled in squalid camps.

PANGLOSS

(pulling out a package)

Here, I have something that will help you deal with the many challenges that await you.

He hands the package to Candide. He opens it with excitement, bringing out a shoe brush and shoe polish.

CANDIDE

Why do you give someone who wears only sneakers a shoe brush and shoe polish?

PANGLOSS

To remind you. You must go through life with a smile on your face and a shine on your shoes and everyone will love you.

CANDIDE

Willie Loehman was a tragic character.

PANGLOSS

Nonsense. Death of a Salesman was a celebration of the American way. After a joyous life of bounty and success as a salesman, Willie Loehman was contemplating a rewarding retirement. What happened in the cellar was unfortunate. Follow his example and always look for the good in people and events.

CANDIDE

I only hope I can do that without you at my side, showing me the way.

PANGLOSS

I will always be by your side. I will never leave you. I must go.

CANDIDE

Thank you, Professor.

Pangloss exits. Candide admires Cunegonde from the distance.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

(continuing; to himself)

I certainly can see the good in my beloved Cunegonde. Never has there been, never could there be, a woman more beautiful, more wonderful, more exciting. When I am with her, the flowers smell sweeter, the sun feels warmer and the very air I breathe fills me with a sense of endless contentment. This woman will never be far from my embrace.

Gathering up his books and papers, Candide sees the lone flower, picks it and goes to Cunegonde.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

(continuing; offering Cunegonde the flower)

The most beautiful flower in the park for the most beautiful woman in the world.

CUNEGONDE

(taking the flower lovingly)

Given to me by the most wonderful man in the world. Quick, we must leave and run to our special hiding place before my father discovers us relating in an intimate way.

She gets up but Candide is more interested in talking than moving on.

CANDIDE

I am fortunate to have had such a mentor as Professor Pangloss.

CUNEGONDE

He's a nut. Everywhere bad things are happening and all he can see is the good. Candide, take me with you to Philadelphia.

CANDIDE

I am indebted to your father for introducing me to him and for enrolling me in No Adult Left Behind.

CUNEGONDE

Father didn't do it for you. It would not have looked good if his man servant was the only adult left behind in Texas.

CANDIDE

Your father's program taught me and millions of Americans that this is the best of all possible countries. That's quite a legacy.

CUNEGONDE

It's all spin. A contented voter is a malleable voter. That's why my father hired Pangloss to present his ridiculous philosophy of positive thinking.

PANGLOSS

Professor Pangloss believes very much in what he teaches.

CUNEGONDE

I don't want to talk about my father and Pangloss. I want to talk about us, running away together, in search of the American Dream.

CANDIDE

We agreed to hold off on our plans until I got a job and started earning enough to support a family.

CUNEGONDE

That might never happen. Many working people never make enough to support a family. Please take me with you. I've always wanted to see the Rocky Steps.

CANDIDE

My starting salary isn't much but they said if I worked hard, got more education, advanced in the company, established some seniority and didn't join a union that one day I will be making enough to live on.

CUNEGONDE

The American Dream is finding someone you love and sharing your life with them. We can't do that with you living in Philadelphia and me living in Houston.

CANDIDE

I will send for you as soon as I can.

CUNEGONDE

I want to come with you now.

CANDIDE

Please, my beloved. Be patient. Pretty please?

He brings a chocolate éclair from his knapsack and offers it to her.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

With sugar on it?

She eagerly starts eating the éclair.

CUNEGONDE

I will count the days until we are together.

CANDIDE

Professor Pangloss says...

CUNEGONDE

No more talk about Pangloss. I want you to kiss me. And then we must get out of here.

CANDIDE

The Professor says for every effect there is a cause. In this instance, you, my beloved, are the cause and this kiss shall be the effect.

He starts to kiss her, but they hear a threatening sound.

CUNEGONDE

I hear my father coming. Quick to our hiding place.

They rush off.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

END OF SCENE 1

SCENE 2

Lights come up on the offices of Greeting Cards Without Borders. The office is suggested by a table, chair and rhyming dictionary. Candide is sitting at the table, pouring over the rhyming dictionary.

CANDIDE

(reading from the dictionary)

Hide. Pride. Fried. Died. Sighed. Lied. Cried.

He starts writing out his poem in longhand.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

Warfare is bad/ Nowhere to hide/ But still there's hope...

He thinks harder to come up with the closing line. Finally he gets it.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

When you have pride.

(revising)

If you have pride.

He looks at the poem he has written down and doesn't like it. He tries again.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

Warfare is bad/ Nowhere to hide/ But still there's hope/ The old man sighed.

He reads it silently.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

Not bad.

Mr. Smiley, the company vice president, enters.

MR. SMILEY

Hard at work, I see.

CANDIDE

Yes, Mr. Smiley.

MR. SMILEY

I want to congratulate you. You have been doing some good work.

CANDIDE

It's an honor to work for Greeting Cards Without Borders.

MR. SMILEY

We've been very impressed with the inspiring messages you have been writing for the cards. Very poetic.

CANDIDE

I was always good at rhyming in school. Mr. Smiley, if you have a minute, there's this idea I'd like to...

MR. SMILEY

What starving refugee wouldn't be moved by your Don't Despair message?

CANDIDE

That was an easy one. What I think the company could do...

MR. SMILEY

Don't despair
One day we'll help

We know you're there
Because we care.

CANDIDE

Lot of words rhyme with despair.

MR. SMILEY

Our distributors in the refugee camps say the cards are going like hotcakes. Of course, all of our cards have been popular because they're good kindling for cooking fires.

CANDIDE

It's good to do work that benefits mankind. This idea I have...

MR. SMILEY

It's why we pay our employees so little. They're doing God's work, which is its own reward.

CANDIDE

My idea could help refugees even more.

MR. SMILEY

You have an idea?

CANDIDE

Yes, Mr. Smiley.

MR. SMILEY

We want our associates to show initiative.

CANDIDE

What I'm proposing is that instead of writing the messages of inspiration on paper cards, we could...

MR. SMILEY

I know what you're going to say. Save paper by using e-mail. We were thinking of that but the idea got nixed by our people in the field. They said the refugees use their laptops only for video games.

CANDIDE

I wasn't thinking of e-mail.

MR. SMILEY

You have another way we could save on paper?

CANDIDE

Write the messages on burlap.

MR. SMILEY

Burlap is more expensive than paper.

CANDIDE

We could write our messages on the burlap bags the rice came in.

MR. SMILEY

What the hell are you suggesting?

CANDIDE

Let them eat rice.

MR. SMILEY

Who do you think you are, Marie Antoinette? Food cost money.

CANDIDE

Food means a lot to starving people.

MR. SMILEY

All the agencies are donating food. We're the only one that is distributing greeting cards.

CANDIDE

Only five percent of our income goes to producing the cards and distributing them.

MR. SMILEY

Where did you hear that?

CANDIDE

People from accounting were laughing about it in the cafeteria.

MR. SMILEY

People from accounting don't know what they're talking about. If they did, they wouldn't be in accounting.

CANDIDE

We're making a huge profit.

MR. SMILEY

(with pride and satisfaction)

Yes.

CANDIDE

Why do you want to make so much money?

The questions stops Mr. Smiley cold. He thinks about it long and hard. He can't believe anyone would ask a question like that.

MR. SMILEY

(finally)

I don't think I understand the question.

CANDIDE

Isn't a profit of 95 percent too much?

MR. SMILEY

Too much?

CANDIDE

Since the purpose of the company is to do good.

MR. SMILEY

Is that what the people in accounting are saying?

CANDIDE

Starving people would prefer food to kindling and messages of inspiration.

MR. SMILEY

I don't care what they prefer. They're the takers. We're the givers. It's the givers who decide what is given. You are disappointing me, Candide.

CANDIDE

You said you liked employees who showed initiative.

MR. SMILEY

Not this kind of initiative.

CANDIDE

You said you liked my poetry.

MR. SMILEY

Anyone can find words that rhyme with despair.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

END OF SCENE 2

SCENE 3

Lights come up on Cunegonde and Candide lying in a park, suggested by a tree, bush or picnic blanket. They are looking up at the clouds.

CANDIDE

Look. That cloud over there. A man's face with a great big smile.

CUNEGONDE

Where?

CANDIDE

Just above that big, beautiful tree.

CUNEGONDE

That's not a man. It's a lion.

CANDIDE

Lions don't smile like that.

CUNEGONDE

He's not smiling. He's roaring. The lion is warning us of danger.

CANDIDE

No, it's a man. With a great big beard and a wonderful head of hair. And he's smiling because he can see we're in love and he's happy for us.

CUNEGONDE

No, It's...

(belatedly taken with the emotion)

That's nice. I like your man a lot more than my lion.

They laugh joyously and kiss passionately.

CUNEGONDE (CONT'D)

To think, I found the only man in the country who likes to watch clouds, make up stories and kiss like that.

CANDIDE

I like being out here with you.

(with sadness)

Away from everything.

CUNEGONDE

I'm sorry you got fired.

CANDIDE

It's probably just as well. I lost my enthusiasm when I found out the refugees couldn't read English.

CUNEGONDE

I thought it was beautiful, your idea about giving the people rice.

CANDIDE

No, Mr. Smiley was right. Everyone's giving food to starving people. We're meeting an unmet need. Our greeting cards are special. Of course, they would be more special if the company hired a translator.

CUNEGONDE

What about our unmet need? Saving up enough money to get married.

CANDIDE

We'll get the money. Someone told me about a job with a health insurance company.

CUNEGONDE

Low-level jobs in nonprofit companies don't pay enough for you to save anything.

CANDIDE

Double Cross executives get paid a lot.

CUNEGONDE

Investment banking pays better.

CANDIDE

I want to benefit mankind.

CUNEGONDE

That's what you think health insurance companies do?

CANDIDE

Double Cross pays everyone's medical bills.

CUNEGONDE

And Santa Claus gives everyone Christmas presents. Let's get married right away. My father is beginning to suspect.

CANDIDE

We should tell your father that we are in love...

Cunegonde reacts with shock at such a suggestion.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

...Engaged...

This shocks her even more.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

...And intend to get married as soon as I make enough money and he gives us his blessing.

This overwhelms her. She looks at Candide, wondering who this man is.

CUNEGONDE

(finally)

Are you out of your mind?

CANDIDE

When the time is right, I'll go to him man to man.

CUNEGONDE

And man to man he'll tell you to go to hell. I don't know what he'd do if you ever went to him like that.

CANDIDE

Everything is going to work out for the best. Trust me.

CUNEGONDE

Actually I do know what he'd do. And it isn't pretty.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

END OF SCENE 3

SCENE 4

Lights come up on an interview room of Double Cross, suggested by a table, two chairs and a poster promoting something healthful. Candide sits at the table with a computer and two phones, call-waiting lights flashing. Sitting across from him is a woman, who is crying and holding a cross, which is on a chain around her neck. She is praying. One of the phones rings. Candide answers.

