

Painting The Porch
a play on five porches

by

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Act One

In Fifteen Minutes

Characters:

Welcoming Committee Leader

Committee Man One

Committee Man Two

Other Committee Member

Marleena Stalwart

Her Assistant

Sport

Max Crisco

Artist

Balladeer

Chauffeur

A small group of four or five people acting as the "Welcoming Committee" nervously wait on the porch for the arrival of the entourage of "Paint Me Magazine." "Paint Me Magazine" has sponsored a contest for an artist to paint the quintessential Norman Rockwell-like Fourth of July porch scene in a small New England town. The town and the painter were selected by the magazine's publisher Ms. Marleena Stalwart. A boy or girl in a baseball uniform meanders through the crowd selling raffle tickets for their baseball team and as the play starts, they move to the front of the crowd.

Committee Member Man One: (pointing to limo coming up the street)
Look, Look. I think that's them coming now!

Committee Leader: Why of course it is! Nobody I know in Bethel, and I do know EVERYONE, has a limousine.(Notices his tie is crooked, adjusts it...then looks at the rest of the Committee) Oh, my! Robert, couldn't you have at least ironed your trousers. And Sarah, a coffee stain on your blouse! Oh, Good lord, it's peach cobbler. Marleena Stalwart is here and just look at us! Heavens, what will she think? Well, too late to worry now.

Committee Member Man Two: Is it time for the band?

Leader: Yes, yes, start the band! (band starts playing as limo pulls to curb stage right)

(Chauffeur opens the door and Marleena emerges, somewhat tired. Her Assistant gets out of the front door holding a leather notebook)

Her Assistant: We're there, Maam. I mean, we have arrived, Ms.Stalwart, Maam.

Marleena Stalwart: Yes, apparently.(waves wryly to the crowd with a somewhat forced smile and then to Her Assistant as they walk to the porch steps) Where are we again?

Her Assistant: "Bethel, Maam"

Marleena: "Oh? We're still in Connecticut?"

Her Assistant:(looks at Chauffeur who shakes his head "No" and silently mouths "Maine") No, we're in Maine, Maam. Bethel, Maine. And I'm sure they will love you here too.

Marleena: Yes, of course they will. (agreeing then puzzled, wondering what Her Assistant meant).

Band Members:(sing to tune of "Swanee") "Maine, ma'am, how we love ya, how we love ya, our dear old Maine ma'am" (.then abruptly quiet)

Leader: Welcome, welcome Ms.Stalwart and Paint Me Magazine. Welcome to Bethel, Maine's Most Beautiful Mountain Town.

Man One:(leaning forward and correcting her) I think you mean, 'Home of Maine's Most Mountainous Porches'

Marleena: (standing awkwardly, hand extended to Leader, listening to Her Assistant whisper in her ear, showing her something in notebook) Yes, yes, thank you for your very warm

welcome to "Maine's Most Beautiful Porch Town." (applause from Committee). After all, that is the contest and distinction you have been awarded by "Paint Me. Magazine." (Her Assistant gives her the "OK" sign and steps to the side)

Man Two: (nudging Man One) Did she say "Pooch Town?"

Man One: Sounded more like "Poach," you know, like them diner eggs we had the other day?

Man Two: Oh, those were good.

Man One: A little on the runny side....

Leader: (turning to men impatiently) Zip it you two. (to Marleena and crowd) We are honored to be recognized by your magazine and to have one of our most gorgeous porches immortalized by.....(turns to men again)...what's his name? That artist who was famous once? (Men both look at each other, shrug)

Marleena: (Her Assistant whispers in her ear) Oh yes, our artist Max Crisco.(she looks around the porch as if looking for him, Committee looks past her to the limo as if looking for artist) Where is he? (looks at Her Assistant who shrugs then flips open her cell phone and wanders off making call)

Leader: He's not with you?

Marleena: (as if the idea were preposterous) Heavens no!
(Committee Members whisper among themselves)

Her Assistant: (stumbling back up the porch) They say he's left Portland and he should be here by now.

Marleena: (to Her Assistant) Are you sure we're in Maine? (Her Assistant nods reassuringly)

(An artist has emerged from the back of the audience and quietly sets up his art and equipment facing the porch, and begins to paint or sketch the porch.)

Man One: Excuse me, Miss Stalwart, maam, but if we haven't got no famous picture painter... (looks around the crowd, the band, the hoopla and walks past Marleena)... well, I hate to rain on your parade, but I see no reason to be standing here much longer celebrating.

Man Two: I second that.(then starts to walk off porch to join Man One on sidewalk) I got grass to mow and I got an old shed torn down I gotta haul off to the dump.

Man One: Don't say? I'm looking to replace my fish shack, you know the one that fell through the ice down to Christopher (they start off the porch talking)?

Leader: Oh, my! We've lost the President of the Bethel Hill Home Preservation Society and the Honorable Chairman of The Task Force for Betterment and Other Good Things. (to Marleena) Now what?

Marleena: (who has been getting an earful of animated whispers from Her Assistant) Now, now Miss.....?

Leader: O'Frito-Sain. Miss O'Frito-Sain.

Her Assistant: (To the Leader) As in the chip?

Leader: Well, no...more in the French British West Indies for "bon voyage".

