

THREE short men

A play that reaches great heights

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

Irene/Wanda, a tall woman and her birth mother  
Jerry, a short man, loves Irene  
Harry, her short father  
Julio, a short fantasy man  
Brad/Chad/Clifford/Phil, tallish men played by one actor  
Robert/Roberta, Irene's transgender friend, also short  
Marjorie, Irene's adoptive mother, not so tall, also plays Mrs.  
Sparrow

## SETTING

Various including a shoe store, elementary school, an ocean liner,  
and the island of Borneo. Also video projections of locations.

## TIME

Moves all over the place

PROLOGUE

(Irene and a slide show. )

IRENE

(to audience)

That's me in the back row center... in the first grade, back row at six. You can't really tell me from the boys, a gift from my mother. We called it a pixie haircut, meaning a haircut you might find on a boy elf. By the way, all of this takes place before cell phones took over the world, so if you begin to wonder when the cell phone is going to go off and spin the story in some new direction, you're on the wrong track. And besides that cell phones are ruining plays and films, not just because they go off in the audience-

(She clicks.)

IRENE

(to audience)

-that's me on the playground being chased by Jerry, Freddie and Buddy-but because cell phones just make everything too easy. You should have to work to tell a story. This is hard labor you're looking at.

(Click. )

IRENE

(to audience)

That's me with Mom and Dad. I'm the tall one.

(She clicks again. Now she is thirteen dressed for a dance. At her side is Jerry.)

IRENE

(to audience)

In middle school the tall boys all wanted the short girls, the short boys wanted whoever was left over. That's me and Jerry. Here we are dancing.

(She clicks again. Jerry has his head between Irene's burgeoning bosom.)

IRENE

You get the idea. The worst part is that I have a thing for shoes. Really sexy high heeled shoes which I, of course, can't wear.

(She turns off the projector.)

I'll kind of slip in and out of the play from now on. Remember, I'm here for you. I'm not working anything out. I've already done that. It's you who need to work it out. Being a tall girl can be hell if you're not a model or a basketball player, but it's not the end of the world. There is life after - okay here's what you paid money to hear- there can be happiness when you are six inches taller than every boy who's ever tried to slide his hand up your whatchit. Oh and by the way, I'm still a virgin at twenty-six.

SCENE 1

(Irene tries on shoes at a shoe store.)

IRENE

Hm, maybe something... a little... I don't know.

JULIO

That shoe is for a duck. You have pretty feet. Try this one.

IRENE

What about the heel?

JULIO

It comes in two inches-

IRENE

Two inches?

JULIO

Or three.

IRENE

I'd like to try this one.

3. THREE SHORT MEN

JULIO

This one? This one is for the nun in a convent. No man is going to make love to the girl in those shoes.

IRENE

Then why are you selling them?

JULIO

For when the nuns come in.

IRENE

Look, I've got a date with a man who is five foot eight and I don't want to tower over him any more than I-

JULIO

Let me show you something. Here, try these on.

IRENE

No way.

JULIO

Just try them on.

IRENE

I'm not going to buy them.

JULIO

Allow me.

(She puts them on and stumbles around.)

JULIO

Yes I knew it. Walk over there.

IRENE

Oops.

JULIO

You can do this.

IRENE

They feel...

JULIO  
What do they feel?

IRENE  
Wow!

JULIO  
Look in the mirror.

IRENE  
Oh wow!

JULIO  
Orgasmic, si?

IRENE  
(to audience)  
Okay, I'm going to step out here for a moment. Julio, his name is Julio. Julio is about to lock the store and take off my clothes. Except for the shoes.

SCENE 2

(Irene and Clifford at a restaurant.)

CLIFFORD  
How's the duck?

IRENE  
Hm? Oh very good. Thank you.

CLIFFORD  
You okay?

IRENE  
Hm? Oh yes, just feeling the wine.

CLIFFORD  
You haven't touched it.

IRENE  
The fumes are really intoxicating.

CLIFFORD

Do you usually have sex on the first date?

IRENE

Excuse me?

CLIFFORD

Just trying to plan ahead.

IRENE

(to audience)

Now, this really happened.

IRENE

Do you always ask this question?

CLIFFORD

Matter of fact...

IRENE

And have you ever had a second date?

CLIFFORD

Just thought with those shoes...

IRENE

Check!

CLIFFORD

What, you paying?

IRENE

(to audience)

Okay, if you're wondering what my point is here, I did after all get on the floor with Julio next to the sale items.

JULIO

She has the pretty feet!

IRENE

(to audience)

But he's not real, Julio. It's just that whenever I try on shoes, I also fantasize.

SCENE 3

IRENE

Mom, can I ask you a question?

MARJORIE

Shoot.

IRENE

Why did you marry Dad?

MARJORIE

God help me, I don't know.

IRENE

I mean how did you know? Was it his looks, chemistry...

MARJORIE

Well, it wasn't his looks.

IRENE

(to audience)

My father's five foot three.

MARJORIE

And as for chemistry...

IRENE

(to audience)

And my mother's five foot four.

MARJORIE

I don't know, it was a long time ago.

IRENE

Did you ever wish you had married someone...

MARJORIE

What?

IRENE

Taller?



MARJORIE

Are you crazy? Look at you! A taller man and you'd be in the Guinness Book of World Records.

IRENE

I'm not that tall.

MARJORIE

You're a giant! No, I nipped it in the bud. You want to know why I married your father? I did it for you. The day you hit five six we draped the windows in black. A tall girl is not marketable. Maybe if her father is rich or she's a model but even then, what happiness can there be. All that dieting! You think it's easy to be beautiful? Better to keep your head low and hope for the best- and straighten up, you're slouching!

IRENE

I'm keeping my head low.

MARJORIE

Yes well, what about the date last night with Clifford?

IRENE

Right, Clifford.

MARJORIE

He's tallish.

IRENE

He propositioned me at dinner.

MARJORIE

A marriage proposal?

IRENE

He wanted me to sleep with him.