CANDIDE

(imitating a telephone recording voice)

Thank you for calling Double Cross. All of our claim-refusal officers are busy with other patients. Your call will be answered in the order that it was received.

(hangs up)

The desperate mother stops crying and fixes Candide with a look that could kill.

DESPERATE MOTHER

I'm a desperate mother with a dying child. Please help me.

CANDIDE

(with sympathy)

Your story is a sad one. It's terrible that a child should be so sick and a mother should be so desperate. But I'm sure everything will work out.

DESPERATE MOTHER

Then you will help me?

CANDIDE

Double Cross can't help you because there are rules we must follow.

He indicates the computer. She looks at it.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

Guidelines. Actuarial limitations.

DESPERATE MOTHER

My son is dying.

CANDIDE

You must have faith.

DESPERATE MOTHER

I am new to this country. I am from Italy. We lived in a small village and didn't have much money. No one did. But something like this would never happen. Not in Italy. My son would get the medicine he needs.

CANDIDE

I know nothing is more important to you than your son's life. But we have fiduciary obligations.

DESPERATE MOTHER

What are fiduciary obligations?

CANDIDE

I'm not quite sure. But I'm told they're very important.

DESPERATE MOTHER

Even more important than saving a child's life?

CANDIDE

It's hard for me to believe that anything could be more important than that.

DESPERATE MOTHER

My son can't breathe. He must have the drug.

Candide picks up a different phone, pushes the hold button and speaks into the phone, changing his voice to sound like a recorded message.

CANDIDE

All claim refusal officers are still busy with other patient patients. We appreciate your patience.

(normal voice, addressing the mother)

How much can you afford for drugs?

DESPERATE MOTHER

Maybe one quarter the amount drug companies are charging. If we gave up vacations, ate only left-overs and stopped heating or air conditioning our home.

CANDIDE

How often does your son take the drug?

DESPERATE MOTHER

Every day.

CANDIDE

(sincerely excited by his discovery)

There's your solution. Give him the drug only once every four days. Then the cost per month will be one quarter of what it is now, a sum you can afford. .

DESPERATE MOTHER

But he needs to breathe every day.

CANDIDE

(deflated)

Of course he does.

DESPERATE MOTHER

That computer. I can see from here. It has two boxes. All you have to do is check the one that says "approved."

CANDIDE

No one in this company has every checked that box.

She gets down on her knees.

DESPERATE MOTHER

Please.

CANDIDE

No. Don't. Please stand up.

She takes the cross from around her neck and holds it out to Candide.

DESPERATE MOTHER

I give this to you.

CANDIDE

No. You must keep your cross. It's yours to bear.

DESPERATE MOTHER

This is pure silver. And it's very old. So I am thinking that it is very valuable.

She offers it to him. He takes the cross and the woman's hands in his and holds them tenderly as he looks at the cross.

CANDIDE

It's a beautiful cross.

DESPERATE MOTHER

My great, great, great grandmother gave it to her daughter. And she gave it to hers. And that daughter gave it to the next daughter. Until my mother got the cross. And last year, just before she died, she gave it to me. Now I am giving it to you. If only you will check that box. So my son can breathe.

CANDIDE

(shaking his head)

I'm sorry.

Candide picks up the first phone and delivers another "recorded" message.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

All claim-refusal officers are still busy with other patient patients. We appreciate your patience.

(hangs up)

The woman stands up angrily and looks down on Candide who is still sitting.

DESPERATE MOTHER

I want to speak to the head of your department.

CANDIDE

I am the head of my department.

DESPERATE MOTHER

Then let me speak to another claim-refusal officer.

CANDIDE

I'm the only one in the department.

DESPERATE MOTHER

This is a company with 75,000 employees. And there is only one claim-refusal officer?

CANDIDE

We have others in India.

DESPERATE MOTHER

Then I will file a complaint with them. What's the phone number?

CANDIDE

You must file in person.

(going to the woman)

I wish we could do more. I'm not just saying that. I mean it.

DESPERATE MOTHER

Sure you do.

CANDIDE

I don't want your son to die.

The woman exits crying. Close to tears, he picks up both phones, speaking into them at the same time.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

(continuing; yelling into the phone)

You've been patient enough. Call back at a later time.

He slams down the phones and rushes to the door.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

(continuing; calling after her)

Mrs. Rodriguez. Come back.

DESPERATE MOTHER

(appearing in the doorway)

What?

CANDIDE

I'll check the box.

He goes to the computer and strikes the appropriate keys. A siren goes off and a female supervisor comes rushing in.

FEMALE SUPERVISOR

What just happened?

She goes to the computer and looks at the screen. She is shocked.

FEMALE SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)

You approved an appeal. You can't do that. You're a claim-refusal officer. What part of refuse don't you understand?

(seeing the woman for the first time)

Who's this woman?

CANDIDE

A desperate mother with a dying child.

FEMALE SUPERVISOR

Then what are you doing here? You should be with your dying child, Get out.

DESPERATE MOTHER

But I've come...

FEMALE SUPERVISOR

Out I said.

The desperate mother starts to protest but the female supervisor pushes her out of the room as Candide looks on helplessly.

LIGHTS FADE TO BACK

SPOT COMES UP ON THE CLOWN TWIRLING A HOOP.

CLOWN

Ex-president Thunderhead discovers that his daughter had fallen in love with Candide. He is outraged and does what any man with limitless power does in a situation like that. He contacts a good friend in the Pentagon, the Secretary of Defense, and has Candide's National Guard unit activated. A few months later, Candide finds himself in Iraq.

SPOT BLACKS OUT

END OF SCENE 4

SCENE 5

Lights come up on a torture chamber in Iraq. Candide is standing on a stool, practically naked, his eyes covered with black masking tape. Electrical wires are attached to his limbs. Another prisoner, Pangloss, also with tape over his eyes, sits shackled to the wall.

CANDIDE

I miss you so much, my sweet Cunegonde. Your smile, your blond hair, your perfectly shaped breasts. I miss your wit, that made me laugh and your insight that made me think. Remember how we would look up at the clouds and make up wonderful stories? To think that we were so close to being united. Now we are so far apart, maybe never to see each other again.

Pangloss moans.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

Is there someone in here with me?

PANGLOSS

I recognize that voice.

CANDIDE

I recognize that voice. Professor Pangloss.

PANGLOSS

Candide?

CANDIDE

Yes, it is I.

PANGLOSS

Please, strip this tape from my eyes. I can't see and I'm shackled to the wall.

CANDIDE

I would if I could. But I am standing on a stool with electrical wires attached to all parts of my body. I will be electrocuted if my feet touch the ground.

PANGLOSS

We are so fortunate to be locked up here. Now we have a chance to talk quietly, away from the constant noise of battle. It has been a long time since our final class.

CANDIDE

I have been working very hard to apply all that you taught me. But I am having trouble seeing the good in the bad things that are happening to people.

PANGLOSS

Can you give me an example?

CANDIDE

I used to work for a health insurance company as a claims-refusal officer and I was told to deny life-saving drugs to a dying child. For months I have been troubled by that. What is the good in doing such a thing?

PANGLOSS

Do you have another example.

CANDIDE

What about what's happening to us right now?

PANGLOSS

You can see no good in this?

CANDIDE

I can see fairness. We torture the terrorists so it's only right that they torture us. But I cannot see this as good.

PANGLOSS

This isn't torture.

CANDIDE

Then what is it?

PANGLOSS

Enhanced interrogation. Few soldiers are given an opportunity like this. After you've been aggressively interrogated, you will become a hero and elected to high office by a grateful nation. Our nation needs heroes and you will make a fine one, assuming you survive the enhancements.

A piercing scream is heard.

CANDIDE

It's strange how they scream only once.

PANGLOSS

A severed head has no need to scream.

CANDIDE

What should I do when they don't like my answers to their questions and they start enhancing my interrogation.

PANGLOSS

Tell them what they want to know. We have nothing to hide.

CANDIDE

We invaded their country. Eliminated law and order. Tens of thousands have died. Millions have fled the country. The people can't get food, water, medical care or electrical power. Hundreds are being killed every week by car bombs and lawless militias that have taken over the country.

PANGLOSS

We eliminated a dictator who wasn't very nice.

CANDIDE

How soon we forget. How is it that you're here, with me, in this place?

PANGLOSS

The president asked me to come to Iraq and explain to the troops that this is the best of all possible wars.

CANDIDE

It's good that you're here. So far, no one has been able to explain that.

PANGLOSS

It's good to see you again. I should say it's good to hear you again since I can see nothing with my eyes taped shut like this. How are you doing?

CANDIDE

I've been better. Tell me, Professor. How is my beloved Cunegonde doing? I have written her and called, but she never writes back and her telephone is disconnected. I should have gotten her e-mail address.

PANGLOSS

Then you don't know.

CANDIDE

Know what, Professor?

PANGLOSS

After the President had your National Guard unit activated, he beat his daughter mercilessly, kicked her out of the mansion and banished her forever from Texas.

CANDIDE

Oh, that is terrible.

PANGLOSS

No, it is for the better. Cunegonde had always wanted to see Massachusetts.

CANDIDE

She's in Massachusetts?

PANGLOSS

Amherst. The most liberal town in the most liberal state in the country. She wanted to get back at her father, who she hates, but loves very much.

Iraqi torturer appears with a masked guard.

IRAQI TORTURER

(pointing to Pangloss)

Take him away.

The guard unshackles Pangloss and drags him away.

CANDIDE

What are they doing to you, Professor?

PANGLOSS

It is a far, far better place they take me to than I have ever been before.

The two exit, leaving the torturer alone with Candide.

IRAQI TORTURER

So what do we have here?

CANDIDE

An innocent intelligence officer in the U.S. Military, taped up and wired, standing on a stool in an enhanced interrogation chamber.

The torturer goes to a black box with a big electrical switch.

IRAQI TORTURER

Muslims are humane people who believe in freedom of choice. You are free to stand there and be tortured with thousands of volts of electricity or you can choose to have your head cut off.

CANDIDE

Is there a third choice?

The torturer rips the tape from Candide's eyes.

IRAQI TORTURER

Decapitation or torture. Your only choices.

CANDIDE

Very limited choices.

A piercing scream is heard.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

Torture.

IRAQI TORTURER

An excellent choice.

The guard returns with a head, face down, on a platter. The Torturer inspects the head, which looks like Pangloss and nods. The guard exits, leaving the head on a nearby table.

IRAQI TORTURER (CONT'D)

I will now ask you two questions. If either answer displeases me, I will send thousands of volts of electricity coursing through your body and watch you writhe in agonizing pain.

CANDIDE

I will try not to displease you.