Her Assistant: Oh, yes. Miss Stalwart has a home there. The people are so friendly. You wouldn't believe the crowds that come out to see her off!

Marleena: (to Her Assistant) Yes, yes, they do seem to hate to see me go. (turning to crowd) But I promise you all, I am not going anywhere and I don't want anyone to worry. Our artist will be here.....eventually. In the meantime, (she has moved to the sidewalk and directs herself to the crowd. the band is slowly leaving the porch behind her and walking off or loitering around to watch) I would like to make an offer, just to show you all we plan on remaining in your beautiful town for the entire afternoon. (Her Assistant hand her a sheet of paper that collapses down into four or five pages). I have my schedule for the afternoon here, meticulously compiled by my assistant, as usual. My offer is this: Is there anyone here, who for the small sum, let's say, \$25.00, (Her Assistant nods), would like to join me for the afternoon?

Her Assistant: (cell phone rings, Her Assistant answers, and interrupts Marleena) It's important. It's for you.

Marleena: Well, if it's important, who else would it be for? (to the crowd) Excuse me. My assistant will carry on? (Her Assistant

nods, takes schedule as Marleena goes to limo, stands outside talking on cell phone)

Her Assistant: As Ms. Stalwart was saying, she has room for two people in the limo and this afternoon she will be touring the porches in town, stopping briefly at four of them that have been recommended by the Bethel Hill Home Preservation Society. Between stops at these magnificent porches she will make stops at several bistros and stores. Of course, offerings at those stops are included in your small tax deductible donation. Do I have any takers?

(Wait briefly for people to indulge...if no takers, continue without.....if people come forward Her Assistant will escort them and Leader to the limo where they will get in, followed by Marleena. Once in the limo they are let out the opposite side into the street and Her Assistant gets out on the sidewalk)

Marleena: (calling out from rear window as limo starts to pull away) I'll be right back! (limo pulls away then stops and backs up. Marleena gets out and addresses Her Assistant, pointing out person in crowd) Darling? (startles Her Assistant) Ask that child there to be an angel (Her Assistant goes to baseball player)Yes the one in the baseball uniform. Have her wait on the porch for our artist Max Crisco. (Her Assistant leads baseball player to porch) I'll be right back!

Leader:(calling after Marleena) But.....oh my. (to Her Assistant and couple, if any) I know her first stop. Follow me. (they move to the edge of the crowd just beyond where the artist is set up where Her Assistant has stopped the Leader and couple to discuss the schedule which she has unfolded. The Leader unfolds a town map. They talk among themselves as the baseball player, "Sport" looks up and down the street for the artist)

Sport: (noticing the artist off to the side of the porch. She walks across the porch and leans out near where he is set up) Hey? I think I'm waiting for you?

Artist: And I'm waiting for you to get off the porch so I can paint it without people all over it.

Sport: Are you the 'famous artist?'

Artist: Not yet. Give me fifteen minutes.

Max Crisco: (yells from a balcony across the street) Hey Sport! Yeah you with the baseball uniform. Is that uppity woman in the big car gone? (Sport nods yes) Great!

Sport: (yelling back, moves to the edge of the sidewalk) Who are you?

Max: You don't know who *I* am?

Sport: No sir. Should I?

Max: Have you heard of Chestnut Hill Wild Kitchen Blueberry Jamboree Jam?

Sport: Sure! It's, like, in a square jar?

Max: It wasn't always square, Sport. Not until I painted it that way!

Sport: Wow, you did that? You painted some weird cans of soup too didn't you?

Max: Well, not really. I've more or less lived off of weird cans of stuff.

Sport: You must be the famous artist I'm supposed to be waiting for.

Max: (pondering) Yes, I was famous once. (balladeer appears on another balcony and starts to sing a song of lament). And I will be famous again. When I paint the porch for the cover of that dreadful magazine everyone will know me again. (MUSIC - BOB SEGER - FAMOUS FINAL SCENE -1ST STANZA)

Her Assistant: (appearing beside Sport) Are you Max Crisco?

Max: Finally.....some recognition.

Her Assistant: Oh, I've never seen you in my life, I just heard you say you were famous once so I figured you **MUST** be Max Chrisco.

Max: And who are you who should care who I am?

Her Assistant: I work for Marleena Stalwart.

Max: Don't we all.....

Her Assistant: I'm her administrative assistant.

Max: In name only I'm sure.

Her Assistant: I'm supposed to show you the porches we think should be on the cover of Paint Me. Magazine.

Max: Oh?

Her Assistant: That's right, but I have my hands full with other matters at the moment so I am asking this young person here to show you around. (Sport shrugs and nods that that's fine)

Max: Whatever! I'll grab my gear and be right down.

Sport: I'm not going to be seen in public with him looking like that!

Her Assistant: (agreeing) Good point. We can't have our artist meandering around like some vagabond. We do have our image to consider. (looks up to Crisco who's licking his fingers and patting down his hair) Mister Crisco? Would you mind perhaps tidying up a bit before you come down?

Max: Oh, very well. Would a hat do?

Her Assistant: And pants, Mister Crisco. I really think you should wear some pants.

Sport: Definitely. (to Her Assistant) Are all artists nutty like that?