MARJORIE

And what did you say?

IRENE

What do you mean, what did I say? I said no. I don't even know him.

MARJORIE

But he's what, five foot eight?

IRENE

I don't sleep with a man on the first date. Certainly not when I haven't even digested my duck.

MARJORIE

You're twenty-six.

IRENE

(to audience)

Okay, tall and not beautiful and twenty-six. What is it about that dreadful age? I mean women don't get married until their thirties nowadays except that, and I think I can speak for all of us here, we secretly want to. Somewhere some genius feminist journalist announced that we were choosing not to get married and we fell for it. Well, this is a day of liberation, girls. I'm here to tell you it's okay to feel like you've totally missed the boat. We're here, we're tall and someone is going to want us for the petite sunny charming little minx that we feel like inside. I can express my inner minx. I just don't want to express it with a man who is under five foot eight. Six foot two would be ideal. Then I could wear the goddamned high heels that I want.

SCENE 4

(Another slide show.)

IRENE

(to audience)

Here's the cast of my high school production of Romeo and Juliet. No, I wasn't Juliet, although I was almost Romeo. Pierre LaChance came down with chicken pox and I had been his understudy. I swear to god. Fortunately, he wasn't contagious, so by the time we opened so he went on anyway. Of course, the hot lights melted his makeup so by the end of the play Pierre looked like he had contracted the Black Plague, adding an air of eerie authenticity to an otherwise pedestrian production.

(MORE)

IRENE (cont'd)

But there I am, sword in hand, crown on head, yes, I'm the Prince who gets the corpse as a bride at the end of the play. Even dead, Juliet had better luck than I did.

(Roberta emerges from the picture.  
She points to a shelf.)

ROBERTA

Hand me that. It's a little high up.

IRENE

Your welcome.

ROBERTA

Thank you. You trying out for the next play?

IRENE

Godspell? I don't think so.

ROBERTA

Oh. I'm trying out for Mary Magdelene.

IRENE

Of course you are.

ROBERTA

You could try out for Jesus.

IRENE

My voice is too low.

IRENE

(to audience)

Roberta was the central little minx I was trying to channel.

IRENE

Can I ask you something?

ROBERTA

Sure.

IRENE

How did you get to be so short?

ROBERTA

Excuse me?

IRENE

I mean there's short and there's short. You're like this little bundle of minxiness.

ROBERTA

Are you coming on to me?

IRENE

Excuse me?

ROBERTA

Because I think you're really hot.

IRENE

(to audience)

Holy crap, Roberta was a lesbian.

IRENE

No, I really just want to- You really think I'm hot?

ROBERTA

White hot smoking.

IRENE

This is not what people usually say to me.

ROBERTA

Then you're talking to the wrong people.

IRENE

I've got to think about this. Wait a minute, wait a minute, do you think I'm a lesbian?

ROBERTA

Who's a lesbian? I just think you're hot.

IRENE

Look, I don't think you're hot and you're actually hot.

ROBERTA

So what are you saying?

IRENE

I'm saying that you are probably playing for the other team.

ROBERTA

I've made out with three boys including Chad.

IRENE

(to audience)

Chad. Chad. Even now that name just brings goose bumps to my goose bumps. He was the quarterback and the math champion... Oh, we were all crazy about him and of course he wanted Roberta.

ROBERTA

(to audience)

Robert, as I would come to be known one day.

IRENE

(to Roberta)

Hey, this is my story.

Chad enters.

IRENE

Hi Chad.

CHAD

Hi, Irene. Oh hi, Roberta. Great job in the play, by the way.

(He points to a shelf.)

Can you hand me that? It's a little high up.

IRENE

Thanks.

CHAD

Oh, were you in it too?

IRENE

I was the guy that got the corpse.

CHAD

Oh yeah, great ending. So Roberta, I was wondering if maybe you'd care to... I mean, if no one has already asked you...

IRENE

(to audience)

Oh god, he's going to ask her to the prom.

ROBERTA

Only if Irene comes with us.

CHAD

Excuse me?

IRENE

I actually have a date to the prom.

CHAD

I was wondering if I could have a ride to the science fair. I mean, if there's room. My car is at the garage.

IRENE

Oh.

ROBERTA

Who are you going to the prom with?

IRENE

Um. Jerry.

IRENE

(to audience)

Too late. I said it. Jerry is, well let's just say he's every tall girl's worst nightmare. I mean, you know there's something wrong with him because he likes you, even prefers you to the minxes. You can only suppose he has a lair in his basement where he stores body and machine parts and of course he's short but you already guessed that.

ROBERTA

My god, everybody! Irene's going to the prom with Jerry!

SCENE 5

(A video projection.)

IRENE

(to audience)

We're going to have to come back to that. Here's a film of my last family reunion... Here's my father's side, swarthy, Italian-Jewish-French Canadian, short, bald and the men aren't much better. aAnd now my mother's side... Irish-German. Everybody, and I mean everybody hovering at around five foot four. That wouldn't have been bad. I'm not a math whiz but even I can average five foot three and five foot four, so where did I come from? There's me and my father. You just can't hate the guy, even when he gets drunk and cries, which he is about to do right now. You can see the eyes tearing up. He only gets drunk once a year at these reunions and he sees all little cousins and grand cousins. Is there such a thing as grand cousins? The rest of the time he's just kind of quiet.

HARRY

Ahh...

IRENE

Did I wake you?

HARRY

No, I was just resting my eyes. What are you doing home so early?

IRENE

Well, I had a date.

HARRY

I know you had a date. What are you doing home so early?

IRENE

Well...

HARRY

Another dud.

IRENE

I was thinking...

HARRY

Yes?

IRENE

I was thinking it was time for me to move out.

HARRY

Out? What do you mean out? Where are you going to go?

IRENE

I don't know, an apartment maybe a condo. I've saved up over forty thousand dollars

HARRY

And you want to blow it on a condo?

IRENE

I'm twenty-six.

