

# **MAYHEM, AMERICA**

by

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## CHARACTERS

### MORRIS

Interim Pastor at Mayhem Reformed Church, has ambitions to become State Assemblyman, 42

### ROSS

Owns Happy Sack Country Bed and Breakfast, openly gay, awards himself trophies, 37

### GERTIE

Secretary to Mayor Grimstad, annually goes on safari, certified pet sitter, avid deer hunter, 47

### THELMA

Works in cafeteria at Mayhem Elementary School, a poet, struggles with mental illness, 32

### SODA

A delinquent, ordered to do community service for graffiti, convinced the world is about to end, 16

### FILUS

Owns Vitamin and Doll House Shop, claims to look like a variety of celebrities depending on which wig she wears, 51

### HORACE

Owns Seed and Farm Supply Company, NASCAR fan, Little League coach, deaf in left ear, 44

### WILLARD

Widower, President of Mayhem Chamber of Commerce, owns billboard company, writes weekly column for Mayhem Sentinel, suffers from a pinched tibial nerve, 39

### ETHEL

Librarian, devout atheist, teaches classes in self-defense, plays the accordion, self-taught handwriting analyst, unmarried, 29

### DOLLY

Single, works at thrift shop, hangs out at the interstate truck stop, hordes tabloid magazines, acutely aware of people's physical appearance, 35

## SETTING AND TIME

An all-purpose auditorium in the City Hall of Mayhem, America. 2012.

An aging, open-floor auditorium with windows that are too high to afford the occupants a view of the outdoors. Upstage is a stage whose curtains are closed. An American flag occupies a prominent position on the shallow stage apron. In the center of the room, several mismatched tables have been pushed together; this makeshift conference table is surrounded with an assortment of chairs. Tables to the side contain dishes of proudly-prepared foods, brochures designed to promote the town, discarded office equipment, un-filed records. Around the periphery is a child's wagon, piled high with artifacts, and a wheelbarrow, also overflowing with items. On the walls: Plaques of awards, poorly-executed portraits of local leaders, mementos, photographs, framed newspaper clippings. As the scene is revealed, MORRIS is seated at the central table, leading the group in prayer. Others at the table include ROSS, HORACE, WILLARD, THELMA and GERTIE; the latter two are holding hands as if to amplify the power of MORRIS' prayer. ETHEL disdainfully stands behind the group, impatient, surveying the scene. SODA is seated on the edge of the stage, picking scabs from her arms. FILUS, standing, thinking she is in church, has her arms fervently raised in praise and supplication. She sways from side to side. During the lengthy prayer, FILUS, unable to hold the pose, will slowly lower her arms, causing her to question her devotion.

MORRIS (The following lines should flow, one into the other. Each line is not an independent thought; they are connected vocally, not separated by pauses. The entire prayer should have a lyrical, musical quality).

To everything there is a season.  
If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
'til death do us part.  
Man shall not live by bread alone.  
You've got the whole world in your hands.  
For better or for worse.  
How great Thou art.  
One nation under God.  
How sweet the sound.  
Swing low, sweet chariot.  
I pledge allegiance to the flag.  
God shed his grace on thee.  
Onward, Christian soldiers.  
Thy will be done.  
In health and in sickness.  
Because the Bible tells me so.  
God bless America.  
On earth as in heaven.  
Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.  
I will fear no evil.  
His truth is marching on.  
Let not your heart be troubled.  
Stand beside her and guide her.  
For richer or for poorer.  
Lay not up for yourself treasures upon earth.  
All things work together for good to them that love God.  
I will preserve, protect and defend the Constitution.  
His truth is marching on.  
Lead us not into temptation.  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
God bless our troops.  
Deliver us from evil.  
My country 'tis of thee.  
So help me, God.  
Amen.

FILUS We should have prayed for Stella.  
ROSS Oh, God. Now what?  
GERTIE You didn't hear?  
THELMA That was lovely, Morris.  
FILUS She fell off the roof.  
WILLARD What was she doing up there?

GERTIE Taking down those damn reindeer.  
 HORACE Should we pray for her?  
 WILLARD This time of year!?  
 MORRIS Thank you.  
 ROSS It's August.  
 FILUS We all get side-tracked.  
 ETHEL I would have left them up.  
 GERTIE Stella has such brittle bones.  
 ETHEL Can we get down to business?  
 THELMA Did she break anything?  
 ROSS Mayor Grimstad isn't here.  
 FILUS We should have prayed for Owen, too.  
 HORACE He never comes to these meetings.  
 ETHEL The man's a drunk.  
 GERTIE I'm sure the mayor will stop by.  
 THELMA I'm surprised he's still alive.  
 FILUS How did a drunk ever get to be Mayor of Mayhem?  
 ROSS So, who, officially, is in charge?  
 THELMA I wouldn't say he's a drunk.  
 MORRIS He was voted in.  
 GERTIE I think Willard is Chairman of the Committee.  
 ETHEL Not by me!  
 THELMA Maybe slightly inebriated – but who can blame him?  
 GERTIE Willard, the Mayor appointed you, right?  
 HORACE You were appointed?  
 WILLARD That was my understanding.  
 MORRIS This should be his last term.  
 FILUS Are you sure?  
 WILLARD Maybe I misunderstood.  
 THELMA You're the one with the papers, aren't you?  
 ETHEL Are you chairman – or president – of the committee?  
 FILUS Is there a difference?  
 GERTIE Doesn't anybody ever clean this place?  
 ETHEL Absolutely!  
 HORACE One is a democracy; the other a dictatorship.  
 THELMA Well, I vote for democracy.  
 ROSS Filus, did you bring your mock apple pie?  
 WILLARD If someone else wants the responsibility....  
 FILUS How was the committee selected?  
 ETHEL I was called.  
 ROSS I love that pie.  
 THELMA When the telephone rings, you pick it up, right?  
 FILUS Who decided?  
 HORACE I was nominated.  
 ROSS Who would think crackers taste more like apples than apples?  
 FILUS By whom?

ETHEL Is someone taking notes?  
THELMA I volunteered.  
ETHEL Someone should take notes.  
THELMA I'm not officially on the committee; I just showed up.  
HORACE Can she do that?  
MORRIS I agree; we should follow the rules.  
GERTIE I'm taking notes.  
ROSS I think it's lovely that you volunteered, Thelma.  
FILUS Thank God; my spelling's horrific.  
ETHEL That would be so much easier with a laptop, Gertie.  
WILLARD Yes, very patriotic of you, Thelma.  
GERTIE Computers agitate the Mayor's pacemaker.  
ETHEL Willard, could you read the mandate?  
THELMA The meeting was announced in the Mayhem Sentinel.  
ETHEL How can that be?  
ROSS Please, Ethel, must we use such big words?  
FILUS I still don't understand who set up this committee!  
GERTIE I admire people who accept their civic responsibility.  
HORACE Add Thelma's name to the list.  
GERTIE They do create vibrations, you know.  
ETHEL Is that right; Willard, are you in charge?  
THELMA I'm happy to be here.  
FILUS Does that mean Thelma has no voting rights?  
THELMA The Mayhem Centennial Committee sounds prestigious, doesn't it?  
MORRIS Willard, I enjoyed your column this week in the Sentinel.  
WILLARD Officially, it is the Mayhem Sesquicentennial.  
FILUS What did he say?  
GERTIE Sesquicentennial?  
ETHEL The one hundred and fiftieth anniversary.  
FILUS Is that a word?  
ROSS I thought it's the quincentennial.  
WILLARD That's five hundred.  
ROSS Well, isn't it the five hundredth anniversary?  
THELMA Mayhem's been around a long time.  
FILUS Gertie, are you getting this?  
HORACE When was Mayhem founded?  
ETHEL 1862.  
ROSS It's the quincentennial.  
GERTIE Are you sure?  
MORRIS I think Mayor Grimstad got it wrong.  
FILUS I was told it was 1812.  
HORACE How can the Mayor be off by fifty years?  
ETHEL That's the War of 1812.  
ROSS Really? 1862?  
FILUS There was no war in 1812.  
HORACE 1812 seems awfully early.