Her Assistant: Only the ones who think they're famous. (starts to walk away) Good luck! We'll see you soon.

(Balladeer reappears and finishes song as Max reappears on the street below)

Max: Ready Sport? How do I look?

Sport: Like you were famous once.

Max: Yes, well....(gestures for Sport to lead on.) Shall we?

(newspaper delivery person, friend of Sport's, appears)

Sport: Hey Sunny! Where you going?

Sunny: Home.

Sport: You done your paper route already?

Sunny: Not really. People have been stopping me all morning buying up all my papers.

Sport: How come?

Sunny: I guess there's something real important in it.

Max: News of my presence here today no doubt. I would imagine it would be rather newsworthy.

Sunny: (to Sport) Who's he?

Sport: It's a long story. (directing Max to follow) C'mon Mr. Crisco. Bye Sunny.

(pick up truck with painter driving comes by and stops beside Sunny)

Painter: Hey kid! Got a paper I can buy?

Sunny: Sorry Mister. All out.

Act Two

Black and White

Characters:

Sherman

Julie

Marleena Stalwart

Her Assistant

Sport

Max Crisco

Artist

Chauffeur

Democratic Party and Republican Party Campaign Workers

Act opens with Sherman entering front porch from house looking around the porch as if expecting to find something. He goes back in the house and comes out again, retracing his steps to make sure he didn't miss something the first time. He's now obviously disturbed.

Sherman: Where's my newspaper? (walks out to the sidewalk and looks up and down the street) Where in heck is my stupid newspaper?

Julie: (from upstairs window or coming out front door. She looks up the street before she snaps in a loud "hushed" tone) Sherman! You be quiet this minute. What are you yelling about?

Sherman: My paper. I can't find my paper.

Julie: Well, it's early, maybe it hasn't come yet.

Sherman: It's one o'clock on a Saturday afternoon how could it NOT have come yet? It'll be tomorrow before I read about yesterday for crying out loud!

Julie: It's the fourth of July weekend, Sherman, maybe our newspaper girl's on vacation. You know, there are still some people who take a vacation.

Sherman: That's ridiculous. I have a subscription!

Julie: Well, I'm sure there's an explanation.

Sherman: (retraces his steps and looks around the porch again) I told her specifically....."leave the paper on the porch." (walks in circles) No Paper!

Julie: Did you look on the back porch?

Sherman: Why would it be on the back porch?

Julie: Because everyone in Maine but you uses the backdoor?

Sherman: Nonsense! And besides, I thought I'd make it easy on the kid if they left it on the front porch.

Julie: Did you tell them "front porch?"

Sherman: I don't know Julie. I mean, it's simple. It's black and white: kid comes down the street, here's the porch, not ten steps from the street, bingo. Simple.(steps in house) I open the door, and there it's...NOT! Where's my paper!

Julie: Sherman...hush up. Look on the back porch. Who knows, it might be there. And what's so important that today, of all days, you're so wound up about your paper?

Sherman: What's so important? I'll tell you what's so important. There's supposed to be an announcement about the porches.

Julie: Announcement?

Sherman: Yes, about which porch will be picked as Bethel's most beautiful porch and be painted by that guy who painted, what was it?

Julie: A jar of square blueberries?

Sherman: Yeah, something like that. (mills about some more)

Julie: (calling from above back porch) Did you look on the back porch? (she disappears)

Sherman: No..... But I will. (goes in house, reappears coming out back door onto back porch. He looks around a little bit) I don't see it anywhere.(goes in door he came out)

Julie: (coming out another door or calling from another window) Did you find it? (goes back in the house)

Sherman: (reappearing through another door) What did you say? (goes back in house)

Julie: (calling from front porch) Sherman? (goes in house)

Sherman: (calling out from window above back porch) Julie? (closes window)

Julie: (reappearing on back porch) Sherman? Sherman? (frustrated) Where are you? (goes back in the house)

Sherman: (calling from front porch) I'm on the porch.

Julie: (from upstairs window above back porch) Is it there?

Sherman: It wasn't here five minutes ago why would it be here now?

Julie: Where are you?

Sherman: On the porch.

Julie: Which one?

Sherman: The front porch.

Julie: Did you check the back porch yet? (closes the window)

Sherman: Yes I said.

Julie: (at upstairs window above front porch) Where was it?

Sherman: What?

Julie: The paper on the porch. Where was it?

Sherman: Julie? Julie I'm on the porch and **I don't** have the newspaper. I looked.....(Julie interrupts)

Julie: I'll be right down. I'll meet you on the porch.

Sherman: Okay! (goes in house, reappears on the back porch. Not seeing Julie, goes in door he came out.)

Julie: (comes out different door on back porch) Sherman? (goes back in house)

Sherman: (comes out different door on back porch) Julie? (to audience) It's bad enough I can't find my paper, now I can't find my wife?(starts to go in house, but has an idea. Closes door and stands on the porch listening, waiting for Julie to appear somewhere)

Julie: (appearing on the back porch) There you are! (happily) Find it?

Sherman: No I didn't find it.

Julie: (looking out over the yard, the sky) Well, it's been pretty windy lately, maybe it blew away.

Sherman: (slowly) If they had left it on the FRONT porch that wouldn't have happened.

Julie: How so?