HARRY

Yes, god help you. We're all getting old. The time to move out was when you were eighteen. Now we're depending on you. I'll be sixty-two.

IRENE

I'll come by. I'll visit. I think living at home-

HARRY

What! What!

IRENE

I think it's holding up my development. I'm trying to change. I've been the same since I was thirteen, same ideas, same obsessions. I keep thinking maybe I'll get shorter or something. I've got to get away from here.



HARRY

Look at the advantages. You saved forty thousand dollars.

IRENE

And for what? To sit in the bank? I need to experience life. I keep having the same bad date with a guy around five foot eight.

HARRY

Five foot eight is good. It's tallish. Marjorie, Marjorie get in here we're having a crisis!

MARJORIE

Who's dead?

HARRY

Irene's moving out.

MARJORIE

She can't move out, we're too old.

HARRY

I told her and she's arguing.

IRENE

I'm not arguing. I'm just... I can't always be the tall one. You two together, your heights add up to plenty.

MARJORIE

Oh, I knew this day would come. Didn't I tell you, Harry?

IRENE

Look, I went to community college. I finished my degree long distance...

MARJORIE

She throws it up in our faces. Harry. Harry talk to her.

IRENE

I want to find out who I am.

MARJORIE

You know who you are. You're Irene Baird, you're a tall... a very tall...

IRENE

There's more to me than my height, Mom!

MARJORIE

Not much.

IRENE

Excuse me?

MARJORIE

You'd better tell her.

HARRY

I should tell her?

MARJORIE

It's your fault.

IRENE

Oh god, whatever it is, I don't want to know.

MARJORIE

If she's moving out she needs to know.

HARRY

All right, all right!

MARJORIE

Better sit down.

IRENE

Okay, but if this is just some trick-

HARRY

No trick, no trick. You're adopted.

MARJORIE

What are you telling her she's adopted for? I meant the thing about your prostate.

HARRY

Oh yeah, my prostate. It could be serious.

IRENE

I'm adopted?

MARJORIE

You've got a big mouth.

IRENE

I'm adopted? That's not the kind of thing you say to your twenty-six year old daughter.

HARRY

I didn't mean it.

MARJORIE

He didn't mean it, he's all upset. How could you say a thing like that?

HARRY

I thought you wanted me to tell her!

IRENE

Oh god.

MARJORIE

Now stop it. It's not the worst thing in the world.

IRENE

You mean it's true?

MARJORIE

You had to open your mouth.

IRENE

How could I be adopted?

MARJORIE

It's not as bad as it sounds. We think we might actually be related.

HARRY

Not that we're sure.

MARJORIE

First you go to bed with that girl, now you break your daughter's heart.

HARRY

I should be struck dead.

IRENE

(to audience)

It's always a child's secret fear. Lord knows I had reason to believe it. I mean the height-

MARJORIE

(to audience)

Everyone in my family is five foot four.

HARRY

(to audience)

If you'll excuse me, I have to try and pee.

SCENE 6

(Another slide show.)

IRENE

(to audience)

Here is my life according to Jerry Hopper. Remember my first grade picture? That's him circled. He's looking up at me. Notice he's in the front row with the minxes?

(Jerry emerges from the slide.)

JERRY

One thousand five hundred and three people died on the Titanic.

IRENE

(to audience)

Jerry was obsessed with the Titanic.

JERRY

Only seven hundred and five people survived.

IRENE

I don't like talking about dead people.

JERRY

There were two thousand, two hundred and eight life jackets on board. Most everybody was wearing one.

IRENE

Mrs. Sparrow, Jerry's talking about the Titanic again. You're not supposed to talk about the Titanic, everyone took a vote.

JERRY

I'm not talking about the Titanic. I'm talking about the people on the Titanic. Three hundred bodies were pulled from the water the next day.

IRENE

Mrs. Sparrow-

JERRY

I've got gum.

IRENE

What kind?

JERRY

Juicy Fruit.

IRENE

Okay, hand it over.

JERRY

Passengers rode stationary bikes in the gymnasium to pass the time before the ship sank.

IRENE

You can say more if you want.

JERRY

No that's okay, maybe later.

IRENE

(to audience)

Jerry and I had this deal concerning gum. I had my own obsessions.

JERRY

Can I look up your skirt?

IRENE  
What kind?

JERRY  
Trident, fruit flavored.

IRENE  
I don't know.

JERRY  
Oh, come on.

IRENE  
Any Rollos?

JERRY  
I'll bring them in tomorrow.

IRENE  
Okay, but just a peek.  
(to audience)  
So I'd spread my legs a little and Jerry would drop his pencil.

MRS. SPARROW  
What are you two doing back there?

IRENE  
Jerry dropped his pencil.

MRS. SPARROW  
Again?

IRENE  
(to Jerry)  
I told you.

(to audience)  
This was back in the days that girls wore skirts to school. I mean had to. There was a dress code and of course because of the way I grew-

SOMEBODY  
Jerry's looking at Irene's underwear.

MRS. SPARROW

Didn't we take a vote about that? Now you two go straight to the office. No, Jerry you go first, then I'll send Irene. Now go!

JERRY

I love you, Irene.

SCENE 7

(Back at the shoe store.)

IRENE

Hello, Julio.

JULIO

Dios mio, what is the matter with your face?

IRENE

Catastrophe. I'm adopted.

JULIO

Adopted and you just found out?

IRENE

I just found out.

JULIO

So now what you going to do?

IRENE

I guess I'm going to look for my birth mother.

JULIO

Oh maybe not good idea. Best to leave dead dogs lie. How you like your shoes?

IRENE

I like my shoes. I just can't walk in them.

JULIO

Takes practice. Here let me show you these...

IRENE

I cannot wear red shoes, I don't want to draw attention-

JULIO

You have to be proud. You are a knockout in those shoes. Here let me...

(Julio runs his fingers up Irene's arm.)

IRENE

Oh that feels... hm...

JULIO

How?

IRENE

Julio, are you married?

JULIO

Married? Me? I cannot afford to marry, I only make two hundred dollars a week.