IRAQI TORTURER

(with his hand on the switch)

Why did you infidels invade my little oil-rich country?

CANDIDE

To bring to your people the joy of living as free men and women in a democracy.

Torturer plunges the switch and Candide screams in agonizing pain.

IRAQI TORTURER

You have displeased me.

CANDIDE

My president said all that.

IRAQI TORTURER

Did he?

CANDIDE

Yes.

Torturer plunges the switch. Candide screams.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

(continuing; with great difficulty speaking)

Does that count as question Number Two?

IRAQI TORTURER

IRAQI TORTURER

Are you ashamed that your country has caused so much suffering in my country?

CANDIDE

My Professor says there is nothing to be ashamed of.

Torturer starts to plunge the switch, but stops.

IRAQI TORTURER

Your professor?

CANDIDE

The man you just beheaded.

IRAQI TORTURER

(indicating the head)

This is... this was your professor?

CANDIDE

Part of him. My Professor said that in everything there is good. It is difficult to see the good in being tortured and decapitated. But maybe it will make me a stronger man.

The torturer throws aside the switch box and starts to leave.

IRAQI TORTURER

You're free to go.

CANDIDE

You're setting me free?

IRAQI TORTURER

You Americans may execute the mentally ill. But we Muslims take pity on them.

Torturer goes to the door.

CANDIDE

Wait. Don't leave me like this.

IRAQI TORTURER

You want more. You don't think WATT I have done to you has been sufficiently reVOLTING.

(he laughs at his little joke)

A play on two of your words. Clever? No?

CANDIDE

If I step off this stool I will be electrocuted by the wires attached to my arms and my legs and my genitals.

IRAQI TORTURER

We tell people that so they won't get off the stool. Nothing will happen to you.

Torturer exits with the head. Candide cautiously gets off the stool, not sure that the torturer was telling the truth. His feet touch the ground and nothing happens.

CANDIDE

This truly is the best of all possible worlds, where those who inflict pain are kind and merciful.

Lights fade to black on the torture scene. Elsewhere on the stage, the Clown enters with balloons on a string.

CLOWN

Candide is freed from the torture chamber and makes his way back to the Green Zone, where he is arrested by military police and court-martialed for surviving the torture. He returns to the U.S. in disgrace and without any money. For several months he works at a MacDonald's, finally saving up enough to buy a bus ticket to Amherst, in pursuit of Cunegonde.

SPOT BLACKS OUT

END OF SCENE 5

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SCENE 6

Lights come up on a bar, where Cacambo, an artsy looking man in his 30s, is sitting. In front of him is a clear plastic bag, six shot glasses filled to the brim with vodka and in front of each glass a small stack of pills. Candide is sitting nearby with a drink. He looks with curiosity at the pills and drinks arrayed before Cacambo.

CANDIDE

Hello.

Cacambo nods with indifference.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

I just saw the show across the street. Dark Despair.

CACAMBO

You like it?

CANDIDE

Not exactly.

CACAMBO

That figures.

Cacambo downs one entire glass of vodka.

CACAMBO (CONT'D)

One of the worst plays ever written.

CANDIDE

You might be right. What are you doing with all those glasses and pills?

Cacambo downs another glass.

CACAMBO

Committing suicide.

CANDIDE

(thinking he's joking)

The play wasn't that bad.

Candide laughs but Cacambo looks deadly serious.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

You're kidding, of course. Aren't you?

CACAMBO

Never been more serious about anything in my life. I wrote *Dark Despair*.

CANDIDE

I would have been more enthusiastic if I knew you were the playwright.

CACAMBO

I was trying to write the great American tragedy. But the best I could come up with was a tedious, humorless play that was boring.

CANDIDE

It worked out for the best. There weren't many people in the audience.

CACAMBO

What does a white, anglo-saxon, middle-class kid from the suburbs know about tragedy? Plays about middle class tragedy in America are all comedies. I was told only writers who have truly suffered know how to write tragedy. So I went to Ireland, became a drunk and led a tragic life in a country where the sun never shines.

He downs another shotglass.

CANDIDE

You can't drink yourself to death.

CACAMBO

You don't think so?

CANDIDE

Of course, there are those pills.

CACAMBO

And this plastic bag. The book says...

CANDIDE

What book?

CACAMBO

From the Hemlock Society. It says I must drink six glasses of 100 proof liquor, followed by these pills. Then I have to put this plastic bag over my head and tie it shut.

CANDIDE

You're going to do all that here, in this bar?

CACAMBO

Yes.

CANDIDE

People will stop you.

CACAMBO

No one will notice.

CANDIDE

They won't notice you suffocating to death with a plastic bag tied around your head?

CACAMBO

This is a sports bar. The games on.

CANDIDE

People don't commit suicide in bars. They go off to dark rooms and do it by themselves.

CACAMBO

That's not very dramatic. Is it?

He swallows some pills

CACAMBO (CONT'D)

At least the final act of my life will be effective, tragic drama.

He puts the plastic bag over his head, dumbfounded by what he is seeing. Finally Cacambo starts struggling to breathe.

CANDIDE

No.

Candide pulls the bag off his head. They wrestle for the bag. Cacambo gets it.

CACAMBO

I was just practicing, for Christ sake.

CANDIDE

Your play wasn't that bad.

CACAMBO

Yeah. Sure.

CANDIDE

It was very effective in helping me sort out a question I've been wrestling with for a long time.

CACAMBO

You're just saying that to keep me from doing what I must do.

He reaches for the bag. Candide stops him.

CANDIDE

Your play showed me why it was right that my company denied a dying child life-saving drugs.

CACAMBO

Of course it was right to provide a dying child a life-saving drug. You didn't need my play to see that.

CANDIDE

Not provide. Deny. My company denied the life-saving drug.

CACAMBO

Before I did that, I'd blow my brains out.

CANDIDE

If the company paid for the drug for one dying child, then it would have to pay for the drugs of all dying children.

Cacambo tries to fit the bag over his head. Candide stops him.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

Since every drug sold in this country is exorbitantly priced, paying for all that medicine would put the company out of business. Hundreds of thousands of sales people and a few researchers would be put out of work. Their families would have to give up some of their cars and the country's economy would collapse.

CACAMBO

This you learned from my play?

CANDIDE

I extrapolated a bit. Let's go down the street and get some coffee.

CACAMBO

I'm not finished here. What I was trying to say with Dark Despair is that this is the worst of all possible worlds.

CANDIDE

It's the best of all possible worlds. Go through life with a shine on your shoes and a smile on your face and the world will embrace you. Like Golden Retrievers. Those dogs love everyone and everyone loves them.

CACAMBO

I didn't think dogs could smile let alone have shines on their shoes. Who told you all this?

CANDIDE

My professor.

CACAMBO

I would have liked to meet him.

CANDIDE

He's dead. They cut off his head.

CACAMBO

In the best of all possible worlds?

CANDIDE

No. In Iraq.

CACAMBO

My condolences. This is not the best of all possible worlds. And it's certainly not the best of all possible countries. This is a cruel, competitive nation where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer because the rich control everything. That's another reason to do what I'm about to do.

CANDIDE

If the poor didn't get poorer, the rich wouldn't get richer. Because I am so poor, I know that someone somewhere in this country must be very rich. That makes me feel good. Look, Mr... What's your name?

CACAMBO

Call me Cacambo.

CANDIDE

Just because you haven't lived a tragic life, Cacambo, doesn't mean you can't write a good tragedy. Find a poor person who has led a tragic life and write a play about him.

CACAMBO

I don't know any poor people. Are you poor?

CANDIDE

Very.

CACAMBO

Have you led a tragic life?

CANDIDE

I've had the best of all possible lives.

CACAMBO

(with disappointment)

Oh.

CANDIDE

I was born of destitute parents who left me in a laundry basket at a Christian Fundamentalist rally.

Cacambo becomes more interested.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

Ex-president Thunderhead found me there, took me into his house and, when I was old enough, allowed me to work as a houseboy. I fell in love with his daughter. Someone told the ex-president that we were going to elope so he had my National Guard unit activated. I was sent to Iraq and ended up in an enhanced interrogation chamber, where they attached electrical wires to all my limbs, including my penis, and shocked me.

This excites Cacambo.

CACAMBO

Go on.

CANDIDE

I was eventually released and I received a dishonorable discharge from the Army for surviving the interrogation. And now I am back in this country, searching for the woman I love. I have lived a very fortunate life.

CACAMBO

(pushing away the plastic bag)

Do you mind if I take notes?

CANDIDE

Not at all.

CACAMBO

What brings you to Amherst?

CANDIDE

I am searching for the woman I love.

CACAMBO

What does she look like?

CANDIDE

She has a fair smile, blue eyes, blonde hair, and lovely perfectly shaped breasts. She is famous for her quick wit and bright mind.

CACAMBO

I have seen such a woman.

CANDIDE

Women with fair smiles, blue eyes, blond hair and lovely perfectly shaped breasts are not common, but they are not rare either.

CACAMBO

The left breast of the woman I am talking about is slightly lower than the right.

CANDIDE

My Cunegonde had such a distinction.

CACAMBO

It made her look a bit saucy. Very attractive.

CANDIDE

Yes, exactly. Was there anything outstanding about her ears?

CACAMBO

Obviously I wasn't looking at her ears. I saw nothing unusual about that part of her body, except for the star shaped mole under the right ear and a half-moon shaped mole under her left ear.

CANDIDE

Could this be yet two more coincidences?

Candide shows Cacambo a picture of Cunegonde.

CACAMBO

The very woman.

CANDIDE

You have found my beloved. Where is she? I must go to her.

CACAMBO

She works as a legal secretary for two lawyers who specialize in evicting little old ladies who have defaulted on their sub-prime mortgages. My saintly mother was such a woman.

CANDIDE

Where is my beloved working?

CACAMBO

I'll take you to her.

They rush off.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

END OF SCENE 6

SCENE 7

Lights come up on a law office. Cunegonde, who looks pale, is sitting at a desk, typing. The phone rings. She answers it.

CUNEGONDE

(on the phone)

Issachar and Lord...No, I'm sorry. Their practice is limited to mortgage foreclosure.

She hangs up and resumes her typing. Candide enters. She doesn't look up.

CUNEGONDE (CONT'D)

Have a seat.

CANDIDE

I'm looking for the legal secretary.

CUNEGONDE

I am the legal secretary. Why else would I be sitting here, typing up foreclosure letters to little old ladies who have defaulted on their sub-prime mortgages?

CANDIDE

(recognizing her voice)

My God, it's you. Cunegonde. The fairest maiden in all the land The woman I love. The reason for living. The woman I would die for.

CUNEGONDE

Candide.

CANDIDE

Yes, it is I.

CUNEGONDE

Oh, my beloved. I thought I would never see you again.

They hug.

CANDIDE

Let me look at you. I forgot how beautiful you are.