Sherman: The wind never blows on the front porch.

Julie: That's ridiculous!

Sherman: It's true.

Julie: Prove it.

Sherman: When you sit on the front porch.....

Julie: Which is just about never.

Sherman: Well, that alone proves you wouldn't know the wind doesn't blow on the front porch.

Julie: You're silly. It proves I'm like most people in Maine who never, ever use the front door.

Sherman: So, then you wouldn't know.

Julie: Okay, genius. Let me ask you this.

Sherman: Shoot.

Julie: Why did you take the wind chimes down?

Sherman: Because they were waking me up in the morning.

Julie: There you have it (satisfied she has proved her point).

Sherman: So now the squirrels don't have the wind chimes to jump from to get to the bird feeder.

Julie: You're impossible.

Sherman: No, I'm mad. I want my paper.

Julie: Well, just for a minute, and I know for you that's a lifetime, let's pretend the wind was blowing on the BACK porch this morning.

Sherman: Yeah? So?

Julie: Now, and we're still pretending because I know if this was real it might be a little hard for you to take.....now, pretend the paper was left right about here. (points to spot on back porch)

Sherman: Yeah? And then?

Julie: (she spins like the wind is blowing her around) A big gust of wind suddenly comes, lifts your precious newspaper, (she twirls off the porch), opening it to the sport section and, seeing another Red Sox loss, (standing in the driveway) blows it to smithereens!

Sherman: Nope.

Julie: What do you mean 'nope?'

Sherman: (leaving porch to the driveway) That wouldn't be a gust of wind, that would be a minor tornado because the paper is always delivered rolled up in an elastic band.

Julie: I did not know that.

Sherman: Yeah, well.....(ponders a moment) but it does present another possibility.

Julie: I hope it's possible that you'll somehow make it through the day without the news.

Sherman: Without knowing if OUR porch was picked for the magazine cover? What. You'd want them to show up here unannounced? Not even a chance to tidy up a bit?

Julie: (looking a little concerned for a minute) No, I don't think I'd like that much.

Sherman: Okay, then. Now listen to this. What if they threw the paper and missed the front porch?

Julie: And it landed in the driveway and Mark Bennett's dog ran over, grabbed it, and chewed it to shreds?

Sherman: (walking slowly up the driveway toward the street, looking in the bushes as he goes) Or....they threw it in the bushes (bedding into the underbrush).

Julie: Or Poison Ivy.

Sherman: (jumps back) Oh, no!

Julie: Kidding.

Sherman: I didn't see it anyway. (they're both walking toward the street) This is frustrating.

Julie: Well, if our porch is going to be painted by the once famous artist, we'll be the last to know.

Sherman: (resigned) You're right about that. (returns to being upset again about not having his paper) If we make the cover of that magazine, great, who cares. That's not the point. What's it take to get a newspaper delivered in this town? An act of Congress?

(campaign cars from Democratic and Republican parties converge at end of driveway and campaign workers run up holding a newspaper)

Campaign Workers: Does someone here need a paper? How about health care? Tax relief? A job? A porch painted?

Act Three

So The Porch Can Be Painted

Characters:

Anna (Mom/Grandma)

Caroline (daughter)

Sarah (granddaughter)

Painter #1

Max Crisco

Sport

Porch Painter

Porch Artist

Act Three is located on a porch that faces a home with a porch across the street. At the other porch, a house painter is going through the motions of setting up to paint the porch. Off to the side of the porch, and somewhat facing the Act Three porch, an artist is set up, seemingly painting both porches)

Max: (appearing from behind the artist with Sport) Well, well, looky here. Another publicity - starved artist trying to get into my act. And look, she's not just painting this porch, she's trying to capture the one across the street as well. Well, we shall see about that! C'mon sport!

Caroline: (Sarah comes out the front door onto the porch. She is visibly upset) Sarah!

Sarah: Mom! (Stopping at the porch rail) What am I supposed to say? What am I supposed to think?

Caroline: Honey (trying to calm her daughter down), you've got to understand...

Sarah: (interrupting) I do understand. I understand I don't understand!

Caroline: (sitting on bench) Sit, honey. C'mon sit here beside me.

Sarah:(sits down) Is she going crazy Mom?

Caroline: She's getting older honey. Sometimes when people get older they may say things without thinking.

Sarah: You mean, they say things that don't make any sense.

Caroline: That too. You just have to be patient.

Sarah: Is that what you do?

Caroline: No, Sarah, I do what you do when I try to talk to you.

Sarah: What's that?

Caroline: I pretend I understand.

Sarah: Oh yeah.(Pause) So I just should act like nothing's wrong when she says something like: "I'm going to get my porch painted so I can have my porch painted"?

Caroline: Like it makes all the sense in the world.

Anna: (coming from house) There you two are. Good. You can wait out here for me while I do some work in the house.

Sarah: Wait for what Gramma?

Anna: Why, the painters, my dear child. The painters. In the ad I specifically said today.

Sarah: (looking at Caroline) Here she goes again.

Anna: Again, child? This porch hasn't been painted in years. In fact, the last time it was painted, I painted it. It was 1986. I remember because it was exactly ten years to the day from when I had painted it before that. For the country's bicentennial.

Sarah: That's not exactly what I meant. I.....