IRENE

Two hundred dollars?

JULIO

I'm paying my loans. It cost plenty to open this place.

IRENE

Hmm... what about those green ones?

JULIO

Spectacular choice.

IRENE

But the heels...

JULIO

Three inches. Ave maria this is the way god meant for womens to look.

IRENE

I cannot wear three inch heels.



JULIO

Just try. Let me see you...

IRENE

I think I'm going to need an eleven and a half.

JULIO

I stretch them for you.

IRENE

Oh, you have a special machine?

JULIO

(to audience)

Everyone thinks we have special machine. We use a coat hangar.

IRENE

Hey, I heard that!

JULIO

Let me see you walk. Oh yes, those legs go all the way up.

IRENE

I just want to know who I am. I want to know where my height came from.

(A projector starts. Irene's extended adopted family stare down at her in her bassinet. Meanwhile, Julio locks the door.)

JULIO

You drive me crazy, baby!

(Julio tackles Irene and they go down into the handbag section. The audio comes on the projector.)

VARIOUS RELATIVES (ON VIDEO)

Will you look at that fat baby? Look at those legs! This little piggy went to the market, this little piggy stayed home...

(MORE)

VARIOUS RELATIVES (ON  
Now that is a big girl, is she a big girl? Is she? Marjorie this one is for  
the record books... Oh look at her squirm around.

IRENE  
(under the handbags with Julio)  
Oh god!

JULIO  
Mmm...

VARIOUS RELATIVES ON  
VIDEO)  
What does she want does? She want something? Oh she's a talker!

IRENE  
Oh my god!

VARIOUS RELATIVES (ON  
VIDEO)  
You've got a smart one here, Harry! I'll bet she doesn't take after you,  
ha ha ha!

JULIO  
You are the goddess of love...

VARIOUS RELATIVES (ON  
VIDEO)  
What does she want? She's trying to talk, Harry, she's trying to talk!

IRENE  
Do me, Julio!

SCENE 8

(Another slide show.)

IRENE  
This is me on my date with Phil. Phil was a lawyer who had just had  
his heart broken. Notice he looks like Chad? That's because it's the  
same actor, but I'm making a point.  
(MORE)

IRENE (cont'd)

They all looked like Chad, the ones I didn't get, the ones the minxes got and anyway you know how expensive this all is, I mean plays, not that anybody here is getting paid, still I'm making a point...

(Phil steps out of the slide.)

PHIL

Of course I'm really more into hockey but after the Knicks signed Amar'e, I mean, it was electric, the while city was on fire.

IRENE

What is he, French?

PHIL

French? Who's French?

IRENE

This Amar'e person.

PHIL

He grew up in Florida. He's a god, a titan.

IRENE

(to audience)

Of course I'm convinced all these guys are secretly gay.

(A slide appears of Amar'e Stoudemire.)

PHIL

So how's your duck?

IRENE

Fine.

PHIL

You ever play basketball?

IRENE

One year they planted me in front of the basket and told me to wave my arms.

(A slide appears of that.)

IRENE

Why would you ask me if I ever played basketball?

PHIL

You're kidding, right?

IRENE

Maybe I was a cheerleader. Maybe it's all ancient history.

PHIL

Look I'm just-

IRENE

You're what?

PHIL

Making conversation. Trying to-

IRENE

Why did you even ask me to dinner?

PHIL

Uh- well...

(Phil looks down at his duck.)

IRENE

Oh god!

(to audience)

He didn't ask me to dinner. He asked Jo-Lynn to dinner. She was standing behind me.

(A slide appears of that.)

IRENE

Oh god.

PHIL

It's okay.

IRENE

I'll pay for my duck.

PHIL

No, I'd be happy to.

IRENE

I'll pay for your duck.

PHIL

I'm not hungry. I shouldn't have even asked Jo-Lynn out. Not after...

IRENE

(to audience)

Here it comes.

PHIL

I haven't been able to eat or sleep since Brittany left.

IRENE

(to audience)

I hate that name, Brittany. Talk about a minxy name.

PHIL

You look like you've got a kind heart.

IRENE

(to audience)

So it turns out Brittany cheated on him with his best friend.

PHIL

I forgave her. I was willing to start again.

IRENE

(to audience)

So blah blah blah we're about to get to the good part.

(to Phil)

I just found out I'm adopted.

PHIL

I saved a drawer of her underwear. What?

IRENE

Adopted. Raised not by my birth parents.

PHIL

Gee, that's rough. You just found out? I thought everybody found that kind of thing out when they were little. It's supposed to instill gratitude.

IRENE

That's only when you find out your mother was a crack addicted... Jeez I never considered. Maybe my mother was in prison. Maybe I was born in prison.

PHIL

You could find out easily enough.

IRENE

I could?

PHIL

Hire a lawyer.

IRENE

You know one? Ha ha ha.

PHIL

These things are simple to uncover.

IRENE

Then why do I need a lawyer?

PHIL

It's America.

IRENE

How much will it cost?

PHIL

I don't know, ten thousand, maybe more.

IRENE

The duck's on you.

PHIL

Hey, nice shoes by the way.

SCENE 9

(Irene introduces Phil to Harry and Marjorie.)

MARJORIE

Sit down! Sit down! Harry, give him your chair. How about dessert, I made bread pudding.

PHIL

Really? I love bread pudding.

MARJORIE

She's a great cook, my Irene. This recipe, I learned it from her.

IRENE

Mom, he's a lawyer.

MARJORIE

Of course, he's a lawyer. He has a lawyer look. Expensive.

HARRY

I was just about to go to bed.

MARJORIE

We have a guest, Harry. Get the dessert.

(to Phil)

He's kidding. He lives for Irene to bring her dates home. Not many girls would stay with her parents until she gets married. This is the kind of girl Irene is.

IRENE

I mean, he's a lawyer. He's my lawyer.

MARJORIE

Harry, did you hear that, Irene's getting married!