CUNEGONDE

I'm going to cry.

CANDIDE

Don't cry because I am here.

CUNEGONDE

That's why I am going to cry.

They hug.

CANDIDE

Tell me about everything that has happened to you since we were last together.

CUNEGONDE

After my father cancelled my cell phone contract, threw me out of the house and banned me from Texas, I moved to Amherst and got this job. It was the only one I could get that offered health insurance.

CANDIDE

This is the land of opportunity. Because you were willing to work hard and move to Massachusetts, you have a job with health insurance.

CUNEGONDE

Which is very fortunate because I have a lethal urinary tract infection.

CANDIDE

Urinary tract infections are easily cured with antibiotics.

CUNEGONDE

I have a very advanced case that requires hospitalization. It is caused by an unusual bacterium that arrived on a medical flight from Africa, where missionary doctors had gone to set up AIDS clinics for children who ultimately would starve to death. Though I have health insurance, the hospital won't put me on the waiting list until I pay my copayment, which is very large. Doctors said I had only 21 months to live. That was two months ago.

CANDIDE

Only 19 months are left.

CUNEGONDE

And three days. The doctors said I would die on July 4, on or about 2:45.

CANDIDE

Oh, that's terrible. My dear, dear...

(sudden realization)

They can be that precise?

CUNEGONDE

The medical profession has become very good at staging disease and determining when you will die. It's finding cures they're having trouble with. Thanks to genome research, doctors can predict the time of death not only to the day, but the hour, give or take a few minutes.

CANDIDE

And to think you've had to face the terror of knowing the exact time of your death all by yourself.

CUNEGONDE

I am so glad you're here. The treatment involves chemotherapy, surgery and radiation and I'm scared.

CANDIDE

Don't be scared. We have the best medical system in the world and you have a wonderful job.

CUNEGONDE

It is not that wonderful. Mr. Issachar owns me in the morning. Mr. Lord owns me in the afternoon.

CANDIDE

Owns you?

CUNEGONDE

In the Biblical sense.

CANDIDE

Surely you don't mean...

(he can't bring himself to say "sex.")

CUNEGONDE

It's part of the job description.

CANDIDE

That's terrible.

CUNEGONDE

It's not wonderful. Mr. Issachar summons me for his pleasures with a gong. Mr. Lord with a chime. This place is a madhouse between 12:30 and 1:30 when both the gong and chimes are going because they can't agree on who owns me during my lunch hour.

CANDIDE

Your days of sexual servitude are over. I will not let them touch you again.

CUNEGONDE

They will hurt you if you try to stop them.

CANDIDE

I am not afraid. We'll run away and get married.

CUNEGONDE

Oh my beloved, beloved. You have finally saved enough for us to get married.

CANDIDE

I have saved nothing. But anything is better than this, even an unfunded marriage.

CUNEGONDE

Already I am beginning to feel stronger.

CANDIDE

I will immediately get a job in investment banking and with my first paycheck I will buy a small house on beachfront property where we will plan our wedding while waiting for your treatment to begin.

CUNEGONDE

I thought such happiness would never be mine.

CANDIDE

And while you're in the hospital recovering from the terrible effects of the surgery, radiation and chemotherapy, each day I will come to the hospital with flowers and candy so it will feel more like a party than a medical ordeal.

CUNEGONDE

You are a crazy, silly man and I love everything about you.

A gong sounds.

CANDIDE

Quick, we must leave.

CUNEGONDE

I must give notice.

CANDIDE

Are you crazy?

CUNEGONDE

They need time to find another girl.

Chimes sound.

CUNEGONDE

I better go to one of them or they'll come in here and beat you mercilessly.

CANDIDE

I will not leave you. I will never leave you again.

A gong sounds.

CUNEGONDE

I don't want you to get hurt.

CANDIDE

They are the ones who will get hurt if they come near you again.

ISSACHAR (O.S.)

Come here. I need you.

CUNEGONDE

That's Mr. Issachar.

LORD (O.S.)

Did you not hear the chimes?

CUNEGONDE

Mr. Lord. They have very mean tempers. Go now. I will meet you after work.

CANDIDE

After you have been ravaged again and again? Not on your life. Or mine either. I am not afraid. Come away with me.

ISSACHAR (O.S.)

I said I need you. Now.

Candide starts collecting her personal items and jamming them into his pocket.

CUNEGONDE

You're so strong and masterful. Just being with you again is happiness enough for me.

CANDIDE

I will never leave you again.

CUNEGONDE

But what if some unforeseen event should split us apart again?

CANDIDE

I won't let that happen. But to be on the safe side, we must exchange e-mail addresses. Quick, tell me. What is your e-mail address?

CUNEGONDE

I will write it out for you.

ISSACHAR (O.S.)

I'm tired of waiting. My body is aching for your touch.

LORD (O.S.)

I'm beginning to loose the urge. And you know how mad I get when I lose the urge.

Issachar comes charging into the room.

ISSACHAR

Hurry, we don't have much time. Lord will be here any minute.

(surprised to see Candide)

What have we here? A new client? A contingency fee? You should have told me, Cunegonde.

Lord enters.

LORD

What are you doing with Cunegonde, Issachar? It is past noon.

(surprised to see Candide)

A new client?

ISSACHAR

We haven't figured that out yet.

CANDIDE

I have not come to foreclose on a mortgage. I have come to save my beloved, Cunegonde.

ISSACHAR

She's not your beloved. She's my beloved. Until noon.

LORD

And then she's my beloved.

ISSACHAR

She doesn't belong to you yet. She's still mine.

CANDIDE

She doesn't belong to either of you.

LORD

Obviously you are not schooled in the law.

ISSACHAR

Eminent domain.

LORD

Precisely.

CANDIDE

What's that?

LORD

I'm eminent. And she's my domain.

ISSACHAR

No, she's my domain. Until 1:30.

CANDIDE

My beloved Cunegonde is no one's domain. She is my fiance.

LORD

Habeas corpus

CANDIDE

What?

LORD

A very common legal term, sir. You forget it. This woman is my corpus.

ISSACHAR

She's my corpus. Until 1:30.

Candide takes Cunegonde by the hand and starts to leave.

CANDIDE

She is no one's corpus. Out of our way.

LORD

You can't leave.

ISSACHAR

Court's still in session.

LORD

Contempt of court. Contempt of court.

They start beating up Candide.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

The beating continues with only voices being heard.

ISSACHAR

Hit him with the law dictionary.

LORD

Keep it legal. Below the neck so the bruises won't show.

CANDIDE

Ow.

CUNEGONDE

Stop it.

CANDIDE

Help. Help.

ISSACHAR

Hit him with a tort.

CANDIDE

That's a wrongful act.

LORD

Couldn't have defined it better myself. Here's another wrongful act.

CANDIDE

Ow.

ISSACHAR

Tort him. Tort him. Tort Him.

CUNEGONDE

No. Don't tort him.

CANDIDE

(screams in pain)

I've been tortured.

The sound of the beating grows in intensity with a variety of sounds being added -- garbage can tops banging, glass breaking, boards smashing. Finally the noise fades to silence.

Spot comes up, revealing the clown doing tricks with a yo-yo.

CLOWN

The two disreputable lawyers beat Candide and Cunegonde senseless. They are taken unconscious to different hospitals. After a few days, Cunegonde regains consciousness and the lawyers tell her that she's fired and Candide is dead. Candide is not dead, but in a permanent vegetative state, or so he had been misdiagnosed by the doctors. He surprises everyone by emerging from his permanent vegetative state after six months, perfectly lucid and determined to find his beloved Cunegonde. He rushes off to New Orleans, where Cunegonde has gone, in search of work.

SPOT OUT

END OF SCENE 7

SCENE 8

In dark, the sound of strong winds is heard. Lights come up on a seedy part of town. Candide and Cacambo are standing in the shadows near a lone street light.

CANDIDE

Why have you brought me to this horrible place?

CACAMBO

This is where Cunegonde works.

CANDIDE

In these back alleys? That's ridiculous.

Cunegonde enters the lighted area, dressed as a whore.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

Oh my God.

A man walks by her.

CUNEGONDE

(sexually provocative)

Hey, happy shopper. May I help you?

SEX-STARVED MAN

There's a storm brewing. I didn't think anyone would be out here tonight.

PROSTITUTE

Big hurricane they say. We're offering a bad-weather special tonight.

SEX-STARVED MAN

Do you take American Express?

CUNEGONDE

We take all the major credit cards. And our billing is discreet.

CANDIDE

No, not my Cunegonde.

Candide starts to go to her, but Cacambo stops him.

CUNEGONDE

What can I offer you?

SEX-STARVED MAN

I'm looking for a good deal.

CUNEGONDE

Always low prices. Always.

SEX-STARVED MAN

Maybe tomorrow. I want to check out a few more places.

CUNEGONDE

No one undersells us.

The sound of the approaching storm increases.

SEX-STARVED MAN

It's getting real bad out here. I've got to go.

The man exits. Cunegonde sees Candide and Cacambo in the shadows.

CUNEGONDE

Hey, you two in the shadows. We're offering a two-for-one special tonight.

She gestures sexually. Candide starts to cry.

CANDIDE

It has come to this.

CUNEGONDE

Almost half price, with the manufacturer's rebate.

CANDIDE

My head tells me there must be good in this. But my heart cries out for the humiliation to stop.

Candide and Cacambo step into the circle of light.
Cunegonde is shocked to see that it is Candide.

CUNEGONDE

Candide.

CANDIDE

My poor, poor dear.

CUNEGONDE

You're dead.

CANDIDE

No, I'm alive.

They hug, both crying.

CUNEGONDE

I can't believe my good fortune, standing here in the red light district with the man I love. Once again I thought I would never see you again. And once again you have found me.

CANDIDE

And once again I promise never to leave you.

CUNEGONDE

And once again I know you won't because you are a man of your word.

CANDIDE

Oh, my beloved. What has brought you to this awful place?

CUNEGONDE

Job opportunity. Whores in Amherst don't make diddley squat.

CACAMBO

This storm is getting nasty. I'll wait for you guys in the car.

Cacambo exits.

CANDIDE

Losing your job worked out for the best. Those two lawyers were not very nice.

CUNEGONDE

It wasn't for the best. I lost my health insurance. So the hospital cancelled the treatment that would save my life.

CANDIDE

You have only 13 months to live.

CUNEGONDE

Eleven months, two weeks and three days.

CANDIDE

Ask your wealthy father for the money.

CUNEGONDE

I'd rather die than ask for help from that son of a bitch, who I love very much.

CANDIDE

Come with me. I will get you a meal, proper clothes and a room in a hotel that does more than rent by the hour.

CUNEGONDE

I can't leave. My shift lasts another six hours.

CANDIDE

You're through with this. I'm taking you away from these mean streets.