FILUS I was told this is a sub-committee.  
 MORRIS Really? Mayhem started in 1862?  
 THELMA What is it now?  
 ROSS 2012.  
 FILUS Wasn't that the year Lincoln was electrocuted?  
 HORACE Aren't we a year early?  
 ETHEL Mayhem was founded in 1862.  
 MORRIS Are we gonna trust Ethel?  
 ETHEL There are records in the Mayhem Library to prove it!  
 WILLARD Yes, technically, we are a sub-committee.  
 THELMA We're just in charge of the time capsule.  
 FILUS Who's on the main committee?  
 MORRIS That's what I thought.  
 GERTIE How do you spell sesquicentennial?  
 ETHEL S...E...S....  
 WILLARD Yes, the time capsule.  
 ETHEL Q...U...I....  
 WILLARD Our task is to obtain a durable container....  
 ETHEL C...E...N....  
 WILLARD Select appropriate artifacts....  
 ETHEL T - E - N....  
 WILLARD And plan the ceremony....  
 ETHEL N...I....  
 WILLARD Which will take place....  
 ETHEL A...L.  
 WILLARD In Mayhem Park on January 1, 2013.  
 ETHEL (Whispering). What is she doing here?  
 FILUS (Whispering). Who is she?  
 GERTIE (Whispering). That's Soda.  
 ETHEL (Whispering). Ernie Sutton's daughter.  
 GERTIE (Whispering). You know, hung himself.  
 FILUS Soda, honey, why are you here?  
 SODA Court order.  
 HORACE What?  
 ETHEL (Loudly, to HORACE). Ernie Sutton's daughter.  
 FILUS This is the Mayhem...what is it, Willard...?  
 WILLARD Sesquicentennial....  
 FILUS ...Committee.  
 SODA I know.  
 ETHEL Well, aren't you in the wrong place, dear?  
 SODA I'm just doing what I was told.  
 HORACE By whom?  
 SODA The Parole Officer.  
 WILLARD Hank sent you?  
 HORACE Why would he do that?  
 SODA Community service.

ROSS Oh?

FILUS We all know what that means.

THELMA Gertie, would you hand me my purse?

FILUS You engaged in criminal activity, Soda?

SODA No.

GERTIE Well, there's got to be a reason.

FILUS No young person does community service without cause!

SODA I was caught doing graffiti.

ETHEL Vandalizing property?

FILUS That's terrible!

THELMA Somebody painted a pitchfork on the back door of Grace Jubilee Church!

FILUS That was you?

SODA No.

HORACE Sounds like something Ethel would do.

GERTIE Graffiti happens in big cities; not in Mayhem.

ETHEL You're joking, Horace, right?

MORRIS It gets worse and worse.

HORACE Well, you make no bones about being atheist.

FILUS Whose property did you trash, Soda?

HORACE During Morris' prayer I opened my eyes a pinch and I seen you glaring.

FILUS Reverend, *you* wouldn't be defecating the doors of Grace Jubilee?

ROSS What did you write, Soda?

MORRIS I'm offended, Filus!

HORACE We all know about the rivalry between you and Reverend Hall.

THELMA You write something scandalous about someone here?

FILUS From day one you've been trying to entice Reverend Hall's flock into your fold.

SODA I just drew a picture on the drive-in movie screen.

GERTIE Oh.

FILUS Well, I never go to the movies.

ROSS What kind of picture?

SODA A picture of the earth...being struck...blown apart by a rocket.

HORACE What she isn't telling you is that the rocket was a penis!

GERTIE I heard about that!

THELMA Really? The world destroyed by a cock!

FILUS Thelma!

THELMA I think it's poetic!

GERTIE I think it's juvenile!

FILUS Is it still there?

MORRIS You would!

ROSS She *is* a juvenile!

SODA No, I had to paint over it.

FILUS Ross, did you see it?

GERTIE What possessed you?

ROSS No, Filus.

ETHEL Why would anyone draw a man's genitalia?

FILUS It's something you might appreciate, no?

GERTIE How old are you?  
ROSS Just because I'm gay, I'm not a dick hound.  
FILUS You *were* locked up, I hope.  
SODA Sixteen.  
THELMA How long were you in jail?  
SODA No.  
MORRIS Never punished!?  
FILUS Juanita no longer works for the prison. She couldn't deal with the ungodliness.  
MORRIS That's the problem with this country.  
GERTIE Yeah, but I heard she's dating an inmate.  
MORRIS Thelma, I think you should resign.  
HORACE We have Teflon paint at the store now, to cut down on vandalism.  
WILLARD Why?  
ROSS By the way, Horace, I like what you did to the floor.  
MORRIS I just think Thelma's attitude isn't appropriate for this committee.  
THELMA Do you no longer sell chicks?  
FILUS What does Soda's drawing mean?  
WILLARD Can we get down to business?  
GERTIE We're still waiting to see if my chicks are hens or roosters.  
WILLARD Let's begin with the capsule itself.  
ETHEL Everybody....  
WILLARD It should be made of non-corrosive material....  
GERTIE Like steel or plastic.  
WILLARD No longer than four feet.  
ETHEL That's small.  
WILLARD With a girth of six feet or less.  
ROSS That's big.  
FILUS My husband's waist is four feet.  
HORACE We have empty acetylene tanks at the store.  
ROSS How would you get inside one?  
THELMA They look like over-size applicators.  
ROSS I'm not crazy about their shape, either.  
GERTIE Applicator?  
FILUS Seeing something that isn't there; that's a poet for you.  
GERTIE (Incredulously). What kind of brand do you use?  
HORACE My son has an army foot locker.  
THELMA What about a heavy-duty garbage container?  
WILLARD They're durable.  
ETHEL We need something that captures the spirit of Mayhem.  
ROSS Have you seen those designer kegs?  
GERTIE I bet Theodore would have some ideas.  
WILLARD What do you think? How is Mayhem different from other towns?  
THELMA Theodore?  
MORRIS Whatever it is....  
GERTIE The undertaker.  
MORRIS It should say "America!"

FILUS His people are recognizable.

GERTIE He's trained in preservation and storage.

THELMA Do we have a town slogan?

GERTIE I like that idea.

WILLARD Not that I know of.

FILUS A mascot?

GERTIE Are there colors that would suggest Mayhem?

THELMA A bird?

HORACE A tree?

ROSS The high school marching band has blue and orange uniforms.

THELMA A Mayhem flag?

WILLARD Do you think an owl would represent us?

ETHEL I never understood orange and blue; it's not very patriotic.

FILUS They're predators!

WILLARD We should have a Mayhem flag!

GERTIE Morris, how are your parrots?

ROSS I think they look nice together.

FILUS And a song!

THELMA I could design one.

MORRIS Good.

DOLLY (Enters, pushing a shopping cart, overflowing with items). Hello, Everyone!

GERTIE Dolly!

DOLLY Sorry I'm late.

THELMA You look like Christmas!

DOLLY I thought I'd get a head start; these are goodies for the time capsule.

ROSS That's an IGA shopping cart.

ETHEL Does Jack know you have it?