HARRY

You've got yourself a tall girl here, Phil.

IRENE

Phil is going to help me find my birth mother.

MARJORIE

He's what?

IRENE

I'm paying him.

PHIL

Only ten thousand. Maybe a little more.

HARRY (O.S.)

You want it warmed up with some whipped cream?

PHIL

Whipped cream would be great!

MARJORIE

I don't know how you could do this to us. Didn't we feed you and love you?

IRENE

It's not about that, Mom. I just want to know where I get my height.  
(Harry enters with the bread  
pudding.)

HARRY

Let her go, let her find out. Maybe she'll have some peace for once.

MARJORIE

I blame you for this. Now she'll never get married. Men don't marry adopted girls.

IRENE

I thought they didn't marry tall girls.

MARJORIE

Tall and adopted. This is your fault. Hand me that, would you?

HARRY

Who knew she would get so tall?

IRENE

You could save me ten thousand dollars if you'd just tell me.



HARRY

If I knew, I would tell you. It wasn't-

MARJORIE

Go ahead and drive the stake into my heart.

HARRY

There are just no guarantees in life. This I have learned.

(to Phil)

How's the bread pudding?

IRENE

What's he talking about  
now, Mom?

PHIL

Great. What kind of bread  
do you use?

MARJORIE

I'm through with this.  
You were the one. You  
tell her.

HARRY

Challah. Better if it's  
stale.

MARJORIE

My sister told me to leave you, but did I listen?

HARRY

Where are my pills?

HARRY

All right, all right! Irene you were born out of wedlock.

IRENE

No shit.

MARJORIE

And stop with the mouth.

HARRY

There is a chance... a very slight chance... that I am your father.

IRENE

You mean?

MARJORIE

He slept with a tall woman.

IRENE

You?

HARRY

There is nothing conclusive. I had just gotten out of the army. I was in the city. My friends and I... we went a little crazy on Harvey Wallbangers. I haven't had orange juice since I came home and married your mother.

MARJORIE

Six months I waited for him and he's out drinking Harvey Wallbangers.

HARRY

One day Wanda shows up.

IRENE

Wanda? My mother's name is Wanda? Phil are you writing any of this down?

HARRY

She shows up with you. She says she's going to Australia and can't take you. She swears I'm the father and what am I supposed to do? She bends over and gives me a big kiss.

MARJORIE

Kiss? What kiss? I don't know about a kiss.

HARRY

We had known each other intimately. I was holding my own daughter in my arms, what is a kiss?

MARJORIE

Tell her the worst part.

HARRY

The worst part is two years later I'm at my reunion. We're talking about the gunfire and the bombs, the mutilated bodies. I hope I never see New Jersey again! And Bennie says, what about that Wanda? And I say, what about her? And he says, she was something, wasn't she, with this gleam in his eye. And Sully, this gunner from Boston, Sully raises his beer and says, I'll drink to that.

IRENE

Bennie and Sully... You mean the three of you, all of you with Wanda?

HARRY

It's possible. We had a lot to drink that night.

IRENE

How tall was she?

HARRY

Well, it's a little fuzzy.

IRENE

She came here, she brought me. How tall was she?

HARRY

Well she was taller than I remembered. In fact I said, Wanda you're taller than I remember.

IRENE

How tall?

HARRY

Six three.

MARJORIE

Tell her the rest.

HARRY

There are no guarantees in life.

IRENE

What? What?

HARRY

She grew the last three inches after thirty.

IRENE

No!

HARRY

I remember she had a thing for nice shoes.

MARJORIE

You're disgusting! You've ruined your daughter's life. Don't worry about those three inches. I smoked every day of your life. I did it for you.

IRENE

Phil, did you hear all that? Australia. My mother is in Australia.

PHIL

Oh, sounds expensive. Say, I could go for another one of these.

SCENE 10

IRENE

(to audience)

I know I'm skipping around, but I'm counting on the incredible tension I'm building about my birth origins to keep you alert and interested. But here's a little recap for those of you secretly texting and playing Bejeweled...

(A series of slides.)

IRENE

(to audience)

My father and two other men have a night of Harvey Wallbangers and sex with a giantess named Wanda...

Click.

IRENE

(to audience)

My birth mother brings me home to my father on her way to Australia...

Click.

IRENE

(to audience)

My adoptive mother is enchanted with this turn of events in spite of its implications, but is secretly worried about the size of my feet...

(Click.)

IRENE

(to audience)

I embark on an elementary and high school career of being photographed in the back row of group pictures...

(Click, click, click, click, click.)

IRENE

(to audience)

I have a series of ill fated dates with tallish men...

(Click, click, click.)

IRENE

(to audience)

Okay, only three...

IRENE

(to audience)

And if not for the attention and support of my friend Roberta...

(Click. Roberta and Irene kissing.)

IRENE

(to audience)

Oops. Ha ha ha. Okay, so I experimented a little. Tall girls need love too, and Roberta was one great kisser and she was, after all, well it's a little complicated...

(Roberta steps out of the slide.)

ROBERTA

What decade is this?

IRENE

The one before you changed into a man. You're just gay now.

ROBERTA

Oh, how do I look?

IRENE

You'll pass in that.

ROBERTA

We still in high school?

IRENE

Just graduated. Here put this on.

(They put on graduation gowns. Jerry enters.)

IRENE

Oh, hi Jerry.

JERRY

Hi, Irene. Hey, Roberta.

ROBERTA

Great speech, Jerry.

JERRY

Did you think so? I was really nervous.

ROBERTA

I never knew the Titanic could be so metaphorical.

JERRY

I was wondering, Irene, if you and your family would like to stop by later. I mean at my house.

IRENE

Oh, I don't know, Jerry. We're having a big dinner at Fuzzy's.

JERRY

Great meatballs.

IRENE

You know my father.

JERRY

Yeah, well.

ROBERTA

Maybe after dinner, huh Irene?

IRENE

I don't know. Then I have to go to bed to sleep. I have to work in the morning. I'm working breakfast at Fuzzy's. We're getting a discount.