CUNEGONDE

The hell you are. I'm making good money here. With a little overtime, I'll be able to save up enough to get the money I need to save my life.

CANDIDE

I will get you the money.

CUNEGONDE

How can you do that? You don't have an MBA.

CANDIDE

I'll find a way.

He takes her by the hand.

CUNEGONDE

I'm not leaving.

She resists.

CANDIDE

I will save you from this.

He pulls her by the hand.

CUNEGONDE

No.

(hearing someone coming)

Oh my God. It's Mr. Masterman.

CANDIDE

Who's that?

CUNEGONDE

My pimp.

A well dressed man, with a very cultured manner, enters.

THE PIMP

(to Candide)

May I help you, sir? Have you found what you wanted?

CANDIDE

You bet I have.

THE PIMP

No one undersells WhoreMart.

CANDIDE

WhoreMart?

THE PIMP

The nation's whore house.

CANDIDE

Who the hell at you?

THE PIMP

Ms. Cunegonde's supervisor.

CANDIDE

You're her pimp.

THE PIMP

Yes.

CANDIDE

And she's your whore.

THE PIMP

We like to call them associates. I find your attitude very unpleasant. I've afraid I'm going to have to ask you to leave the premises.

CANDIDE

This is a city street.

THE PIMP

This is our place of business.

(to Cunegonde)

Ms. Cunegonde, I came here to tell you that you're needed on Bourbon Street. A Family Value's Convention has come to town. We're offering them a red light special.

He takes her by one hand and Candide takes her by the other.

CANDIDE

No, I won't allow it,

THE PIMP

Let go of my associate's hand.

CANDIDE

Let go of my fiance's hand.

CUNEGONDE

I need the overtime, Candide.

THE PIMP

She's coming with me.

CANDIDE

No.

THE PIMP

Yes.

CANDIDE

Let go of her hand.

THE PIMP

You let go of her hand.

CUNEGONDE

(screaming in pain)

Will someone please let go of my hand.

CANDIDE

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you.

Candide lets go of her hand. The pimp pulls her away and they start to exit.

CANDIDE

(continuing; yelling after her)

She's dying.

The pimp stops in his tracks.

THE PIMP

What?

CANDIDE

From a urinary tract infection.

THE PIMP

Oh my God.

(to Cunegonde)

You have a urinary tract infection?

CUNEGONDE

Just a little, lethal one.

THE PIMP

This will never do.

CUNEGONDE

It's not contagious.

THE PIMP

Think of the bad publicity if it ever got out that WhoreMart employed associates with urinary tract infections.

CUNEGONDE

What are you saying, Mr. Masterman?

THE PIMP

I'm saying, Ms. Cunegonde, that WhoreMart no longer requires your services.

The pimp marches off angrily as the sound of increasingly severe weather is heard.

CUNEGONDE

Look what you've done.

CANDIDE

I will get the money for you.

CUNEGONDE

You don't even have a job.

CANDIDE

I'll go to Silicon Valley.

CUNEGONDE

There's not time to find a job and make all the money I need.

The storm intensifies.

CANDIDE

Everyone in the Silicon Valley makes their first million by their 30th birthday.

CUNEGONDE

I'm scheduled to die on July 4, on or about 2:45.

CANDIDE

My 30th birthday is June 4.

CUNEGONDE

That would give us a month to spare, if you can do it.

CANDIDE

I will do it. I leave immediately.

CUNEGONDE

My savior.

CANDIDE

My beloved.

CUNEGONDE

We must exchange e-mail addresses so we will never again be out of touch. What is your e-mail address?

Battling the winds which are now overwhelming, Candide shouts out his e-mail address.

CANDIDE

Candide. B. 7. 23. 4. J. K at g-mail.dot com.

Cunegonde tries to remember the number but can't because it is so long.

CUNEGONDE

Do you have a pencil?

The winds are incredibly strong now and both have to fight hard to keep from being blown away.

CANDIDE

(desperately looking for a pencil)

I'm sure I have one somewhere.

CUNEGONDE

Hurry. The winds are blowing us apart.

CANDIDE

No. I don't have a pencil. Do you have one?

CUNEGONDE

Let me look in my bag.

Before she can, the bag is blown away.

CUNEGONDE (CONT'D)

I'm being blown away.

The winds blow Candide and Cunegonde to opposite sides of the stage.

CANDIDE

Hold my hand.

Help. Candide.

CUNEGONDE

Cunegonde.

CANDIDE

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

The sound of the winds and rain intensify in the darkness.

END OF SCENE 8

END OF ACT I

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ACT II

SCENE 1

Lights come up on Cacambo, his clothes ripped and wet, crowded in a sports stadium with many other moaning hurricane survivors. Candide enters.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

They must have taken her to another shelter.

CACAMBO

No one's coming to save us.

CANDIDE

Can't you ever look on the bright side of things?

CACAMBO

Not one government official has come here. Not one policeman. Not one fireman. No one from the State Police or National Guard. No one from Homeland Security. No Federal troops. They have forgotten about us.

CANDIDE

We will get out of here. I have to save Cunegonde.

CACAMBO

She's probably already dead.

CANDIDE

She is still alive, I tell you.

CACAMBO

We're fucked. They're going to leave us here to die.

CANDIDE

That would never happen in this country.

CACAMBO

What about that old man over there, buried under the mountain of wet, putrid rags. He hasn't moved for hours.

CANDIDE

He's probably sleeping.

CACAMBO

Yea, sure. The sleep no one wakes from.

Candide goes to the mountain of rags and gingerly inspects it.

CANDIDE

Old man huddled under this mountain of wet, putrid rags. How are you doing?

Candide pulls the rags from the old man's face and is shocked by what he discovers.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

Oh, my God. You're dead.

PANGLOSS

I am?

CANDIDE

I saw your head on a silver platter in Iraq.

CACAMBO

What the hell are you talking about?

PANGLOSS

(finally recognizing him)

Candide. What happened?

CANDIDE

They cut your head off.

PANGLOSS

(feeling to see if it was still there)

They did?

CANDIDE

Didn't they?

PANGLOSS

I don't remember a thing.

CANDIDE

Think back, Professor. You were in Iraq, shackled to the wall in an interrogation chamber. The interrogator ordered you taken away.

PANGLOSS

I was shackled to the wall?

CANDIDE

Yes.

PANGLOSS

It's beginning to come back to me.

CANDIDE

After they took you away, I heard a scream and then one of the interrogator's assistants walked in with your head on a platter.

PANGLOSS

The old head-on- the-platter trick. I remember it all clearly now. They wanted to scare you so they picked one of their prisoners who had a head that looked very much like mine from the back. They cut it off, put it face down on a platter and took it into the room where you were being interrogated.

CANDIDE

They cut off someone's head, just for a visual aid?

PANGLOSS

I thought it was a bit extreme.

CANDIDE

How did you get free?

PANGLOSS

After telling them how this is the best of all possible worlds, they decided I was crazy, and set me free. I returned to Texas to resume my studies. When the hurricane hit New Orleans, I knew a lot of people would be questioning whether this was the best of all possible worlds so I came here as a volunteer to reassure them.

CACAMBO

(coming over to them)

Is everything all right, Candide?

CANDIDE

Everything is wonderful.

CACAMBO

I know. I know. But is everything all right? Is this old man causing problems?

CANDIDE

This old man is my professor.

CACAMBO

The one whose head was cut off?

CANDIDE

The very same.

Cacambo comes closer and inspects Pangloss' neck.

CACAMBO

Battlefield surgery has come a long way.

PANGLOSS

This beautiful stadium is filled with thousands of wounded, hungry, desperate, dying people. But I'm sure they'll still be able to have the game tonight.

CACAMBO

Everything Candide said about you is true.

PANGLOSS

With so many people here, the evacuation must be going very well.

CACAMBO

The bastards have forgotten about us.

PANGLOSS

It takes time to respond to a catastrophe. You don't send firemen to a burning building without consultation and planning. Soon we will be hearing the helicopters.

CACAMBO

You're a crazy old man.

PANGLOSS

Candide, you haven't introduced me to your nice friend.

CANDIDE

That's Cacambo. He hates everything.

CACAMBO

It's terrible how you've filled poor Candide's head with all this nonsense about shiny shoes and smiling faces. In this world, the real world, you've got to be alert and on your guard or you get hurt. It's as simple as that.

CANDIDE

Show the professor respect, Cacambo.

PANGLOSS

There is much in what you say.

CACAMBO

There is?

PANGLOSS

Because Cacambo has always been alert and on his guard, he's never been hurt.

CACAMBO

I've been hurt. Plenty of times.

PANGLOSS

So your system isn't working.

CACAMBO

I assume you see good in that.

PANGLOSS

I do. Knowing what doesn't work is just as valuable as knowing what does.

CACAMBO

Do you see good in me?

PANGLOSS

I see a lot of good in you. You're Candide's friend.

CACAMBO

(laughing warmly)

I'm beginning to see why Candide likes an old coot like you.

PANGLOSS

The helicopters are coming.

CACAMBO
What makes you think that?

PANGLOSS
I can hear them.

CACAMBO
Even your fantasies are optimistic.

CANDIDE
I can hear something, too.

CACAMBO
How can you hear anything above the roar of the moaning multitudes?

PANGLOSS
You hear the moaning. We hear the helicopters.

The sound grows louder then diminishes and goes away.

CACAMBO
Why am I not surprised?

PANGLOSS
It's probably just as well.

CANDIDE
Professor, is it possible that sometimes Cacambo is right? Ever since I was brutally separated from my beloved Cunegonde, I have seen only war, disease, pain and enhanced interrogation.

PANGLOSS
You must have faith.

CACAMBO
(sarcastically)
Without faith there is only truth.

PANGLOSS
Faith gives you the strength to believe.

CACAMBO
When there is no reason to believe.

PANGLOSS

I will teach both of you what faith is.

Pangloss holds out a rock.

PANGLOSS (CONT'D)

What will happen if I let go of this rock?

CANDIDE

It will fall to the ground.

He opens his grasp and the rock falls to the ground.

PANGLOSS

You didn't need faith to believe that. But believing it will float away? That requires faith. Faith lets you believe in what you want to believe in.

(indicating the surroundings)

I want to believe that some good will come from this.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK on this part of the stage and come up elsewhere as the Clown comes out with a hoop.

CLOWN

The TV people arrive to film the dying and broadcast it on the evening news. A White House staffer, who was watching TV that night, thought it was a new survivor show, and settled down with beer and pretzels to watch. But it got boring after a while, making him realize that it was a real catastrophe. He woke up the president. Eventually military trucks began arriving to take away anyone who had managed to stay alive. Among the living were Candide, Pangloss and Cacambo, who rushed off to the nearest functioning airport, which was in Texas.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

END OF SCENE 1

SCENE 2

Lights come up on a row of seats in coach class. Candide, Cacambo and Pangloss are crunched up in the cramped seats, waiting for the plane to take off. Candide is on his cell phone.