DOLLY My arms are only so long.

HORACE Did you ask him?

DOLLY Lord, no; Jack knows I'm no thief.

ROSS What do you make of those handi-wipes?

DOLLY Looks like I'm not the only one wanting to stuff the turkey.

WILLARD The wheelbarrow belongs to Horace.

FILUS I brought the wagon.

ROSS Nobody told me we could bring heirlooms.

FILUS We're such a diverse, talented group; between us we could fill a thousand capsules

THELMA Ross' trophies.

FILUS My doll collection.

WILLARD Horace's barbecue sauce.

ETHEL We're not all pack rats like you, Filus.

THELMA It's like making our very own museum.

WILLARD I think we might be getting ahead of ourselves.

DOLLY I brought seven-layer marshmallow delight and peach sliders.

GERTIE Put them with the rest of the desserts.

WILLARD We were just discussing the shape of the capsule.

DOLLY Don't let me hold you up.

HORACE They make good, strong gas tanks for stock cars.  
 MORRIS I seen high-impact aircraft casings that could work.  
 FILUS Isn't titanium stronger than steel?  
 DOLLY Am I not seeing something?  
 GERTIE Is there a limit on how much we can spend?  
 FILUS Why don't we go to Wal Mart, as a committee, and look around; see what they have?  
 DOLLY There's no theme here.  
 GERTIE There's no Wal Mart in Mayhem.  
 THELMA Denison has a Super Wal Mart.  
 HORACE But it's not the Denison... (Looks to WILLARD).  
 WILLARD Sesquicentennial....  
 HORACE Committee.  
 DOLLY The food should be laid out in some kind of order.  
 THELMA We should stay local.  
 DOLLY Something – by color...calories...seasons – something.  
 ROSS We could paint a design on the capsule if we wanted, right?  
 FILUS Why don't they build a store here; Wal Mart and Mayhem are a perfect match.  
 WILLARD I don't see why not.  
 GERIE We're the committee.  
 SODA I weld.  
 WILLARD We get to choose.  
 SODA I weld.  
 ETHEL Well, aren't you the surprise.  
 SODA I could make the time capsule.  
 FILUS I'm not sure that's what Mayhem has in mind.  
 SODA We could build it from scratch.  
 HORACE That's a thought.  
 SODA Our own design.  
 FILUS We all know what your capsule would look like!  
 MORRIS It's a possibility, certainly; but we haven't exhausted all our options yet.  
 DOLLY Is it okay if I leave my cell phone on?  
 THELMA Are you expecting a call?  
 GERTIE Nobody's in trouble, I hope.  
 DOLLY Oh, no.  
 GERTIE 'Cause my Granddaddy's in the hospital, with the pneumonia.  
 DOLLY Nothing like that.  
 FILUS Who comes up with those annoying ring tones?  
 DOLLY Just being open to the miracle.  
 ETHEL She expecting a call from God?  
 DOLLY Isn't that right, Reverend Morris?  
 GERTIE No, someone better.  
 ETHEL Somebody with working parts.  
 THELMA I like Soda's idea.  
 FILUS Oh, all you artists and freak types stick together.  
 WILLARD I'm intrigued, too.  
 ROSS Who you calling freak?

FILUS Oh, Ross, being gay is in a whole different category.  
 ETHEL Don't ask, Ross.  
 WILLARD Did you have something in mind, Soda?  
 HORACE This is getting too complicated.  
 SODA Maybe something...(long pause)...that looks like a seed pod.  
 WILLARD I sorta like it.  
 THELMA It *is* buried!  
 HORACE You could make something like that?  
 THELMA And all the artifacts inside are, like...the seeds.  
 HORACE Out of metal?  
 ROSS But does it say *Mayhem*?  
 DOLLY What about a wisteria blossom?  
 ETHEL Pod, Dolly, not blossom  
 THELMA What about a sweet gum pod?  
 FILUS I'd recognize a milkweed pod.  
 GERTIE I don't know what sweet gum looks like.  
 DOLLY No weeds.  
 GERTIE Nothing that causes hay fever.  
 ROSS Are they pretty?  
 DOLLY Lotus pods are attractive.  
 ROSS The ones used in flower arrangements?  
 ETHEL What about moon flower seeds?  
 FILUS Oh, yes!  
 THELMA They're beautiful!  
 ROSS They have these fanciful ribs...  
 FILUS You've seen them!  
 THELMA It's like a pendant.  
 DOLLY A piece of jewelry!?  
 FILUS Gertie, that's brilliant; a brilliant idea.  
 WILLARD I do think we should not lose sight of the fact....  
 FILUS Just brilliant!  
 WILLARD That Soda was the one to suggest....  
 FILUS I'd give anything to have your imagination.  
 WILLARD A pod.  
 FILUS And what it says about Mayhem, lovely, just lovely.  
 WILLARD So, we're agreed?  
 GERTIE I think so.  
 ETHEL Morris, why are you looking so unhappy?  
 WILLARD The capsule will be made to resemble a moon flower pod.  
 THELMA Wait 'til Ella gets wind of this; she works at the nursery.  
 MORRIS Soda, where are you living at the moment?  
 THELMA Anything botanical gets her going.  
 SODA With my aunt.  
 MORRIS Your aunt has welding equipment?  
 SODA No.  
 MORRIS Well, I'm concerned....

WILLARD I see where you're going, Morris.  
MORRIS Where are you going to manufacture this pod?  
SODA I'll find a place.  
HORACE I'll take care of it.  
MORRIS That's a risky enterprise...welding makes sparks...sparks burn down towns.  
HORACE I'm sure Ned will let us use his body shop.  
GERTIE How's Sonny doing?  
ETHEL Morris, you've been reading too much Bible.  
HORACE In the last two races he finished third and fifth.  
DOLLY He musta made a lot of money!  
ROSS Sonny?  
DOLLY Horace loves the NASCAR.  
GERTIE He sponsors a driver, Sonny Bruniski.  
FILUS You think Sonny has something he might want to put in the capsule?  
GERTIE The last name's made up, to sound Italian.  
DOLLY No, I think it's Polish.  
FILUS Italians are famous for their speed.  
MORRIS Gertie, you've been to Poland.  
GERTIE No, I go to central Africa, mostly.  
FILUS They are separate countries, aren't they?  
WILLARD Aren't you about to go on another safari?  
GERTIE In September.  
DOLLY Next month.  
FILUS I've never set foot in a plane.  
ROSS I can't wait to go back to Greece; it's my favorite country.  
GERTIE You're afraid of heights?  
FILUS I just don't see the world out there has anything to offer better than Mayhem.  
THELMA And you don't mind going alone?  
DOLLY If I were among foreigners, I'd need a man.  
THELMA What about you, Willard, could you travel alone?  
ETHEL Thelma!  
THELMA What?  
ROSS Let's move on.  
THELMA It's been over a year.  
GERTIE Thelma!  
MORRIS Can't you see; you're upsetting Willard.  
WILLARD No, it's okay.  
THELMA Did I say something wrong?  
ROSS Thelma.  
THELMA We all knew Francis.  
FILUS A lovely, lovely person, Willard.  
THELMA She died and we all miss her....  
ETHEL Really, enough now!  
THELMA What's wrong with talking about it?  
FILUS We're here to celebrate Mayhem.  
THELMA It happened; it's true.