Caroline: (interrupting) Sarah? Sarah why don't you make us all some lemonade.

Sarah: (to Caroline) You mean "get lost".

Caroline: (artificially polite) Okay. (Sarah exits)

Anna: (pauses, looking after Sarah) Is she alright dear?

Caroline: Yeah, she's fine.

Anna: She seems troubled.

Caroline: Well, honestly Mama, she's having trouble understanding you.

Anna: Me?

Caroline: Yes, and I must admit, I'm not sure I understand you half the time these days.

Anna: How so dear?

Caroline: (looks around the porch) Well..... I guess this porch thing has me a little confused.

Anna: There's nothing confusing about getting a porch painted.

Caroline: So it can be painted.

Anna: Just look at it. (walks about, gesturing) Don't you think it would look better painted?

Caroline: I suppose.

Anna: How else can it be painted if it isn't painted?

Caroline: (beginning to show a little frustration) Of course it needs to be painted, I agree.

Anna: (happy there's agreement) Then it can be painted (states emphatically).

Caroline: Mama! (standing up) That doesn't make any sense!

Anna: What dear?

Caroline: You saying you want to have your porch painted....

Anna: (nodding her head as she listens to her daughter, then interrupts) so I can have the porch painted. Right!

Caroline: (sits down, somewhat defeated) I don't get it.

Anna: I thought you knew exactly what I want to do.

Caroline: I don't. I'm pretending I do but I don't.

Anna: Come here dear. (Anna stands at the top step of porch. Caroline joins her) Look (she points across the street to the house where a house painter is painting the porch and an artist is set up off to the side) That's what I mean. (turns and goes in the house as Sarah returns with tray of lemonade and a newspaper, Anna taking a lemonade on her way by).

Sarah: (standing outside front door, Caroline takes a lemonade) SO? What did you say?

Caroline: She's losing it.(shaking her head)

Sarah: I told you so.(sitting down)

Caroline: I hate to admit it, but she's losing it.(looking across the street at the painter and artist as though she's trying to figure out what she's looking at)

Sarah: You're not the only one who's going to come to that conclusion. (unfolding newspaper)

Caroline: What do you mean?

Sarah: After everyone in town sees this ad in the paper they'll think we're all nuts!

Caroline: (taking paper from Sarah, and reads aloud) "Painters wanted to paint my porch and paint my porch. Apply only at _____ Main St., Bethel at 2:15 PM Saturday July the third. See Anna" (looks at watch) Oh my, that's right about now.

Sarah: What do we do?

Caroline: If anyone comes, try to keep them away from your Grandmother. I'm going in to check on her. You keep watch in case someone comes (exits into house).

Sarah: (seated on bench) Please, please no one come. (looks up and there's a man with house painting equipment and a newspaper under his arm)

Painter: I'm here about the job.

Sarah: Which one?

Painter: The one in the paper.

Sarah: Yes, well...(pausing....looking across the state)...she's looking for someone who can, well, (points across the state), do that?

Painter: (looks across the street) Okay. Thanks. (turns and leaves)

Anna: (coming from house) Sarah? Did I just hear voices?

Sarah: It was someone looking for (pauses).....directions.

Anna: (disappointed) I was hoping I'd get some response from my ad in the paper. With so many people out of work, I would think there would be painters galore. You always hear those starving painter stories afterall.

Caroline: (sticking head out the door) Sarah! Could you come in here a minute?

Sarah: (looking at Anna, questioning with expression if she should be left alone) Okay. (goes in house)

Painter: (returning with sketch pad or canvas, tubes of artist paints sticking out of pockets, and handful of artist brushes) Excuse me Maam? I'm here about the job.

Anna: Oh, yes. (sees that he is carrying art supplies) But I am not quite ready for you yet.

Painter: But I thought.....(or "What do you mean?")

Anna: (interrupting) Look across the street.

Painter: (hesitating) Yaaaahhhh? And so.....?

Anna: I need to have my porch painted first.

Painter: I don't get it.

Anna: Well maybe you can come back after I get my porch painted?

Painter: I don't know about that. (walks away confused, shaking head)

Anna: I can't be putting the cart in front of the horse. I would think he could see that afterall. (gestures across the street)

Max Crisco: (approaches with his gear) Pardon me Maam? But are you the owner of this beautiful home?

Anna: Yes, yes I am. Can I help you?

Max Crisco: I have come to paint your porch.

Anna: Have you ever painted a porch?

Max: No, I can't say that I have. This will be my first.

Anna: I'm sorry. I really need someone with experience. Afterall it's got to look just so if it's going to be painted.

Sarah: (having come out behind Anna) She wants it to be "Home and Garden" gorgeous, you know?

Max: 'Home and Garden'?

Sarah: You know, the magazine?

Max: (looks at Sport) They had a contest too?

Anna: (to Sarah) No, dear, it just won't look as nice if isn't painted so it can be painted.

Max: (Tips his hat to Sarah) Well, I.....

Artist from Across the Street: (coming forward onto the porch with a canvas) Excuse me, but I couldn't help but over hear. (to Anna) I think I know what you want.

Anna: You do?

Artist: (showing Anna the canvas) Is this what you had in mind?