CANDIDE

(on cell phone)

Koon..a...gun...da.

(He spells out her name. Then listens.)

She's 23... Thank you.

(hangs up. Addresses Cacambo)

They have no record of her.

CACAMBO

Are you sure you want to take this trip?

CANDIDE

There's nothing more that we can do here.

(almost hysterically)

I've got to start making money. A lot of it. Cunegonde has only a couple of months left to live. When the hell is this plane going to take off?

CACAMBO

Easy there.

CANDIDE

She's counting on me.

CACAMBO

What good is the money if we don't know where she is?

CANDIDE

We'll keep checking for her from California. Damnit, Cacambo. We've been sitting on the tarmac for six hours.

(calling out)

Stewardess.

CACAMBO

Shhh, Candide. It's not good to make a scene on an airplane these days. Not good at all.

CANDIDE

Cunegonde is going to die.

PANGLOSS

Everything is going to work out for the best.

CANDIDE

Why the hell should it? It never has so far.

CACAMBO

I don't feel good about this flight. I hope they cancel it.

CANDIDE

What are you talking about?

CACAMBO

There hasn't been a commercial plane crash for five years. Statistically we're due for one and this flight is going to be the one.

PANGLOSS

Whatever happens will be for the best.

CACAMBO

As we were being herded into this plane, I kept thinking that this is not an airplane. It is my coffin.

PANGLOSS

We will not die because it is not meant to be. And Cunegonde won't die because it is not meant to be. But if we do die and she does also, it was meant to be.

CANDIDE

I won't stay here any longer.

CACAMBO

Don't bother the stewardess, You forget, this is coach class.

PANGLOSS

The seats are comfortable.

CACAMBO

This guy is certifiable.

CANDIDE

I've got to leave.

CACAMBO

Easy boy. Easy. They don't have to be nice to you in coach.

CANDIDE

Stewardess. Stewardess.

(unbuckling his seatbelt and standing)

I'm out of here

CACAMBO

Are you out of your ever-loving mind?

The stewardess appears

STEWARDESS

Sir, you must stay in your seat.

CANDIDE

I can't wait here any longer.

STEWARDESS

Get back in your seat.

CANDIDE

Get out of my way.

STEWARDESS

(yelling)

Condition Red. Condition Red.

An air marshal appears, with his gun drawn.

AIR MARSHAL

(showing his credentials)

Air Marshal Robert Jennings. Someone about to light his shoes?

STEWARDESS

(pointing to Candide and the others)

Those guys.

AIR MARSHAL

OK, on your feet. Hands off your shoes.

AIR MARSHAL (CONT'D)

(continuing; radioing for help)

This is the air marshal on United 972. Three terrorists have been apprehended. Need transport.

(clicks off the radio)

OK, you three. Let's get moving.

He starts to herd them off.

PANGLOSS

(to Cacambo)

There is much good in all this. Candide wanted to get off the tarmac so a federal air marshal came to personally escort us off the plane.

CACAMBO

So this plane isn't going to crash after all.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SPOT LIGHTS THE CLOWN

CLOWN

Candide, Pangloss and Cacambo are shackled, hooded and are about to be flown to Egypt, where the U. S. has outsourced interrogation and torture. But just before the plane takes off, the CIA realizes that it has not apprehended terrorists but three nuts when one of the agents overhears Pangloss assuring Candide and Cacambo that water boarding is a good thing. The three are released. Pangloss returns to Texas, to resume his studies of optimism. Cacambo and Candide fly to the Silicon Valley.

END OF SCENE 2

SCENE 3

Lights come up on an office at Micro Hard, a growing computer conglomerate. Candide is working out on an exercise bike while Cacambo watches disapprovingly.

CANDIDE

She's fallen off the face of the earth.

CACAMBO

A lot of people went missing after that hurricane.

CANDIDE

I've checked with TrackStar. The National Center for Missing Adults. Net Detective. And Locate People dot org. None of them came up with anything.

CACAMBO

You're doing everything you can.

CANDIDE

Tomorrow is June 4.

CACAMBO

Happy birthday.

CANDIDE

Cunegonde has only a month to live.

Out of breath, Candide gets off the bike and towels himself off.

CACAMBO

You're right. This has been a bust for us. You've been here for weeks and all you've got to show for it are buffed pecs and twenty thousand dollars.

CANDIDE

An entry level job was the best I could do.

CACAMBO

I thought computer manual editors did better than that.

CANDIDE

It's not an important job. I'm only in charge of obfuscation.

CACAMBO

Where would computer manuals be if it wasn't for people like you?

CANDIDE

I'm about to be fired.

CACAMBO

You're obfuscating the manual for a new operating system. They wouldn't give you a job like that if they were going to fire you.

CANDIDE

I described the installation process with clarity, logic and engaging, meaningful dialogue.

CACAMBO

You didn't.

CANDIDE

I couldn't help myself.

CACAMBO

That's terrible. People will be able to install the operating system without yelling and screaming.

CANDIDE

I know.

CACAMBO

You're dead in this town.

The chief of obfuscation editors enters.

CACAMBO

I'll check back with you later.

Cacambo exits. Candide rushes to resume his exercising. But he's barely able to keep the barbell above his head.

OBFUSCATION CHIEF

Ah, there you are. I was looking for you in your cubicle.

CANDIDE

You should have called me, chief. I would have come up to your office.

OBFUSCATION CHIEF

I was coming down here anyhow, to play ping pong. Your probation is up tomorrow. Thought we should have a talk.

Candide stops lifting the barbell.

OBFUSCATION CHIEF

Don't stop. Keep the old heart pumping.

Candide unhappily resumes the lifts.

CANDIDE

I know what you want to talk about. The instructions on installing the new operating system.

Candide starts to put down the barbell.

OBFUSCATION CHIEF

Keep it up there. When I first joined the company, I held the weight up for one hour, to show my boss that I had what it takes to get the job done.

CANDIDE

This weight is nothing.

OBFUSCATION CHIEF

Higher.

CANDIDE

(straining to his limit, he lifts it higher)

No problem.

OBFUSCATION CHIEF

Funny thing about those weights. They don't seem that heavy at first. But as the hours go by...

CANDIDE

(horrified at the thought of holding the weight much longer)

Hours?

OBFUSCATION CHIEF

I once did it for three hours, as a dare with my department head.

Oh God.
CANDIDE

What?
OBFUSCATION CHIEF

CANDIDE
(barely able to keep going)
I could do this forever.

OBFUSCATION CHIEF
The instructions you wrote were a brilliant piece of work. Who would have thought that instructions for a 21-step installation procedure could read so clearly, like a mystery story, and then end with a socko climax.

CANDIDE
You mean a 20-step installation procedure.

OBFUSCATION CHIEF
(exploding with laughter)
You are a kidder. Your instructions are diabolical. You go through them, step by step. Everything reads beautifully. You can't believe that you are doing the impossible -- installing an operating system without spending hours on the phone talking to someone in India who knows all the English words but can't understand the sentences. And then you complete what you think is the last part of the instructions. Step 20. And nothing happens. Because you need Step 21 to start up the system. And there is no Step 21 in the instructions. Bravo.

Twenty-one steps?
CANDIDE

OBFUSCATION CHIEF
I know it's the old missing-last-step trick. A golden oldie in the obfuscation business. But you executed it beautifully.

Candide starts to bring down the weight, sees his boss' disapproving look and lifts it high again.

OBFUSCATION CHIEF
My congratulations. Here's your signing bonus and a little something extra for your fine work.

He puts the envelope on a table and gives Candide a well-done punch on the arm. He exits. Candide drops the weight on the floor and sits down, too exhausted to open the envelope. The sound of a ping-pong ball in play is heard. Cacambo enters.

CACAMBO

He walked out of here smiling. He must enjoy firing people. Will they let you pack up your things?

CANDIDE

(indicating the envelope)

I made the bonus.

CACAMBO

You fuck up and still they give you a bonus? I just can't understand how big business works in this country.

(looking at the check)

There are an awful lot of zeroes here. One. Two. Three...

CANDIDE

The tragic irony of this is so painful. Now I have the money. But I don't have the woman.

CACAMBO

...Four. Five. Six. Son of a bitch. The number one followed by six zeroes. They paid you one million bucks.

CANDIDE

The money is worthless.

CACAMBO

I wouldn't say that. Nothing at all came up when you Googled her?

CANDIDE

I put in her name and got 1,296 hits. But none of them were her.

CACAMBO

You don't use her name. You use her description. That's how Google will find her. Damn, do I have to do everything for you.

CANDIDE

Quick, tell me what to do.

Candide opens up a laptop and calls up Google.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

Tell me the search terms.

CACAMBO

Beautiful young woman. Fair smile. Blue eyes. Blond hair. Quick wit. Bright mind.

Candide types them in and hits the enter key. Cacambo peers over his shoulder.

CACAMBO (CONT'D)

Too many hits. Add "perfectly shaped breasts."

Candide redoes the search term.

CACAMBO (CONT'D)

Still too many. One breast lower than the other. Add that.

Candide does so.

CACAMBO (CONT'D)

Now that's a manageable number. Change "one breast" to "left breast."

Candide does so.

CACAMBO (CONT'D)

Three women. One lives in China and the other is in the Vatican, probably a nun. Call up Number Three's picture.

Candide types on the computer.

CACAMBO (CONT'D)

There she is.

CANDIDE

I'll be damned. Google surely is the best of all possible search engines.

CACAMBO

Maybe it's not so good. All the contact information is "N.A."

CANDIDE

I'll check occupation.

Candide types some more and checks the screen.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

Oh, damn. Google goofed up on this one.

CACAMBO

The National Rifle Association?

CANDIDE

She wouldn't work in a place like that.

CACAMBO

She was a sex slave for two disreputable lawyers and a whore in New Orleans. It's in the ballpark.

CANDIDE

But there are limits.

CACAMBO

This is our only lead.

CANDIDE

OK. We go to Washington.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SPOTLIGHT COMES UP. Clown walks into it.

CLOWN

What with long waits at the airport, cancelled flights and different time zones, Candide reaches Washington with only six days left. He goes straight to NRA headquarters but is denied admission when the metal detector fails to find any concealed weapons. For three days he rushes about the city, trying to find ways to reach Cunegonde. Finally he learns that all NRA employees will be attending a street rally on July 2 to promote changes in the Constitution.

SPOT GOES TO BLACK

END OF SCENE 3

SCENE 4

Lights come up on a street rally with an NRA official giving a speech on a bullhorn. Candide watches from a distance. The NRA official waits for the cheering to die down.

NRA OFFICIAL

A moment of silence, please, as I read to you the sacred words.

The crowd becomes quiet.