FILUS (A strong outburst). Sometimes people don't want the truth!  
GERTIE It's not just Willard.  
ETHEL Some things are just too painful to talk about!  
FILUS (Repeats the line). Some things are just too painful to talk about!  
SODA You can talk about my Dad.  
ROSS See where it leads?  
SODA It doesn't bother me.  
GERTIE Really?  
FILUS Now that you bring it up...what really happened there?  
DOLLY Everybody knew your Dad's situation....  
FILUS We just don't know the details.  
THELMA Do you have any idea why?  
FILUS Did he leave a note? I heard he left a note.  
DOLLY Was it as gruesome as I imagine?  
FILUS Who cleaned up the mess?  
ROSS Did you see him in person?  
GERTIE We don't mean to pry.  
SODA Yeah.  
FILUS I don't know what I'd do if my husband committed suicide.  
THELMA Do you remember what it said?  
SODA It was more an apology than an explanation.  
DOLLY Was it in pen or pencil?  
SODA Just...that he lost hope...and he was sorry.  
DOLLY I composed a suicide letter once.  
ETHEL Pen or pencil?  
DOLLY It makes a difference!  
SODA I don't know.  
DOLLY Mine was in pencil.  
FILUS Lost hope?  
DOLLY I kept erasing words and replacing them.  
FILUS Why did your Daddy lose hope?  
SODA I dunno. He'd been trying for over two years to find a job.  
ETHEL He didn't collect welfare?  
SODA It's not the same....  
MORRIS Well, I'm sorry, Soda. Your father should have come to us for help.  
SODA He did.  
HORACE I don't recall him...personally...reaching out.  
SODA He did.  
THELMA (After a long pause). I'm sorry, Soda.  
SODA Thanks.  
THELMA No, really. I'm sorry.  
SODA You still work in the cafeteria?  
THELMA Yeah.  
SODA I remember you...behind the counter... 'cause you were different from the others.  
THELMA Most folks say crazy.  
GERTIE Thelma, be reasonable!

FILUS Nobody says that!  
 THELMA They do. I was in an institution for awhile....  
 GERTIE It was very short-lived, Thelma,  
 THELMA Now I write poetry.  
 SODA Maybe we should put one of your poems in the capsule.  
 THELMA That's nice. I thought about it. But most folks sorta grimace when they read them, or their eyes glaze over.  
 SODA Assholes.  
 FILUS Poems aren't for everybody.  
 SODA You should do it! Don't give a shit about us. When it's time to dig up the capsule, none of us will be around.  
 WILLARD I think we should include a few of your poems, Thelma.  
 THELMA Did you ever read any, Willard?  
 ETHEL What are you saying?  
 WILLARD No.  
 THELMA Then you're patronizing me, aren't you?  
 HORACE It's another way of saying the world's about to end. Goodbye Mayhem.  
 SODA Do you have any memorized?  
 THELMA A few, I suppose.  
 ETHEL Every Thursday Thelma reads to the old folks at Ashcroft Homes. Ask her to take you.  
 SODA You read your poetry?  
 THELMA I tried. They prefer children's stories.  
 FILUS Well, at that stage, who can blame them?  
 GERTIE If only it didn't smell like sour cheese.  
 FILUS What was it like...in the asylum, Thelma?  
 ETHEL Oh, Filus, those places aren't called asylums anymore.  
 DOLLY They're more like hotels.  
 ROSS Everyone has a private room with twenty-four hour room service....  
 THELMA It's not like that.  
 ROSS With individual counseling sessions.  
 FILUS So if I crack up, I get to have a vacation?  
 ETHEL Everybody, imagine Morris as the psychiatrist.  
 DOLLY I could use a vacation.  
 HORACE He'd be good.  
 ETHEL Ugh!  
 HORACE I like his advice.  
 FILUS What sent you there in the first place?  
 GERTIE Oh, Filus. Show a little tact.  
 FILUS I'm just expressing my concern.  
 GERTIE There are limits, you know.  
 FILUS Can't a person exercise his Christian rights?  
 THELMA My fantasies failed me, Filus.  
 DOLLY You gotta have fantasies!  
 THELMA So I re-construed reality.  
 FILUS We all do that!

THELMA Uncle Jack became Whitman. My sister was Sexton. Jackie was Plath. You get the picture.

SODA Who is Whitman?

ETHEL A famous poet.

SODA And Sexton?

ETHEL Another poet, like Path, who struggled with depression.

DOLLY (Touches THELMA). You must have been lonely.

THELMA You can't imagine.

DOLLY I can.

FILUS I wouldn't mind being the object of someone's imagination.

WILLARD Now that we settled on a container....

HORACE Yes. A container....

WILLARD We need to come up with a list of items to put in it.

FILUS Well, for starters, I know Ethel would like to include her book.

DOLLY Ethel wrote a book?

FILUS It's not a best-seller or anything....

DOLLY You really think the world's going to end, Soda?

ETHEL It's a short pamphlet on the history of Mayhem.

HORACE Where can I get a copy?

ETHEL You should know, Horace, they're sold at your Seed and Farm Supply Store. Every fact's been thoroughly researched.

WILLARD The Chamber keeps some in the back room

ETHEL The library keeps them in stock.

WILLARD What is the population of Mayhem?

ROSS We have nine stop lights.

ETHEL Four thousand three hundred twenty seven.

MORRIS I would have guessed more.

GERTIE We should all read Ethel's book.

HORACE Are you counting the new one at the outlet center?

GERTIE Did any famous people come from Mayhem?

ETHEL Robin Gibbons did a baton routine for forty eight hours and made the Guinness Book of World Records.

DOLLY Where's Mayor Grimstad?

ETHEL Does that count?

GERTIE He'll be along soon, Dolly.

WILLARD If nobody objects, we'll include Ethel's book on the life of Mayhem.

ETHEL *History* of Mayhem.

FILUS My sister gave me a video for the capsule.

HORACE Wait....

THELMA I like the idea of Mayhem on film.

FILUS It's a dance performed by Paula's daughter.

HORACE What does that have to do with the ses...e...quicentennial?

ETHEL Will they even have video players in 2165?

HORACE This is not a free-for-all....

DOLLY People record everything nowadays.

HORACE Every Tom, Dick and Harry shouldn't just throw what they want into the capsule.

ETHEL I blame it on YouTube.  
 THELMA A young boy impaled himself with a fish hook.  
 WILLARD In the mouth?  
 HORACE On purpose?  
 THELMA Yeah.  
 DOLLY That's nothing!  
 THELMA Came right out his cheek.  
 DOLLY I seen a man skin a live snake with his teeth and eat it raw.  
 MORRIS And you watched?  
 THELMA It got a million hits.  
 FILUS Everybody thinks he's a celebrity.  
 ETHEL Who can forget Susan Boyle?  
 FILUS There's a Cinderella story for all ugly, old, talented broads.  
 GERTIE I'm waiting for the impossible clip....  
 MORRIS What's that?  
 GERTIE A man cutting off his own penis!  
 FILUS I'd watch that!  
 DOLLY They do that to women in some countries.  
 SODA If you accept Paula's video, you should include some of Thelma's poems.  
 HORACE We're not making room for Paula's little girl dancing!  
 MORRIS I propose a copy of Mayhem Sentinel.  
 FILUS Who's going to tell Paula?  
 THELMA Yes! Yes!  
 FILUS I'm not relaying the decision.  
 GERTIE It's a snapshot of our community.  
 HORACE Which issue?  
 FILUS She'll be crushed.  
 GERTIE Let Willard pick.  
 FILUS Any idea?  
 THELMA Willard, I like your columns which feature hometown heroes.  
 DOLLY What about the time when we had that freak tornado?  
 ROSS I'm against including the newspaper unless we cut out Otis.  
 MORRIS Otis is part of our community.  
 SODA Who's Otis?  
 ETHEL You don't read the paper?  
 SODA Hardly.  
 ROSS Every week Otis writes a letter to the Sentinel....  
 WILLARD The man's bored.  
 ROSS Hateful letters about gay people....  
 WILLARD Otis is a fanatic.  
 ROSS And it's published!  
 WILLARD Nobody takes him seriously.  
 ROSS You could stop it! Put an end to the bigotry!  
 WILLARD I'm not the editor!  
 ROSS No, but the editor is your friend!  
 WILLARD Leave Charlie out of this.