Anna: (taking canvas and turning it for the audience to see that it is the painting of a sign that reads: "Porches By Lois - Painting & Paintings - Free Estimates - call 555-5555") Perfect!

Act Four

With A Little Help

Characters:

Caretaker Will

Sport

Max Crisco

Artist

Baseball Player/Coach

Baseball Team

Act opens with Caretaker Will walking onto the porch with a small stepladder and tool belt. He exits the porch and returns with a gallon of paint and a paint brush. He puts the paint down and looks around the porch as if trying to decide where to start. He reaches in his pocket and retrieves a note.

Will: (reading from the list) "Replace lightbulb." Yeah, that needs doing. I should probably replace the wiring too. These old houses (shakes his head). "Touch up railing." Touch up? I think maybe a good scrubbing is all that needs. "Remove bird's Nest." Well, we'll see about that.(folds list back into pocket) Okay, that's a good place to start. (surveys his gear)

(Max and Sport appear and Max looks around the lawn and sidewalk in front of the porch. Seems satisfied. Sport has gone around the house, following a "wraparound" porch)

Max: Great! A porch to paint! And what a lovely porch this will be.(pauses) When I'm done with it!

Sport: Think again Mr. Crisco. There's someone around the side of the house. I think they're painting the porch.

Max: This can't be! (he leaves Sport standing on the sidewalk to investigate) I've got to see this. My time in this town is growing short and this is the perfect porch to paint. No, no....this should be my porch.

Sport: (noticing Will on the porch setting up his stepladder. Puts her donation box to her hear and shakes it. It sounds like two coins rattling. She looks at Will again and approaches the porch) Hey Mister?

Will: (stepping to the edge of the porch) Yes? Can I help you?

Sport: (storms up the steps so she is standing right beside him, and sticks the container in his face) Wanna donate to my baseball team?

Will: (takes a few steps back) Well, I don't know.....

Sport: (pleading) It's for good cause, and besides, whoever gets the most money wins a prize.

Will: A prize huh?(picks a lightbulb out of a canvas bag of stuff. Shakes it to see if it's burnt out)

Sport: Yeah. Whoever raises the most money wins an autographed painting of Josh Beckett.

Will: Who?

Sport: Josh Beckett, just the best Red Sox pitcher ever.

Will: Well, I suppose that may be a matter of opinion.

Sport: Doesn't matter anyway. I just want to win it so I can sell it on ebay.

Will: What about the team?

Sport: What do you mean? (doesn't understand)

Will: You know, your team. They might want to, well, donate it to the library, or hang it someplace where everyone can enjoy it. I mean we all take a little bit of pride in our World Championship Red Sox.

Sport: But I'm the one who's selling the most tickets!

Will: (reaches for the container and shakes it) Sounds to me like you have alot of work to do kiddo.

Sport: (snatching it back) I'm not worried. Everyone will buy a ticket from me.

Will: How's that?

Sport: (bragging) I'm the most valuable player.

Will: Oh yeah?

Sport: Three years in a row. I'm the pitcher. We never lose when I'm pitching.

Will:(starts up the ladder) So you got a good team behind you.

Sport: I don't need a good team behind me. I got more no hitters than anybody.

Will: Hey, could you pass me that lightbulb over there? (Sport hands him the lightbulb) Thank you.

Sport: So, you gonna buy a ticket? How 'bout ten?

Max:(yelling at the artist who's painting the porch) No, no no! You need shadow, not more color! When I painted my famous "Square Jar of Blueberry Jam" I didn't add more blueberries! No! I added non-blueberries. The essence of blueberriness. I gave them shadow. Tiny, tiny blueberry shadows! Surely you must remember my trademark style!

Will: (has been screwing and unscrewing lightbulb with Sport looking on. He makes a motion over his shoulder to refer to Max.) What's up with him?

Sport: (she looks in the direction of Max) He was famous once. He's the artist the big magazine brought here to paint the best porch in town.

Will: Oh.....(looking past Sport as if for something he needs) Hand me that other lightbulb would you please? (Sport hand him the lightbulb) Thank you. (screws the lightbulb in and starts down the ladder) Famous once, huh?

Sport: Yep, that's what they say. I'm gonna be famous someday too.

Will: So you can be famous once?

Sport: (not understanding) What?

Will: (going through his tools) So you can have your moment of fame and, well, eventual loneliness? Like him?

Artist: (to Max) Would you please go away. I'm trying to work here.

Sport: What are you talking about?

Will:(folding the stepladder) Grab my tool belt will you please? That artist fella? I don't imagine he has many friends.

Sport: (looking for Max) What's he need friends for? He's an artist.

Will: Everyone needs a friend.

Sport: I don't. People get in the way.

Will: What do you mean by that? (standing at railing looking at baluster) Could you hand me that tape measure. Thanks.

Sport: Cause they'll always tell you what to do. Like when I know I should throw a fast ball inside and the stupid catcher wants me to throw something else.

Will: Maybe they're just asking you to do something that would help the team.

Sport: Maybe they don't know what I know!

Will: Your not much of a team player are you? Here, put my tape back in the belt would you please?

Sport: Do you want to buy some tickets? It would really help me out you know.

Will: Well, I've got alot of work to do. You see, the people who own this house are busy folk. They're doing things that will help alot of people so I told 'em I'd pitch in where I can.