NRA OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

A well regulated militia being necessary for the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.

The crowd roars its approval.

NRA OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

In today's world, the right of the people should include hand grenades and land mines. And maybe even mortars and tanks and, dare I said it, nuclear weapons. If poor countries can have nukes, why shouldn't the citizens of the richest country in the world have them, too.

The crowds roars again.

NRA OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

Today the Aim-Right Bus for Weapons of Personal Destruction begins a 365-day tour of this great and free nation, to expand the Second Amendment and distribute guns to every man, woman and child. Remember our motto: A well armed society is a polite society.

Roar of approval. Dressed in a red-white-and-blue costume, Cunegonde enters, carrying a basket full of handguns. She looks very sick. The crowd roars. Candide sees Cunegonde.

CANDIDE

(to himself)

My beloved.

CUNEGONDE

(weak and angry that she's doing this)

Guns anyone? Guns anyone? Take a few home to your children. Create your own well regulated militia.

CANDIDE

(calling to her)

Cunegonde.

Cunegonde turns to him and is shocked.

CUNEGONDE

Candide.

CANDIDE

Oh, my beloved.

CUNEGONDE

I never thought I would see you again.

CANDIDE

Are you OK?

CUNEGONDE

I'm sick. Terribly sick.

CANDIDE

You should be in bed.

CUNEGONDE

They won't give me sick leave to die. I wanted to spend my last two days on earth, curled up under a tree, thinking of what could have been for us. But I'm under house arrest.

CANDIDE

Those bastards. What are you doing working for people like this?

CUNEGONDE

I couldn't get any other job. Only the NRA was willing to hire a whore from New Orleans and provide health insurance. But that part of the deal didn't work out. The insurance company rejected me because of my pre-existing condition.

CANDIDE

They doesn't matter. I got the money.

He hands her a check.

CUNEGONDE

What's this?

CANDIDE

A cashier's check for a million dollars made out to you.

CUNEGONDE

There's not enough time to find a doctor willing to take on a new patient.

CANDIDE

We'll go to the emergency room. Quick.

CUNEGONDE

(tucking the check in her bra)

I'm so ashamed. That you found me doing this.

She breaks down crying and Candide hugs her, dumping the guns on the ground.

CUNEGONDE

Hold me tight, Candide.

CANDIDE

It's OK. You're not a whore any more.

CUNEGONDE

(indicating her get-up and basket of guns)

You're kidding me?

CANDIDE

It's legal to promote gun violence in this country -- some people think it's patriotic.

CUNEGONDE

It's not a patriotic thing. And it's not a good thing.

CANDIDE

Let's discuss this later. Please.

CUNEGONDE

It's not a good thing that we're killing each other with these guns. It's not good that people can't get health insurance. It's not good that we're torturing people.

(MORE)

CUNEGONDE (CONT'D)

It's wrong that we don't save people from natural disasters and that there're priests who rape choir boys with impunity.

CANDIDE

Are you through?

CUNEGONDE

It's terrible that mothers can't get drugs for dying children.

CANDIDE

Now?

CUNEGONDE

Or that government leaders terrify everyone into surrendering civil liberties.

CANDIDE

(screaming in desperation)

Cunegonde. We haven't a minute to lose.

CUNEGONDE

Actually, we have one thousand, four hundred and 47 minutes to lose.

CANDIDE

You've been counting.

CUNEGONDE

Impending death helps you focus.

The NRA official comes over with a bazooka and an NRA henchman, who has a rifle.

NRA OFFICIAL

What's going on here?

(seeing the guns scattered on the ground)

What the hell? Pick up those guns, woman.

Terrified by the official, Cunegonde rushes to scoop the guns into the basket.

NRA OFFICIAL

What are you doing talking to this guy when you should be handing out weapons?

He slaps her.

CANDIDE

No.

Candide starts to go to her but the henchmen smashes the butt of the rifle into his stomach. Candide falls to the ground in agony.

CANDIDE

Leave her alone. She's sick.

NRA OFFICIAL

(to Cunegonde)

Are you or are you not a loyal American?

CUNEGONDE

I am an American.

CANDIDE

She has to get to the hospital immediately.

NRA OFFICIAL

(to Cunegonde)

Stand at attention.

CUNEGONDE

What?

NRA OFFICIAL

Attention, I said.

She stands at attention, Candide tries to get up but is smacked down again with the rifle.

NRA OFFICIAL

Pledge of allegiance.

CUNEGONDE

Are you crazy?

NRA official slaps her.

NRA OFFICIAL

Say it.

CUNEGONDE

(tearfully, frightened)

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

NRA OFFICIAL

You're an American and don't forget it.

CUNEGONDE

Candide.

NRA OFFICIAL

Come on, woman. The bus is leaving.

CUNEGONDE

No, I won't go.

HENCHMAN

Leave the bitch. We don't need her.

NRA OFFICIAL

(lecherous)

I'm not through training her yet.

CUNEGONDE

Help me, Candide.

The official grabs her by the shoulder.

CANDIDE

Take your hands off that woman.

Candide tries to get up but pain stops him.

CUNEGONDE

I'm going to die. But I know you tried to save me, Candide.

The official drags her off.

CUNEGONDE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You tried.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK as the sound of Candide being beaten by the henchman is heard. Lights come up on the clown.

CLOWN

A few hours later, Pangloss and Cacambo find Candide unconscious in a dumpster. They take him to an acupuncturist, who tries to restore him to health. He develops a serious infection from the acupuncture needles and is poisoned by improperly prepared organic vegetables. He falls into a deep coma and doctors diagnose him as being in a permanent vegetative state. But once again he disappoints anxiously awaiting organ transplant recipients by regaining consciousness several months later. Just before being kicked out of the hospice ward, Candide is shocked to read in the newspapers that not only is Cunegonde still alive, she's in Antarctica, living in an igloo built by an oil company. She had inadvertently become part of a highly publicized P.R. campaign to prove that global warming is a hoax.

SPOT BLACKS OUT

END OF SCENE 4

SCENE 5

Lights come up on the interior of a very large igloo. Cunegonde is asleep in the dark, shackled to a huge ice cube. The oil company executive is drinking a gin and tonic and working on his laptop. He wears a Hawaiian shirt. Exhausted and out of breath, Candide enters with the gear needed for a long trek through the cold wilderness. He obviously is overdressed. At first he doesn't see Cunegonde.

CANDIDE

Damn, has it gotten hot out there.

OIL EXECUTIVE

(grabbing a pistol and aiming it at Candide)

Jesus Christ. Where did you come from? Who are you?

CANDIDE

(holding up his hands)

I'm not armed.

OIL EXECUTIVE

What do you want?

CANDIDE

I've come to save my beloved from certain death.

CUNEGONDE

(rousing from her sleep)

Is that you, Candide?

CANDIDE

Cunegonde, my beloved. Where are you?

CUNEGONDE

I'm over here in the murky dark recesses of this giant igloo.

He goes to her and hugs her.

CUNEGONDE

It's so good to feel your warm embrace. I never thought I would see you again.

OIL EXECUTIVE

Enough of that, you two.

CANDIDE

The pain and agony was awful, thinking that you were dead. But miraculously you're still alive.

CUNEGONDE

I got the treatment. Thanks to you. I had only one day and 17 hours to live, but the hospital immediately admitted me and started therapy just in time. .

CANDIDE

They gave you special consideration because death was so close?

CUNEGONDE

No. Because I walked in with all that money. Hospitals can charge patients five times as much for the privilege of paying in cash. A dozen insured patients were displaced,

CANDIDE

Why are you sitting here in the dark?

OIL EXECUTIVE

Hey, mister. I want you out of here now.

CUNEGONDE

The dark is good.

CANDIDE

No, I want to see you. I have a lantern among the many things I packed for this arduous journey to the bottom of the world. Where did I put it?

CUNEGONDE

Forget the lantern. Just hold me. In the dark.

CANDIDE

Ah, here it is.

He lights the lantern.

CUNEGONDE

No.

Her face is bruised. Her head is wrapped in a bandana.
Candide is shocked by her appearance.

CANDIDE

You've been hurt.

CUNEGONDE

(not revealing her teeth)

Put the light out. Please.

CANDIDE

Where is that smile that has brought me so much happiness?

CUNEGONDE

(not revealing her teeth)

Put that damn light out.

CANDIDE

Oh, my God. What happened to your teeth?

CUNEGONDE

Shit.

CANDIDE

You have no teeth.

CUNEGONDE

I lost them. Jumping off the Aim-Right Bus as it was racing through New Jersey. I fell to the ground and state troopers arrested me for littering the highway. The few remaining teeth were knocked out when I protested the injustice and they hit me with their batons.

CANDIDE

Oh, you poor dear.

CUNEGONDE

I know how much you loved my smile. Now the smile is gone. I have failed you, Candide.

CANDIDE

They are doing wonders with dental construction. Your smile will return, better than ever before.

OIL EXECUTIVE

Enough with the soap opera.

CANDIDE

It's true. I loved your smile. But what I love even more is your beautiful, flowing golden hair.

He goes to take off her bandana.

CUNEGONDE

No.

He removes her bandana. She is bald. Candide is shocked.

CANDIDE

You're bald.

CUNEGONDE

Shut off the lantern. I don't want you to see me this way.

CANDIDE

What happened to your beautiful, flowing golden hair?

CUNEGONDE

Chemotherapy. From the treatment.

CANDIDE

Bald is a fashion statement.

He puts his arms around her. The oil executive is walking back and forth in frustrated anger.

CANDIDE

Every inch of your sweet, little body I remember. So many times I have fantasized about holding you like this and feeling...

(moving his hand across her chest)

Oh, my. What is this I'm not feeling?

CUNEGONDE

I was hoping that I could at least keep that a secret.

CANDIDE

One of your perfectly shaped breasts is gone.

CUNEGONDE

They gave me a mastectomy. I still had money left over so the hospital said why not.

The oil executive fires his gun in the air.

OIL EXECUTIVE

Will no one listen to me?

CANDIDE

Why are you here in this frozen wasteland?

OIL EXECUTIVE

It's like I'm not even here.

He starts beating the ground.

CUNEGONDE

After getting out of the hospital, I bought a chance on an all-expenses paid vacation to a winter wonderland and won. As soon as I got here, I realized what a terrible mistake I had made. Now he won't let me leave.

OIL EXECUTIVE

We're here demonstrating that it is perfectly safe to live here because global warming is a hoax. It would be terrible public relations if she left.

CANDIDE

We're leaving this place.

OIL EXECUTIVE

We've got enough supplies to last for six month and we're not leaving until we've used them up.

CANDIDE

We're leaving now.

He tries to lead Cunegonde away, but the chain shackling Cunegonde to the ice cube prevents him.

CANDIDE

What's the matter?

CUNEGONDE

This fiend has chained me to a giant ice cube.