ROSS Charlie would stop publishing the letters...if you asked him.  
WILLARD Take up your anger with Otis.  
ROSS Don't you have any moral responsibility?  
WILLARD It's a free country. The man is just exercising his rights.  
ROSS Where's your compassion?  
WILLARD I'm not the enemy.  
ROSS Why indulge Otis!? To stir up the flames? To boost sales?  
WILLARD Charlie is simply letting his readers voice their opinions.  
ROSS What a crock! It's more insidious than that!  
WILLARD If I didn't know better, I'd say you're insulting Charlie.  
ROSS Forget Charlie! Why, Willard?!  
WILLARD Ross, not here.  
ROSS Why don't you find it repugnant?  
WILLARD Not now.  
ROSS Is it because you secretly agree with Otis!?  
WILLARD That is an unkind remark.  
ROSS Remember Marty? Why do you think he killed himself?  
WILLARD I have no idea.  
ROSS Otis shit....  
WILLARD I won't tolerate this....  
ROSS It's shit like that – published week after week - that poisons a young boy's heart.  
With all that hate, he can't see there are people in the world who would embrace him.  
MORRIS Ross, you're being unfair.  
ROSS So help me God, I want Marty's obituary in that capsule!  
MORRIS It's unfair to blame others....  
ROSS Not a word from you!  
DOLLY Maybe the newspaper isn't such a good idea.  
GERTIE Ross, honey, the capsule is meant to show what life in Mayhem in 2012 was like.  
That was us...that *is* us. (Pause). Maybe we should include both.  
ROSS (Shaking his head in agreement). I'm sorry if I offended anyone.  
WILLARD No.  
ROSS Gertie's right.  
WILLARD Take your time.  
DOLLY What do you say? Let's see if we can find some happy items for our little casket.  
HORACE Florence volunteered her collection of bumper stickers.  
FILUS I'm getting hungry.  
HORACE They're hilarious.  
MORRIS Why would anyone collect bumper stickers?  
DOLLY I collect china cups.  
GERTIE Filus collects dolls.  
DOLLY Ross has his trophies.  
MORRIS Bumper stickers?  
THELMA It's like Facebook for the back of your car.  
ETHEL If any were printed in 2012, maybe....  
ROSS This time capsule is not meant to be a warehouse of people's hobbies!  
ETHEL Otherwise, they're not really relevant.

FILUS You think like a book, Ethel.  
 HORACE Isn't it wonderful how the internet is one big suppository...at our fingertips.  
 ETHEL I do ninety percent of my shopping on line.  
 DOLLY The whole system is too complicated for me.  
 SODA I could show you.  
 DOLLY Every transaction requires a password, nowadays.  
 WILLARD Isn't that the truth?  
 FILUS You can't even open a cookie jar without a code.  
 DOLLY Who can remember all those numbers?  
 ETHEL It's for our safety.  
 SODA I think it would be fun to include a list of passwords in the capsule.  
 ETHEL To prevent fraud.  
 SODA See if the assholes can figure out which codes belongs to which people.  
 ROSS I'm not giving out any passwords!  
 SODA It would be, like, a puzzle...for them to solve.  
 THELMA Why, Ross? They open porn sites?  
 DOLLY You can do that!?  
 ROSS Shut up.  
 DOLLY See porn on the computer?  
 SODA Hello!  
 DOLLY What did you say, Soda?  
 FILUS That's disgusting!  
 DOLLY You can show me?  
 WILLARD I thought the internet was regulated.  
 DOLLY Morris, did you know people log on to access porn?  
 MORRIS I'm a preacher, Dolly,  
 THELMA Anybody could figure out which passwords belong to me.  
 DOLLY This is all new to me.  
 THELMA They all are names of poets.  
 DOLLY I thought people had to go to the adult store in Denison to see that kind of stuff.  
 GERTIE Mine are reconfigurations of the names of my pets.  
 WILLARD I guess we're all pretty predictable.  
 HORACE I pretty much stick to the same sites on line.  
 DOLLY Has anyone heard Linford's new plan for the thrift shop?  
 THELMA I love brown bag Monday.  
 GERTIE It hasn't gotten any better?  
 THELMA Anything you can stuff in a bag for five dollars.  
 DOLLY Oil and vinegar. That's us.  
 THELMA It used to be two.  
 DOLLY Linford wants to hang up a few bed sheets in one corner and turn the space into a tattoo parlor.  
 FILUS The idea of wearing someone else's clothes is gruesome.  
 SODA That can change pretty easily.  
 ETHEL It is a popular sport nowadays.  
 DOLLY I'm against it.  
 MORRIS I thought your type would be all for it.

DOLLY Well, of course I like tattoos.  
 SODA Filus, you should get one.  
 DOLLY I have three myself.  
 SODA A rosebud. Somewhere private.  
 DOLLY The problem is...Linford wants to bring in his friend Kenny.  
 FILUS Do we know Kenny?  
 DOLLY It would be part-time.  
 THELMA I'd try it.  
 GERTIE We'll go together, Thelma!  
 DOLLY Kenny's not real particular about his needles.  
 GERTIE Oh!  
 DOLLY All Linford cares about is the money.  
 GERTIE I thought you need a license to do tattoos.  
 DOLLY You know how that goes.  
 GERTIE You have to put your foot down.  
 DOLLY Linford is a stubborn clod.  
 GERTIE If it helps, I'll talk to Linford.  
 DOLLY Thanks, Gertie.  
 GERTIE I'm good friends with his aunt.  
 DOLLY What do you mean, Morris? My type?  
 MORRIS Just that you're a free spirit.  
 DOLLY A slut? Is that what you mean?  
 MORRIS I didn't say that.  
 DOLLY I hear the little preacher inside. A slut.  
 MORRIS I only meant you do hang out with a rougher crowd.  
 FILUS It's not a secret, Dolly.  
 DOLLY Oh, yes! The truck stop is a cesspool of thugs!  
 FILUS Their cheese steaks are good.  
 DOLLY I like stimulating conversation.  
 HORACE I'm told girls cruising the parking lot....  
 DOLLY I'm not going to find it in Mayhem.  
 HORACE Can make a lot of money.  
 DOLLY What do we have? A donut shop and one lousy diner that closes at six-thirty.  
 SODA Right.  
 WILLARD I've asked them to stay open until seven.  
 DOLLY We girls can't be blamed for wanting a little excitement, Morris.  
 ROSS (In good humor, with only the slightest sarcasm). There's always Wednesday night prayer meeting, Dolly.  
 HORACE It's probably stupid.  
 FILUS What?  
 THELMA Dolly, I think your phone is ringing.  
 HORACE I'm not an educated man.  
 FILUS Horace, you're miles ahead of most college graduates.  
 HORACE But I run a pretty good business.  
 GERTIE Yes, you do.  
 ETHEL What a racket.