Sport: So? Does that mean you don't have any money?

Will: It means I feel like I'm a part of a team, that I'm part of a bigger picture, and I've got my job to do. Now, if you're

still here when I'm done fixing the railing, replacing a couple of treads in the steps, securing some of those loose floorboards, scraping that peeling paint, well maybe we can talk.

Sport: How long's all that gonna take?

Will: Well, seeings how I'm doing this by myself, it may be a while.

Sport: Maybe I can help and you can get done sooner.

Will: Sure.(smiles) That would be great.

(pickup truck of baseball players comes down the street and stops in front of the house. some kids or the coach walks up on the porch)

Player/Coach: Hi Will.(sees Sport) Hi there Sport. (Sport gives a weak wave and moves off to the background alittle)

Will: Hi Coach. Good to see ya (shaker hands)

Player/Coach: I'm here for those bottles for our fundraiser?

Will: You bet.

Player/Coach: I'm sure Sport's already filled you in on why we need to raise the money. The town won't be giving us much in the future, the field needs repair, kids need uniforms. It all adds up.

Will: It sure does. (puts his tool down) I'll be right back.

(Will exits off porch leaving Coach and Sport awkwardly standing there in silence. He returns with a huge bag of bottles and cans)

Will: Here you go Coach.

Sport: (looking at bag of cans) Wow, there's got to be fifty dollars worth of cans in that bag.

Player/Coach: Maybe more. I figure this ought to put us over the top. Thanks Will.

Sport: You mean win the prize?

Player/Coach: I suppose if you think of a few truck loads of Dick Douglas's best loam as a prize, yup, I think we got it covered.

Sport: What about the autographed painting of Josh Beckett? Who'll get that?

Player/Coach: I don't know Sport. I imagine the school or the Community Center.

Will: That's just great Coach. I'm sure the _____ will be happy to know they could be of some help.

Player/Coach: Thanks again, Will. (turning to Sport) You coming? The team's been looking for you.

Sport: (looks at Will who gestures with his head to go with Coach) I, uh, what about the artist guy?

Will: He'll be fine. Why don't you go along and join your team.

Sport: (shakes Will's hand) Thanks mister.

Will: For what?

Sport: For all your help. (exit with Coach)

Max: (appearing from behind) Hello? Hello, hello?

Will: (turns to meet Max) Hello. What can I do for you?

Max: Besides telling that trespasser with no sense of composition to vamoose? Not much I guess. Wear's my helper?

Will: Is that what she was?

Max: Why yes, she was helping me find a porch to paint.

Will: And you found this one?

Max: Along with everyone else who wants to be on the cover of a magazine.

Will: Pardon?

Max: Oh, I don't know, seems like this town has become obsessed with itself since Paint Me. Magazine selected it for its cover.

Will: A town doesn't need a picture of itself on the cover of a magazine to take pride in itself.

Max: Whatever (looking about). Well, if my helper's gone, perhaps you could direct me to the town's most beautiful porch.

Will: I'm not sure I'd be of much help. I kinda like 'em all.

(points in the direction of the Common where a festival is taking place) Maybe someone over there can help you out.

Max: I rather doubt it, but the good light is fading and I don't have any choice. I need to find a porch that hasn't been painted before or my future's history. (walks off porch, picks up his gear and starts to cross the street)

Act Five

Anywhere

Characters:

Max Crisco

Marleena Stalwart

Her Assistant

Sport

Balladeer

Act opens with Balladeer appearing from Port-A-Potty, tucking in his shirt and struggling with his guitar as he makes his way through the audience to the stage where Max is sitting on the steps of the town square gazebo.

Balladeer: (seeing Max) Hey, you're still here?

Max: Where else would I be?

Balladeer: (picks up guitar) You're famous. You could be anywhere.

Max: There was a time that may have been true. I'm afraid those days are gone. Long gone.

Balladeer: That reminds me of a song.

Max:(standing) I'm not surprised.

Balladeer: (plays song) What do you think?

Max: Reminds me of my life.

Balladeer: Hey! That reminds me of another song.

Max: Please, please....I'm sure everything reminds you of a song.

Balladeer: Surely, as you travel around you must be reminded of a scene, a picture, a painting.....

Max: A porch. A porch unpainted? An opportunity lost? (Balladeer shakes his head like Max "doesn't get it" and exits to rear of the gazebo) Oh yes, how can I not be reminded that all of a sudden my plans for the future are poof, gone! Why?

Sport: (running up through the crowd with friend) Hi, Mr. Crisco. Did you find your porch to paint?

Max: I'm afraid not Sport. I guess I'll be heading back to the city. Just as well, really. I have more demanding work I must get back to.

Sport: (disbelieving) Yeah right. Like what?

Max: I've had this concept in mind, rather ingenious I believe. What do you think of this idea. A huge canvas of a gigantic sandwich, you know with ham, cheese, tomatoes, green peppers, and onions, spilling out from between to slices of bread.

Sport: So?

Max: BUT the bread isn't square!

Sport: So?

Max: I'll paint the bread round. And I'll paint on the side of it "Torpedo".

Sport: Sorry, Mr. Crisco, it's already been done and it's called a "sub".