JERRY

Oh that's huge. So maybe some other time?

IRENE

Sure, sure.

ROBERTA

What about tomorrow night?

IRENE

What, tomorrow night? Well I don't have my schedule exactly.

JERRY

Maybe I'll drop in and have some meatballs.

IRENE

All right.

JERRY

All right?

ROBERTA

All right!

IRENE

Nice speech.

JERRY

All right.

IRENE

See you.

JERRY

Bye.

(Jerry exits.)

ROBERTA

You're such a moron.

IRENE

What? I'm not going out with him. I did that once.  
(Quick look at the slide again with  
Jerry's head between Irene's  
boobs.)

IRENE

I'm going to find a tall man. I'm not settling anymore.

ROBERTA

Look, it's all a matter of attitude and you could dress a little differently.

IRENE

What's the matter with the way I dress?

ROBERTA

You dress tall. Stripes?

IRENE

They're slenderizing.

ROBERTA

You look like a barber shop pole.

IRENE

Thanks.

ROBERTA

Look, I know something about fashion. I was a minx once and now as a gay transgender male-

IRENE

(to audience)

I told you it was complicated.

ROBERTA

I've got a lot of perspective. You need a makeover.

IRENE

(to audience)

So we tried a couple of things.



A slide show.

ROBERTA

(to audience)

This was the layered look, kind of a Christmas tree in June effect. We were trying to create the impression that her feet were closer to her knees.

(Another slide.)

ROBERTA

(to audience)

This was my personal favorite. I call it the teacup look. In this outfit you can never stand up.

Another slide.

IRENE

(to audience)

And even in my chair I towered over my date.

ROBERTA

Look just face it. Tall men like short women and short men are crazy for tall girls.

(She points to a shelf.)

Can you hand me that?

IRENE

Get it yourself. Get a step ladder. Get a pogo stick. Jump for Christ's sake!

ROBERTA

Touchy. Nice shoes, though.

SCENE 11

(Back at the shoe store.)

IRENE

I need a pair of flats.

JULIO

Flats!

IRENE

Mary Janes. Ballet slippers. Anything without a heel. Something that I can wear on a ship.

JULIO

What is that you have on?

IRENE

It's called the Christmas tree in June look. It's supposed to make me look shorter.

JULIO

You look like the liberty bell.

IRENE

How about these?

JULIO

We don't have them in your size.

IRENE

What about these?

JULIO

Same thing.

IRENE

Come on, Julio.

JULIO

You want to ruin your life, you do it in another shoe store. These shoes are for those girls, what do you call them-

IRENE

Minxes-

JULIO

What is a mink and you has to lose the ruffles, dios mio, I cannot even find you in there.

IRENE

So what should I wear then?

JULIO

I don't know, naked is pretty good.

IRENE

Anyway, I'm going to Australia to find my mother.

JULIO

Your mother live in Australia?

IRENE

She migrated there after I was born. I'm adopted. I just found out and I have a new lease on life. Maybe if I find my tall relatives... Hm, Australia, I'm going to need a hat-

JULIO

All right, I have a pair of flats that will look just- Wait here while I go in the back.

(Jerry enters.)

JERRY

Hey, Irene.

IRENE

Jerry?

JERRY

Shopping for shoes?

IRENE

No I'm getting a haircut.

JERRY

How you been?

IRENE

Julio's in the back.

JERRY

Who's Julio?

IRENE

Julio, Julio the owner, he's...

JERRY

Are you all right?

IRENE

Fine. I've got to sit down. Jerry, I'm having an identity crisis.

JERRY

Gee, what can I do?

IRENE

You can stop being so nice for one thing. The fact that you are so nice keeps me from seriously finding a tall man. I'm even fantasizing. I conjured up an affair with a short shoe salesman named Julio.

JERRY

Lucky guy.

IRENE

You see, I'm adopted and my birth mother moved to Australia. Australia, for god's sake. I mean could she get any further away from me? Here's the worst part. It turns out she was gang banded by three men the night I was conceived and one of them might be my adoptive father so I have that to contend with the idea that my own father might be a gang banger.

JERRY

You know what's weird?

IRENE

What?

JERRY

When we're sitting down we're the same height.

IRENE

Oh.

JERRY

I might even be a little taller.

IRENE

Oh yeah.

JERRY

You have really pretty eyes.

IRENE

Why are short men so nice?

JERRY

We try harder.

IRENE

Oh.

(Julio enters.)

IRENE

Go away Julio.

JULIO

I've got just the thing for you. Flats but look at this! Slave girl shoes with little bells...

Jerry and Irene slump to the floor.

JULIO

You can't have sex in front of me. I'm your short man fantasy.

IRENE

Mm you're even taller when we... oooh...

SCENE 10

MARJORIE

Harry! Harry are you listening to me!

HARRY

I tried talking to her.

MARJORIE

Twenty six years and this is what we get, you and your Harvey Wallbangers. Where did you get those shoes?

IRENE

Going away present from Titanic Footwear.

MARJORIE

Look, your father and I found someone for you. Someone tallish.

IRENE

It's too late, Mom. I'm going and that's final.

MARJORIE

His name is Brad.

IRENE

(to audience)

Brad. Brad. Brad is the new Chad.

MARJORIE

He's nice and he likes tall girls.

IRENE

What's wrong with him?

MARJORIE

Otherwise looks don't matter. In fact he hates good looks, not that you're not pretty. Just you know, your face is kind of long,

HARRY

Don't make her. You can't force these things.

MARJORIE

He's coming over. I told him it was an emergency. You can't get on that ship, you don't know what you'll catch. Have you seen the news lately? The Singapore Sling wiped out a hundred passengers. He's coming over. Harry, put in your teeth.

IRENE

What does he do?

MARJORIE

What does he do? He's tallish, what does it matter what he does?

IRENE

I'd like to know.

MARJORIE

He's adopted, so you've got that in common. Tallish and adopted.

HARRY

He just moved here.