WILLARD You made a name for yourself, Horace,  
 FILUS I have Tammy Wynette on my phone.  
 HORACE I thought...maybe a few packs of seeds....  
 THELMA Soda, did you hear? (Whispers). Seeds!  
 HORACE Sealed in air-tight jars....  
 WILLARD What kind of seeds?  
 HORACE With a note.  
 ROSS Mason came out with a new style this year.  
 HORACE Peas. Watermelon. Asters.  
 GERTIE I don't know if seeds can survive one hundred and fifty years.  
 HORACE My mother loved Asters.  
 ROSS What would the note say?  
 HORACE Just instructions.  
 ROSS For what?  
 HORACE How to plant and tend the seeds.  
 FILUS You don't think people in the future will be capable of growing common vegetables?  
 HORACE I'm afraid...maybe not.  
 FILUS That's just silly, Horace.  
 MORRIS A little dirt. Water. Sunshine.  
 ETHEL Don't tell me you're like Soda - thinking the world's about to end.  
 FILUS The sun's hotter than it used to be; that's for sure.  
 WILLARD We just had our coldest winter ever.  
 FILUS Morris, you should do something about that.  
 MORRIS (Confused). Have you tried prayer?  
 FILUS When you're elected to Congress.  
 GERTIE He's running for State Assembly.  
 MORRIS *Thinking* about running....  
 HORACE You'd get my vote.  
 DOLLY We need more evangelists in government.  
 ETHEL I don't agree at all.  
 DOLLY You only say that because you're an atheist.  
 FILUS That's what happens when you're around too many books.  
 THELMA Who's our congressman? Does anyone know?  
 GERTIE We should invite him to the ceremony.  
 HORACE Morris, no doubt you'll be rubbing elbows with politicians. How many are Christians?  
 DOLLY Muslims get all the attention.  
 FILUS That's the media.  
 DOLLY Everything's corrupt.  
 GERTIE I just ignore it.  
 ROSS Mormons seem to be on the rise.  
 FILUS Me, too.  
 HORACE You can't ignore taxes.  
 ROSS The rich do.  
 HORACE The rich aren't like the rest of us.  
 FILUS The rich get away with everything.

DOLLY           What can you do?  
 ROSS            Gertie goes to Africa.  
 WILLARD       (Not sarcastically, sweetly). Thelma writes poems.  
 HORACE         Gertie hunts deer.  
 ETHEL          I never understood that about you, Gertie.  
 SODA           (Surprised, impressed, a little jealous). Gertie with a gun?  
 GERTIE         What's to understand?  
 ETHEL          You don't shoot the wildlife in Africa!  
 GERTIE         Deer aren't endangered.  
 HORACE         They're a nuisance.  
 DOLLY          They make good eating.  
 MORRIS         Why Africa, Gertie?  
 HORACE         Ask any farmer.  
 ETHEL          Whatever, Horace.  
 HORACE         Hey, now.  
 ETHEL          Admit it. Demonizing deer is good business!  
 HORACE         What are you saying?  
 ETHEL          Creating enemies, in any form, is profitable. It sells guns.  
 HORACE         That's what I do?  
 ETHEL          Why else would a seed and farm supply store sell firearms?  
 HORACE         Why do you hate me, Ethel?  
 ETHEL          Because the man who killed my sister bought the bullets at your store!  
 HORACE         Whoa! You can't hold me responsible for that.  
 ETHEL          But I do.  
 HORACE         When the ammunition leaves the store, it's out of my control.  
 ETHEL          (Slowly, with great sarcasm). Yeah. We're all just innocent bystanders.  
 FILUS          I resent your tone!  
 ETHEL          Because Nate was your nephew?  
 FILUS          I can't be blamed for that.  
 ETHEL          Right.  
 FILUS          We were never close.  
 ETHEL          You knew his temperament.  
 FILUS          It was no concern of mine.  
 ETHEL          You could have done something....  
 FILUS          What?  
 ETHEL          Something to stop him!  
 FILUS          Tell me what!  
 ETHEL          You never had a discussion with your sister about Nate!?  
 FILUS          I might have.  
 ETHEL          Might have!  
 THELMA         This is Mayhem.  
 DOLLY          We *do* like to talk.  
 ETHEL          Did nobody think Nate should be monitored?  
 FILUS          He was no more strange than, say, Ricky Dillard...or Rebecca Stein...or....  
 THELMA         Or who, Filus?  
 FILUS          Never mind.

ETHEL The guy was a fricking nut!  
 THELMA You were going to say me.  
 HORACE There you have it.  
 ETHEL A nut!!  
 HORACE Guns don't kill people.  
 ETHEL Here we go!  
 HORACE People kill people.  
 ETHEL That is such a crock of shit!  
 HORACE It's the truth!  
 ETHEL The truth is...people – deranged people - *with guns* kill people.  
 HORACE Calm down.  
 ETHEL Guns are part of the fucking equation, Horace!  
 DOLLY (After a brief pause). Would anybody like to see Darlene's quilt?  
 ROSS Yes!  
 MORRIS What a good idea!  
 DOLLY (Pulling a quilt form her shopping cart). Soda, could you help?  
 MORRIS We're going to put a quilt in the time capsule?  
 DOLLY Just wait 'til you see it.  
 THELMA Isn't it rather large?  
 DOLLY Just look at Darlene's stitching!  
 ROSS It's a little bold, don't you think?  
 MORRIS People expect strong colors, nowadays.  
 DOLLY If you think it's too big....  
 THELMA Does anybody mind if I have a cupcake?  
 ROSS Is that an original pattern?  
 DOLLY I could ask Darlene to cut it down.  
 HORACE Dolly, your phone is ringing.  
 ETHEL What does it say about Mayhem?  
 DOLLY Oh, dear!  
 WILLARD That we're a strong, vibrant community.  
 SODA (Picking up the theme. Sarcasically). Neatly stitched together...where every thread counts.  
 FILUS I'd like to put that phone in a capsule!  
 ROSS What about a quilt that's a map of the town?  
 DOLLY I let it go to voicemail.  
 WILLARD Maybe we should take a break.  
 GERTIE Ross, you might be on to something.  
 THELMA A map, showing all the streets...and major landmarks.  
 (The group begins to break up and help themselves to plates of food while speaking).  
 ROSS Do you think Darlene could do that?  
 DOLLY Oh, yes! I'm sure!  
 FILUS I'd love such a quilt myself!  
 ROSS We could ask people to donate the fabric.  
 DOLLY I'll ask her.  
 HORACE I was hoping you'd bring cheese balls, Gertie.  
 DOLLY The fabric could be cut from clothes worn by each of us.

GERTIE I'd rather ask people to donate recipes.  
 MORRIS Can Darlene devote a patch to the Reformed Church?  
 FILUS I have a few skirts I'd be happy to donate.  
 HORACE All churches should be included.  
 ROSS I saw these napkins at Franklins.  
 ETHEL Not if they're outside city limits.  
 WILLARD Morris, is your church in bounds?  
 FILUS Whatever this is, it's yummy.  
 HORACE We don't want to eliminate Morris and his congregation.  
 DOLLY Are we out of Sweet and Low?  
 MORRIS Technically, the church is outside of Mayhem.  
 FILUS Should we have said grace?  
 HORACE We could redraw city lines, couldn't we?  
 DOLLY Mayor Grimstad is missing quite the feast.  
 FILUS I'm sure he's getting his fill somewhere.  
 GERTIE He'll be along any minute, now.  
 MORRIS I could say grace.  
 ETHEL Enough with the prayers!  
 FILUS Why do you always defend him?  
 GERTIE His heart's in the right place.  
 FILUS The man's thoroughly incompetent.  
 GERTIE He's had to deal with pain all his life.  
 FILUS You're not involved with him, are you?  
 SODA Is he the guy with all the burn marks?  
 GERTIE Yes, that's Mayor Grimstad.  
 SODA What happened?  
 GERTIE When he was nineteen he was working under the car...draining the gas line...on the street, in front of his house. Somebody drove by and threw out a cigarette butt.  
 SODA That's gnarly.  
 GERTIE His father heard the screams and pulled him out. To this day, no one knows who was responsible.  
 SODA I guess I have it easy.  
 DOLLY That's something, Soda.  
 SODA What about some photographs of ordinary people, like Mayor Grimstad, with handwritten letters.  
 FILUS These salty caramel wings are divine.  
 ETHEL Come to the library sometime, Soda. I'll show you some books. Photographers. Annie Leibovitz. Diane Arbus.  
 THELMA How do you eat these?  
 HORACE They look like fruit burgers.  
 THELMA Have you thought about starting a cooking show?  
 ETHEL What are they called?  
 DOLLY Peach sliders.  
 WILLARD And what's the meat?  
 DOLLY Fig jam and gelatin.  
 GERTIE How cute!