CANDIDE

Unchain this woman. We've got to get out of here. The only thing connecting this ice shelf to the mainland is an ice bridge, a few hundred feet wide.

OIL EXECUTIVE

This shelf has been here for eons. No reason for it to break loose now.

CANDIDE

The temperature is rising 10 times faster than ever before. Because of all the pollution from the oil your company sells.

OIL EXECUTIVE

Apocalyptic environmentalism. I'll have none of it. Besides, we're not the ones who burn the oil and cause the pollution.

The sound of an approaching helicopter is heard.

COAST GUARD HELICOPTER

VOICE (O.S.)

(on bullhorn)

This is the Coast Guard. How many people are down there?

Candide rushes to go outside, but the oil executive stops him with his gun.

OIL EXECUTIVE

No. Stop. You stay in here or I'll shoot your lady friend.

Candide freezes.

CANDIDE

They can save us.

OIL EXECUTIVE

Not on my watch, mister. My bonus is at risk.

COAST GUARD HELICOPTER

VOICE (O.S.)

Is there anyone there? Are you OK?

The oil executive gets a megaphone and goes outside, warning Candide with the gun to stay put.

OIL EXECUTIVE

(speaking into the megaphone)

Leave us alone. We're fine.

COAST GUARD HELICOPTER
VOICE (O.S.)

You are in danger. You must leave.

OIL EXECUTIVE

We don't need any help. Go.

COAST GUARD HELICOPTER
VOICE (O.S.)

We'll lower a basket.

OIL EXECUTIVE

The hell you will. You're invading my air space. Get out of here.

COAST GUARD HELICOPTER
VOICE (O.S.)

It's your call. But we can't come back. We've used up our allotment of fuel for this month.

The sound of the helicopter leaving is heard.

CUNEGONDE

No. Don't let them go.

OIL EXECUTIVE

This ice shelf weighs 720 billion tons. That's a lot of ice to melt.

CANDIDE

Where did you hear that?

OIL EXECUTIVE

Company news letter.

The loud sound of the ice shelf cracking is heard.

CANDIDE

Oh, my God. Could that be?

Candide rushes to get binoculars. He looks off in the distance.

CANDIDE

It is. The ice bridge is breaking up. There's no way to escape now.

CUNEGONDE

I think I hear something.

CANDIDE

Just the wind in the trees.

CUNEGONDE

There are no trees in Antarctica. It's a helicopter.

CANDIDE

They've come back?

CUNEGONDE

Yes.

The sound of a helicopter approaching is heard. Candide heads for the "door." The oil executive pulls out his gun.

OIL EXECUTIVE

Stop.

CANDIDE

This is our last chance.

TV HELICOPTER VOICE (O.S.)

Hello, down there. Anyone there? We're looking for people stranded on the ice shelf.

CANDIDE

We're getting out of here, I tell you.

OIL EXECUTIVE

No.

He aims his gun at Candide.

TV HELICOPTER VOICE (O.S.)

We cannot remain here much longer.

CANDIDE

They're going to leave.

Candide jumps the oil executive. They wrestle.
Cunegonde screams in support of Candide. Finally
Candide gains control of the gun.

CANDIDE

(continuing; pointing the gun at him)

Back, you son of a bitch.

OIL EXECUTIVE

(grabbing a harpoon)

Get out of my igloo.

CANDIDE

Drop it. Or I'll shoot.

The sound of the helicopter's motor revving up to climb.

CUNEGONDE

The helicopter's leaving.

CANDIDE

Drop it, I said.

Candide fires a shot in the air and then takes aim at the oil executive.

CANDIDE

I'll shoot.

The oil executive drops the harpoon. The sound of the helicopter leaving is heard.

OIL EXECUTIVE

Shit.

Candide gets the megaphone and rushes to the outside.

CANDIDE

(into the megaphone)

Help. Please. Don't leave. There are three people here. Help. They can't hear me. They're leaving.

Candide rips off his orange storm coat and waves it.

CUNEGONDE

Look what you've done, you miserable bastard.

Candide keeps waving the coat.

CANDIDE

The helicopter is turning. It's coming back.

CUNEGONDE

We're saved.

TV HELICOPTER VOICE (O.S.)

(on bullhorn)

Hello, down there. This is Fox News. Your ice shelf has broken loose and now you're drifting out to sea. We're here to film it.

CANDIDE

(into megaphone)

Help, save us.

TV HELICOPTER VOICE (O.S.)

We can't. We're objective journalists.

CANDIDE

(into megaphone)

You work for Fox News.

TV HELICOPTER VOICE (O.S.)

Objective journalists are not supposed to intervene in the events they cover.

OIL EXECUTIVE

They've come to film us drifting out to sea?

TV HELICOPTER VOICE (O.S.)

The video footage is absolutely wonderful -- 720 billion tons of ice, 700-foot thick, breaking up. TV news doesn't get much better than this.

OIL EXECUTIVE

Then there really is global warming.

TV HELICOPTER VOICE (O.S.)

Can't talk anymore. Got to refuel. We'll be back just before the evening news,

The sound of the helicopter climbing and disappearing is heard.

OIL EXECUTIVE

If Fox News says the ice shelf is breaking up, it must be true.

CANDIDE

I've been telling you that since I got here.

OIL EXECUTIVE

Son of a gun. Corporate must have known about this all along.

CANDIDE

Now you believe it just because some TV guy tells you?

OIL EXECUTIVE

Not some TV guy. That was Fox News. You know what this means, don't you?

CANDIDE

Yeah, the world is doomed.

OIL EXECUTIVE

Corporate lied. When they sent me down here. Nothing to worry about, they said.

CANDIDE

You can't believe your company doomed the planet?

OIL EXECUTIVE

I can't believe they'd put one of their executives in harms way for a publicity stunt. What's good for the corporation is good for the executive. That's what I was raised to believe. Now I find out it's all a lie.

CANDIDE

I know what it's like to have a belief system crumble. It's not a pretty sight.

The oil executive starts sobbing. Candide starts to go over to him.

CUNEGONDE

Don't you dare comfort that bastard.

OIL EXECUTIVE

I can't live in a system where trickle-down goodness doesn't even reach the junior executive level. I don't want to live in a world like that.

He rushes off stage

CANDIDE

(calling after him)

We'll be saved. Even Fox News wouldn't let us die just to get some good video for the evening news.

OIL EXECUTIVE (O.S.)

It's sweeps week.

The sound of him screaming followed by a splash and then silence.

CUNEGONDE

CANDIDE

I have failed you Cunegonde. I promised to be by your side always.

CUNEGONDE (CONT'D)

That's true. You did fail me in that way. But you did get me the money that saved my life.

CANDIDE

But not for long. You're about to die.

CUNEGONDE

(with sadness)

We're both about to die.

She turns away to keep Candide from seeing her crying.

CANDIDE

Is there something wrong?

She smiles sadly at his inability to appreciate their plight.
He gets up and starts taking off his clothes.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

What kind of world is this, where someone as wonderful as you could be so poorly treated. You were almost killed by a painful, horrible disease. Hospitals refused to treat you because you had no money. You were forced to be: a sex slave to two disreputable lawyers. A whore in New Orleans. A shill for the NRA. The police knocked out your teeth. Chemotherapy made you bald. Surgeons cuts off one of your breasts. This is not the best of all possible worlds.

CUNEGONDE

That's what I've been telling you all this time.

CANDIDE

All my adult life I have been substituting faith for knowledge, living in a make-believe world that I was told existed. But never did. A not-thinking-for-yourself life isn't worth living.

Now stripped down to only his shorts, he starts to leave.

CANDIDE (CONT'D)

Adieu, my beloved beloved..

CUNEGONDE

Wait. You can't leave like this.

CANDIDE

Why can't I?

CUNEGONDE

For one thing, I've waited all this time to be with you. And for another thing, I'm still shackled to a giant ice cube on an ice shelf drifting out to sea.

CANDIDE

You've made two good points. I can't leave you like this. But corporate man took the key with him to his watery grave.

CUNEGONDE

No, it's over there next to his gin and tonic.

CANDIDE

Ah, yes. Here it is.

He takes a big gulp of gin and tonic and then uses the key to free Cunegonde, who hugs him.

CUNEGONDE

You no longer love me. That's why you want to leave.

CANDIDE

No, no, my beloved. I will always love you.

CUNEGONDE

I don't blame you for wanting to be free. You fell in love with me when I was the most beautiful woman in the world with a fair smile, blonde hair and perfectly shaped breasts, though admittedly the left one was slightly lower than the right. But look what I have become.

CANDIDE

No, my beloved. Your pathetic appearance has nothing to do with my need to die.

CUNEGONDE

I understand why death is preferable to fulfilling your vows to me.

CANDIDE

(shocked)

I can't believe what I was about to do. Fail you yet again. No, Cunegonde. The final act of my life will not be a selfish one. You are the woman I love, even though you look like hell. I will spend the rest of my life with you.

CUNEGONDE

I don't want to force you to do something you don't want to do.

CANDIDE

But I want to die with you.

CUNEGONDE

You do?

CANDIDE

Yes.

CUNEGONDE

That's sweet.

CANDIDE

Let's go outside and see one last sunset before we die.

They go outside and lie down in a garden chaise lounge.

CUNEGONDE

It'll be a while. It's summertime in Antarctica and the sun won't set for another month.

CANDIDE

Then let's pretend.

The roar of a nearby ice slide is heard.

CUNEGONDE

Oh, my God.

They jump up and look into the distance.

CUNEGONDE (CONT'D)

Would you look at that?

CANDIDE

The whole side of the mountain crashed into the sea.

CUNEGONDE

(in awe)

This is so immense. And we're so little. It's hard to believe that we were able to destroy it.

Another roar, bigger than the last. They look in another direction.

CUNEGONDE (CONT'D)

Over there.

Another roar in yet another direction is heard.

CANDIDE

Great mountains of ice, crashing into the sea on all sides of us.

CUNEGONDE

The whole sub-continent is breaking up. The world is coming to an end.

CANDIDE

It's majestic. It's beautiful.

CUNEGONDE

I thought the world would end in a mushroom cloud.

CANDIDE

This is nicer.

CUNEGONDE

Yes, much.

CANDIDE

Though a nuclear mushroom cloud is not something to sneeze at.

CUNEGONDE

What have we done?

Candide takes out a compass.

CANDIDE

(excited)

Look, Cunegonde.

(showing her the compass)

We're drifting northward. To warmer waters. We're headed towards the tip of South America. I've always wanted to see Argentina.

Cunegonde looks at him lovingly. She knows that they're going to die, but loves Candide for his unbelievable optimism. She holds him tightly -- perhaps as a mother would hold a baby -- as the lights slowly fade to black. Roars of ice shelves breaking up all around them are heard in the black. After a while, it becomes quiet.

CURTAIN