IRENE

From where?

MARJORIE

Well we're not sure. It was hard to pronounce. Harry, what was it called?

HARRY

He's from Borneo.

IRENE

You mean like in Mexico?

MARJORIE

Here he is. Harry, your teeth. Irene, why don't you sit, just in case.  
(Brad enters. He is dressed in a  
grass skirt.)

BRAD

Abba dabba, how do you do?

IRENE

Um okay. Mom?

IRENE

(to audience)

And I thought I had troubles.

IRENE

(to audience)

Here is a picture of Brad and his family.

(Click.)

IRENE

(to audience)

He's the one that's not short.

Click.

BRAD

We're Pugmies.

IRENE

Excuse me?

BRAD

We trace our lineage back to a guy named Pug O'Farrell. Hence the name.

IRENE

Pug O'Farrell.

BRAD

He was a short pirate who was shipwrecked on Borneo. Had twelve kids, all of them five foot three. And every generation, no matter who they intermarry with, everybody is five foot three.

IRENE

So I guess you sort of stood out.

BRAD

I was a late bloomer. Once I hit five-five I was banished from the tribe. I foraged for food for about ten years then got a job at the Pugmy Museum.

MARJORIE

Harry get some milk and cookies. Sit here next to Irene.

BRAD

You're dubba doey tall.

IRENE

Is your name really Brad?



BRAD

Bubba boeey.

IRENE

Mom?

MARJORIE

It's a transliteration. That's what Harriet at the bank told me. How do you pronounce it in Pugmese?

BRAD

Dabba do.

MARJORIE

Oh, it's so much more musical in that language. Irene works for a law firm. She files papers in the court, that sort of thing. Would you like a cookie?

BRAD

Gunga grunga.

MARJORIE

Harry, what's wrong with you. Harry. Harry!

HARRY

It's her!

(The slide shows a gaggle of drunken tourists and Brad has his arm around...)

HARRY

Wanda!

BRAD

You know Wanda?

MARJORIE

Wanton Wanda? Gang banger Wanda?

BRAD

Oh yes, that's Wanda.

IRENE

That's my mother! That's my birth mother! My god, Brad how can I find her?

BRAD

Well the news is not good.

IRENE

Is she dead?

BRAD

No, she's captured. Right after I left, the tree Pugmies over ran the resort. They're a mean breed, the tree Pugmies.

(A slide of three tree Pugmies who looks suspiciously like Harry, Jerry and Roberta/Robert, and a tied up Wanda who seems to be enjoying herself.)

MARJORIE

Those are three short men.

BRAD

Tree Pugmies are all about five foot three.

IRENE

I've got to rescue her. I have to find out who my real father is.

BRAD

Dubba dubba, that's dangerous.

IRENE

I don't care if I have to spend all of my forty thousand dollars. Brad, Brad you know the language, you know the customs...

BRAD

I swore I would never go back there but abba dabba, I'll do it!  
(A knock on the door.)

JERRY

Hi, Irene.

IRENE

What are you doing here?

JERRY

I'm here to declare my love.

IRENE

Jerry, Jerry listen.

MARJORIE

He's got a job and he's not so bad looking.

JERRY

Irene, I know I'm shorter than you but if I were seven feet tall I couldn't love you more. Where did you find the pugmy?

BRAD

Abba dabba.

JERRY

Dubba grubba. Sorry, that's my name in Pugmy. I took it as an elective in college my junior year.

IRENE

You can really speak Pugmy?

JERRY

There's only about six words. It's all to do with inflection.

HARRY

I'm going, too.

MARJORIE

What?

HARRY

I have to know, Marjorie. All these years, I owe it to myself. I've got to confront her about Bennie and Sully.

MARJORIE

Six months I waited for you and you're drinking Harvey Wallbangers with a slut named Wanda.

IRENE

That slut is my mother!

BRAD

Wanda is a bit of an dubba dooey.

(Roberta enters in a minxy outfit.)

ROBERTA

Is this the flashback? Oh sorry.

IRENE

(to audience)

We're going to show you a film about Wanda's capture while we get ready to go to Borneo and Roberta changes into Robert.

(Video begins.)

Wanda, who looks suspiciously like Irene, is having a blast at a Pugmese nightclub with three short men at her table when all of a sudden three tree Pugmies, who look exactly like the three short men at the table, attack the three men at the table and carry off Wanda.)

BRAD

(to audience)

There has been a lot of dubba dooey between the tourists and the tree Pugmies over the years which explains how the tree Pugmies grew to five foot three.

(Julio enters.)

JULIO

Irene?

IRENE

Julio!

JULIO

I bring you a present for your trip.

IRENE

Oh, Julio!

JULIO

Let's try them on. These are going to really, really show off your two legs to perfection.

IRENE

This is so nice of you but-

JULIO

What? But what?

IRENE

You're a fantasy. You're how I torment myself about short men.

JULIO

And these shoes are part of the fantasy.

IRENE

The shoes are real.

JULIO

And this is not real?

(He kisses her passionately.)

IRENE

Oh, Julio!

(Roberta returns only now she is actually Robert.)

ROBERT

Hey, Brad!

BRAD

Abba dabba.

(Video continues, now Robert, Brad, Jerry and Irene are on a slow boat to Borneo intercut with scenes of Wanda being terrorized by the tree Pugmies.)

(Robert and Brad have hit it off.)

IRENE

(to audience)

I told you it was complicated.

ROBERT

I'm gay. I just didn't know what kind of gay.

(Jerry is holding court with a group of passengers and regaling them with Titanic trivia intercut with Harry at the bar drinking Harvey Wallbangers. We also see a cutaway of Marjorie who has stowed away in steerage (is there still steerage?).)

JERRY (ON VIDEO)

Actually, the Titanic didn't hit an iceberg. It hit a blackberg, which is an iceberg that has started to melt so that the ice is transparent making it virtually impossible for the captain to see it coming, or in this case, see it sitting there. Now a male in third class had a one in ten chance of survival while a male in first class had a fifty fifty chance of survival. A female in third class had a twenty-five percent chance of survival while her first class counterpart had almost a hundred percent chance of survival.