FILUS            Ross, I bet your guests would love these.  
 ETHEL            What's the name, again?  
 HORACE          Fruit bumpers.  
 FILUS            What do you normally serve them for breakfast?  
 DOLLY            Peach sliders.  
 ROSS             Scones and cheese and fruit.  
 WILLARD         Soda, aren't you eating?  
 THELMA          That sounds European.  
 GERTIE           Instead of canned peaches, could you use fresh ones?  
 SODA             I'm on probation.  
 GERTIE           Well, you still gotta eat!  
 DOLLY            I don't see why not.  
 ETHEL            These people who have their pictures taken...who compose letters...what would they say?  
 SODA             I don't know. Something that changed them. A memory about Mayhem. Something unforgettable.  
 ROSS             My letter would be a confession.  
 MORRIS          Oh?  
 ROSS             I'd have a picture of myself, surrounded by all the trophies...awarded to me.  
 FILUS            That would take a big picture.  
 ROSS             Glee Club President. Football Captain. Track Star. Talent Show Winner. Volunteer of the Year.  
 THELMA          It's an impressive collection.  
 ROSS             In the letter I'd say I didn't win a single trophy. I purchased them all – one by one – over the years – at a trophy shop in Columbus and had each one engraved with my name.  
 GERTIE           Well, don't that take all!  
 DOLLY            That's adorable, Ross.  
 FILUS            They're all phony!?  
 DOLLY            It's something I'd do!  
 MORRIS          And you have them all displayed in the foyer of your bed and breakfast.  
 DOLLY            You're forgiven, I'm sure.  
 SODA             That's what I'm talking about.  
 DOLLY            Isn't he forgiven, Reverend Morris?  
 ETHEL            I'd like to hear one of your confessions, Morris.  
 FILUS            What about Eugene, your partner?  
 ROSS             He'd have his own photo and story...but they'd be stapled with mine.  
 GERTIE           Ethel, where would you have your picture taken? In front of the library?  
 ETHEL            No.  
 FILUS            Really? That's practically your home.  
 ETHEL            I'd have a picture of me in Denison, teaching at the YMCA.  
 FILUS            Tonight is just full of surprises.  
 HORACE          What do you teach?  
 GERTIE            Classic literature?  
 THELMA          Romance novels?  
 ETHEL            Self-defense.

SODA Really?  
 DOLLY Like...in...how to take down a man?  
 ETHEL A class in self-defense for women.  
 WILLARD When did this start?  
 ETHEL I think you know.  
 ROSS Just when you think you know a person....  
 ETHEL After four years as a student, the instructor asked me teach a beginners class.  
 DOLLY I'm proud of you, girl.  
 ETHEL It's been one of the best things I've done in my life.  
 HORACE I guess sometimes a punch will do more good than a book.  
 THELMA Gertie, would your photo show you at a campsite on the savannah, surrounded by acacia trees?  
  
 GERTIE I like that.  
 WILLARD Does it come with a story?  
 MORRIS Why Africa, Gertie?  
 GERTIE Oh, yes.  
 ROSS Greece appeals to me much more.  
 DOLLY Just keep your eye on those crocodiles.  
 FILUS What's the story, Gertie?  
 GERTIE No one would believe me.  
 ROSS I'd believe anything, Gertie.  
 GERTIE I've never told anyone this....  
 FILUS Don't keep us in suspense!  
 GERTIE I think...I was born in Africa.  
 HORACE No!  
 THELMA Really!  
 DOLLY Africa?  
 MORRIS Were your parents missionaries?  
 GERTIE And I suspect my father was black.  
 MORRIS Oh!  
 THELMA Really?  
 ETHEL Black?  
 ROSS Africa?  
 MORRIS Not missionaries.  
 SODA Your mother is white.  
 GERTIE I assume. I don't honestly know.  
 HORACE But look at you.  
 GERTIE We never met.  
 ROSS You're adopted?  
 GERTIE Yes.  
 THELMA Conceived in the jungles of Africa!  
 WILLARD This takes it all.  
 THELMA How thrilling!  
 DOLLY You should have told us!  
 ROSS We're your friends.  
 FILUS We like to be in the know.

MORRIS Surely, you harbor resentment – at not knowing your heritage.  
GERTIE No. Only fascination.  
FILUS Looking at you...I don't see a trace of black blood.  
ETHEL People don't use such terms anymore, Filus.  
FILUS Oh, hush, Ethel! Despite what you think, I can be quite progressive. I'm partial to the Negroes. I'm fond of homosexuals, too. Ask Ross.  
SODA Is there any way you might ever meet your parents?  
GERTIE It's unlikely.  
SODA I thought only young people have to deal with fucked-up parents.  
GERTIE Mine weren't that! At least not in my imagination.  
SODA It's different with my generation, I guess.  
GERTIE I try to give them the benefit of the doubt.  
THELMA I like this idea of photographs. And all these luscious stories!  
SODA That's sorta cool.  
WILLARD I think we should have a photograph of Francis – holding one of her paintings.  
MORRIS My wife owns one.  
WILLARD Perhaps we could commission someone to paint Mayhem for us.  
GERTIE A scene of Main Street.  
ROSS Looking west from Maple is the most attractive view.  
DOLLY What about the Fourth of July, when all the lamps are decorated?  
FILUS I wish Max and Ella would do something about their store front.  
DOLLY The Rexall Store in Denison is much more attractive.  
HORACE You'd think with all the money they make on drugs they could afford a facelift.  
DOLLY God, the price of medicine!  
FILUS Thelma, what do you take?  
ETHEL Filus!  
FILUS It's nothing to be ashamed of.  
THELMA What's the remedy for cuckoo lady?  
FILUS I was being complimentary.  
THELMA It's insulting.  
FILUS I only wanted to say whatever it is – it's working fairly well.  
THELMA I've been drinking battery fluid!  
MORRIS Willard, have you ever thought about asking someone out?  
FILUS There's no need to be saucy.  
DOLLY I take Valium and Ambien.  
ROSS Oxycontin is great.  
DOLLY One to get me up and one to put me down.  
GERTIE Does anybody know anything about Viagra?  
FILUS (After an awkward pause). My husband takes Altace, Lipitor and Hydrochlorothiazide.  
MORRIS I swear by Clariton.  
ROSS Dolly, you might want to try Prozac.  
ETHEL Just give me chocolate.  
HORACE You've been thinking of dating again, Willard?  
DOLLY I could use a valium now.  
MORRIS We'll put together a list of candidates for you.