Max: Impossible!

Sport: (takes sub sandwich from backpack) Would it look like this?

Max: (defeated) Exactly! Who made that?

Sport: Who doesn't...Sunday River Brewing Company, Bethel's Best, Homeslice, Pat's Pizza, the Suds, the milltavern, Good Food Store....

Max: Good lord. It has been done before!

Sport: That's right.

Max: (resigned to another idea) Well, that's not the BIG work, the really big work I have to get back to.

Sport: Oh yeah?

Max: Oh yes indeed. I have a sculpture in mind that will be absolutely phenomenal. Something that has never been seen before. Imagine this. Boxes, alot of boxes. And each side of each box is painted a different color.

Sport: Like a big Rubik's cube?

Max: A whobits what?

Sport: Like this? (pulls Rubik's Cube from pack).

Max: Let me see that? (examines cube) I would've painted it different colors. What else is in that bag of yours?

Sport: Just this snowman.(Committee Man One has joined Sport)

Max: I've done that. That's nothing new. Anyone can make a snowman.

Committee Man One: Not one over a hundred and twenty feet high I bet.

Max: That's nuts! I know alot of artists, but none crazy enough to attempt something like that! Who would do that?

Will: (appearing from the crowd) How about a town?

Max: A town? What do you mean?

Committee Man Two: (stepping forward and sweeping his arms in a wide gesture to include the whole common) All of us.

Marleena: (marching up to Max with Her Assistant at her heels) There you are!

Committee Leader: (followed by exhausted Committee women) And there you are, Ms. Marleena Stawart, **Maam**.

Marleena: (to Her Assistant) Who's she?

Her Assistant: Miss O'Frito Sain.

Marleena: As in the chip?

Leader: As in bon voyage, goodbye, so long, Miss Stalwart, maam!

Marleena: (to Her Assistant) I thought she looked familiar. She seems, well larger.

Her Assistant: I'm not surprised. She's been in your rear view mirror all afternoon.

Leader:(original Welcoming Commitee members gather around Leader) We have decided, on behalf and for the sake of our beautiful town, to UNWELCOME you Miss Stalwart.....

All Committee Members: Maam!

Marleena: (shocked) What!

Leader: (continuing an impromptu rant).....We do not wish to be on the cover of your silly magazine.

All Committee Members: Yeah.

Leader: We don't need to see ourselves in a magazine to know who we are!

All Committee Members: That's right!

Marleena: (to Her Assistant) Can she do that?

Her Assistant: Don't ask me.(dropping satchel at Marleena's feet) I quit!

Max: (to Her Assistant) Well said, Miss?

Her Assistant: Juliet. (making sure Marleena hears) My name is Juliet, not Missy!

Max: Lovely. (to Marleena) And I too think it's time to part company Marleena.

All: Maam!

Max: Maam, spam! I've had enough of this pretentious dribble. I'm not going to paint your porch Marleena.

Marleena: You're not? Why not?

Max: Because. It has already been painted.

Marleena: What do you mean?

Max: While you were busying yourself with yourself and all your little selfishness things, I was actually visiting the most wonderful homes you could imagine. And each one of these magnificent homes was being captured by a local artist. Not for the cover of a magazine, but for a spot on a neighbor's wall no doubt.

Balladeer: That's right. Yup, I got me a Jewel Clark in my kitchen!

All: Yeah, I've got a.....

Max: You see Marleena. It's not all about you. Hell, it isn't all about me either.

Marleena: But who's going to paint my porch.

Max: Well, you might find someone around here who will do it. But I doubt it. (Points to house in distance where an empty easel is set up in memory of local artist Helen Morton) Look over there. And the house beside it.

Marleena: I see an empty easel, so?

Max: That's because it's already been painted.

Marleena: By who? I must get their name, their work.

Max: They were painted by Helen Morton. From what I've learned today, there are precious few places in this town Helen didn't paint.

Marleena: I don't believe it.

Leader: Believe it.

Marleena: But what about my cover? My magazine? (appeals to crowd) Is there anyone who will paint my porch for Paint Me.?

(if someone in crowd steps forward....Committee and Cast jeer and heckle "They must be from Ct., Ca., San Juan,so on....")

Oh dear.....this is just the worst. (to Chauffeur) Get me out of here. Now!

All: **"Auf wiedersehen"** (Marleena and Chauffeur go to limo and drive off)

Max: Well, I guess I better leave to. What about you Miss Juliet?

Juliet:

Max: That sounds nice. Good luck. Well all...(starts to depart)...

Committee Man One: Why don't you stick around Mr. Crisco.

Max: I must get back work.

Grandmother: Sounds like your work is looking for work.

Granddaughter: Don't mind her....she always says stuff like that.

Mother: You can find work in our town I'm sure.

Max: Well, I don't know.....I mean, right now, I guess I could be anywhere.

Juliet: But you're in Bethel, Maine. Anywhere never looked so good.

Committee Man Two: That's right. And I'll tell you what. I just started building me a new fishing shack.

Max: You need a painter?

Committee Man Two: (as they exit, Sport joins them) I think I do Mr. Crisco, let's go over to the Bethel Inn and discuss your future shall we?

Max: Lead on Sport

Sport: My name is Gabby. You can call me Gabby.