HYSTERICAL PASSENGER

(O.C.)

Mort! I told you we shouldn't have come coach!

SCENE 11

(The jungle. Wanda now dressed as a puggmy, and the tree Pugmies in a hut.)

WANDA

God, what I'd do for a cigarette!

HARRY PUGMY

Abba dabba!

WANDA

Cut with the abba dabba crap and rub my feet.

ROBERT PUGMY

We're hungry. We want some coconut stew.

WANDA

What do I look like, Snow White? You captured me, now deal with it.

IRENE

(to audience)

Okay, it's going to get a little tricky here so pay attention. You may have noticed that the tree Pugmies look a lot like Robert, Harry and Jerry. In a coincidence that defies logic their ancestors all vacationed here in Borneo in the early twentieth century and as Americans are wont to do, left some little bundles behind. And since we were persuaded by Brad to dress as Pugmies so that we would blend in you might get a little confused as to who are the natives and who are the freedom fighters.

BRAD

Abba dabba!

IRENE

(to audience)

Of course, there's only one Brad.

BRAD

Abba dabba do!

IRENE

(to audience)

Thank god.

SCENE 12

(The tree Pugmies are singing and dancing around Wanda who paints her toenails.)

WANDA

Orange juice vodka and Galliano, who's going to the store?

JERRY PUGMY

Abba dabba!

WANDA

Look, I won't go anywhere. Where am I going to go? You think I can climb down out of this tree?

THREE PUGMIES

Abba dabba abba dabba etcetera

WANDA

Just go and bring me a carton of Marlboro Lights, eggs, mushroom soup and Ritz crackers and ice, a block of ice.

THREE PUGMIES

Abba dabba dubba dooey, etcetera.

WANDA

Here's a coupon for the mushroom soup. Make sure it's Campbell's. I don't want any knockoffs.

THREE PUGMIES

Bubba booeey!

WANDA

What?

THREE PUGMIES

Bubba boodle!



WANDA

Oh, you're kidding. Three at once?

THREE PUGMIES

Abba dabba!

WANDA

Oh, all right. Wait, my nails!

(Love making ensues. Harry, Robert,  
Brad and Jerry stick their heads  
into the tree house. Don't forget  
they are the same three playing the  
Pugmies.)

WANDA

(to audience)

This took a while to figure out in rehearsal

(back to the world of dreams)

Oh yes... oh oh oh... yes... wow!

DIRECTOR (V.O.)

Here is a video of how we figured this bit out while you also watch  
Wanda get it on with three Pugmies of mixed European ancestry.  
Probably there are puppets on the stage somewhere.

WANDA

All right, that's enough! You guys never stop. Now off, get off!

THREE PUGMIES

Abba dabba doey!

WANDA

Stop grumbling. Here, take the list.

(They climb down the tree.)

BRAD

Psst psst!

WANDA

What?

BRAD  
Psst!

WANDA  
Brad?

BRAD  
Wanda, we're here to rescue you!

WANDA  
Who's here?

BRAD  
Me and three short men. Oh, and your daughter Irene.

WANDA  
Daughter, what daughter?

BRAD  
She's got on high heels or she would have climbed up.

HARRY  
Remember me?

WANDA  
Harvey, is that you?

HARRY  
Harry.

WANDA  
Right. I don't remember you being tallish.

HARRY  
I'm standing on Robert's shoulders.

ROBERT  
You're killing me down here!

HARRY  
Wanda, you have to talk to Irene. She's confused. She's unhappy.  
She's spent her life worrying about her height.  
(Marjorie flies in on a vine.)

MARJORIE

Tramp!

WANDA

Hey!

MARJORIE

I've lived in your shadow for twenty-six years. Is my husband Irene's father or isn't he?

WANDA

You mean he doesn't know?

(Now we go to a video of that fateful night between Harry, Sully and Bennie and Wanda. Harry is passed out with a picture of Marjorie and Sully and Bennie are, well, very comfy together. Wanda is reading an early pregnancy test. It's positive.)

WANDA (ON VIDEO)

Holy crap!

MARJORIE

You let him believe he was Irene's father!

WANDA

He talked a lot about you, so I thought...

(Wanda and Irene have a conversation. Somehow this got figured out. Don't worry about it.)

IRENE

So who's my father?

(Wanda smiles. A slide of her with the same three Pugmies in Australia twenty seven years earlier.)

WANDA

Spring break!

IRENE

I'm coming up there!

(She throws up the shoes or  
someone does. Wanda puts them  
on.)

WANDA

This girl has taste.

(Offstage we hear the chant of the  
three Pugmies of mixed European  
descent.)

THREE PUGMIES

Abba dabba abba dabba!

(Jerry pulls himself up into the tree  
house.)

JERRY

Wanda, I love Irene and I don't know how to convince her...

WANDA

(yelling down)

Short men are better in bed. Hands down.

IRENE

Really?

WANDA

I've tried them all.

(Jerry leaps down to Irene.)

WANDA

Thanks for the shoes. Wow, these are going to do wonders for my legs!

(She puts them on and prances a  
bit.)

MARJORIE

Harry, I'm sorry for all the things I said.

WANDA

Go reconcile somewhere else. The Pugmies are coming and we've got plans.

(The last projection starts.)

IRENE

(to audience)

So it turns out that I was a Pugmy princess of mixed European descent after all and that I really do have a short person inside.

(A series of stills of the short people on Irene's father's side of the family. They look a lot like Robert, interestingly enough.)

ROBERT

(to audience)

She told you it was complicated.

JERRY

Come here you little minx!

IRENE

(to audience)

It's not how tall you are or how tall your partner is...

(Jerry begins to pull Irene to the floor.)

IRENE

(to audience)

It's how tall he is when he's... ooh Jerry!

JERRY

And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

IRENE

Dubba dooey!

THE END.