WILLARD It's a little premature.  
 MORRIS There's several unattached ladies at church. Attractive, too.  
 ETHEL Why not post your profile on one of your billboards?  
 SODA Billboards!? People use Match.com for that sort of thing.  
 GERTIE Handsome widower.  
 ROSS Owns profitable business.  
 DOLLY Involved in community.  
 ETHEL Level-headed. Charismatic.  
 GERTIE Loves...? What do you love, Willard?  
 WILLARD Weekend trips.  
 THELMA Handsome pens and honest words.  
 WILLARD Backyard barbeques. Hand-churned banana ice cream.  
 DOLLY You'll be reeling them in.  
 WILLARD A good pair of gloves.  
 ROSS I know what you mean.  
 WILLARD Tulips.  
 DOLLY Aah.  
 FILUS Looking...for big-bosomed gal....  
 WILLARD (Good naturedly, embarrassed). All right. Enough!  
 SODA I have someone in mind for you, Mr. Willard.  
 WILLARD Oh? Is she pretty?  
 SODA Yeah. More than that - quirky.  
 HORACE I'd stop at pretty.  
 SODA Quirky trumps pretty.  
 WILLARD You think so?  
 DOLLY Horace, dating you would be hell.  
 WILLARD Soda, why don't you join us at the table?  
 HORACE I'm married.  
 DOLLY How's that working for Ginger?  
 WILLARD What's it like out there?  
 SODA Bleak.  
 WILLARD I mean cruising Main, making out, drinking Jack.... The dating scene.  
 SODA Bleak.  
 FILUS What about Morris, Dolly? Would he be a fun date?  
 DOLLY Morris likes me; the reverend doesn't.  
 FILUS Ethel, what's your situation?  
 ETHEL My situation?  
 FILUS I always thought Ross and you would make a nice couple, but he's married to Eugene.  
 THELMA Ross, you got married!?  
 DOLLY Who got married?  
 ROSS It's not allowed here.  
 THELMA You can always tie the bow in another state.  
 ETHEL Nobody.  
 ROSS I'm holding out for Morris to run for office, get elected, and change the laws.  
 FILUS Ethel....

HORACE Morris! You would legalize marriage between men?!  
 FILUS Ethel, no pussyfooting....  
 MORRIS "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction."  
 ETHEL You haven't heard?  
 MORRIS Matthew 7:13.  
 ETHEL It's been months now.  
 DOLLY Ethel, it's about time.  
 FILUS Pray tell!  
 ETHEL Gertie and I are having an affair.  
 DOLLY No!  
 GERTIE Ethel!  
 ROSS Who knew!  
 DOLLY Really!  
 ETHEL It's quite serious.  
 GERTIE Stop now!  
 ETHEL Of course, Gertie's husband doesn't know, so, if we could keep it here....  
 FILUS I always had my suspicions about Gertie.  
 ETHEL I'm kidding. I'm kidding. I'm joking.  
 GERTIE That's not funny!  
 ROSS This is too much.  
 GERTIE And what do you mean, Filus, having suspicions...!  
 FILUS Nothing.  
 GERTIE You must have meant something...!  
 FILUS Well, sometimes, you do carry on: Camping in the bush...hunting deer...tracking game. All that outdoor hoopla. You gotta agree. It's sorta manly.  
 GERTIE I'm not like you...  
 MORRIS This is....  
 GERTIE Thank God!  
 MORRIS (Finishing the sentence only because he started it, retreating from his original, intended meaning). One of the mercies of the Lord.  
 GERTIE I don't play the helpless hausfrau at home and then castrate my husband in public!  
 HORACE Willard, you might want to pull in the reins.  
 FILUS I do that!?  
 WILLARD Please, everyone!  
 FILUS Do I dawdle around the house, like a brainless retard?  
 ETHEL No, Filus.  
 FILUS Do I act like a helpless cripple?  
 THELMA That's not what Gertie was saying.  
 GERTIE You are always very busy.  
 WILLARD You have a doll house and vitamin shop.  
 MORRIS You do a great impression of Phyliss Diller.  
 ROSS You have a fabulous collection of celebrity wigs.  
 ETHEL You always happily share your opinion.  
 HORACE You drive a beautiful Continental.  
 ROSS You know how to finger whistle.  
 DOLLY You have the perfect set of false teeth.

ETHEL You have a watch from Tiffanys.  
 ROSS You were the first person in Mayhem to invite Eugene and me for dinner.  
 DOLLY You have a talent for decorating.  
 MORRIS You sing in the church choir.  
 FILUS (Her dignity restored). Thank you!  
 SODA Yeah. The world's gonna end.  
 THELMA One day, at random, we should collect all the notices posted on the bulletin board at the laundromat.  
 MORRIS Why would we do that?  
 GERTIE So many pets go missing.  
 THELMA Put them in the capsule.  
 DOLLY I think someone is kidnapping them to sell abroad.  
 ROSS It's Mayhem's version of the stock market.  
 ETHEL Or Craig's List with pushpins.  
 GERTIE Someone is confiscating our cats and dogs?!  
 DOLLY To serve as food in foreign, gourmet restaurants.  
 FILUS Another reason not to travel.  
 THELMA Folks from Denison are always plastering the board with their announcements.  
 DOLLY Especially those strumpets from the Theatre.  
 FILUS I sold a treadmill through the laundromat.  
 THELMA I prefer yard sales.  
 ROSS You had a treadmill?  
 SODA Once I bought a sleeping bag.  
 HORACE I need to exercise more.  
 DOLLY And it wasn't infested?  
 THELMA Would you like me to do that? Collect the notices?  
 WILLARD Sure. Later, we can decide whether to include them or not.  
 GERTIE We should include a menu from Kelly's Diner.  
 FILUS Why? I always order the same thing.  
 GERTIE It's a reflection of our taste in food.  
 FILUS Meatloaf, mashed potatoes, extra gravy, coleslaw.  
 HORACE Meatloaf, mashed potatoes, extra gravy, coleslaw!  
 ROSS Most of their food comes from a can.  
 WILLARD Who knows? Maybe meatloaf won't be around in one hundred and fifty years.  
 MORRIS Nobody does a better coleslaw.  
 DOLLY I hear the kitchen isn't very clean.  
 ROSS Didn't someone file a lawsuit against Kelly?  
 ETHEL Yeah. The bathroom isn't ADA compliant.  
 DOLLY A complaint about the odor?! Really!  
 ETHEL Kelly's toilets aren't accessible to people with handicaps.  
 THELMA I wish they served cappuccinos.  
 DOLLY That's not right!  
 ROSS If you want cosmopolitan coffee, you have to drive to Denison.  
 DOLLY Everybody's gotta puff and whiz.  
 MORRIS I'd like to include a registry for each church.  
 ETHEL Why would we do that?

MORRIS Future generations might find a record of membership interesting.  
 ETHEL How so?  
 HORACE We trace family roots.  
 WILLARD Why not document religious affiliations?  
 ETHEL I can see it now. These are the people with gold stars.  
 MORRIS Ethel, there's nothing sinister about it.  
 ETHEL While we're at it, maybe we should make a few more lists: High school dropouts, welfare mothers, illegal immigrants, graffiti terrorists....  
 HORACE They're all factors...which affect the character of a town.  
 SODA I'm not a terrorist.  
 DOLLY We know that.  
 ETHEL I was being glib.  
 GERTIE I don't see the problem, so long as we're fair.  
 WILLARD After all, Mayhem does fit a profile.  
 HORACE We're Republican...  
 ETHEL Stop!  
 FILUS Ethel, don't be difficult.  
 ETHEL I don't want to hear the same old party line!  
 FILUS Fine! But that doesn't change a thing!  
 ETHEL I know what we are! I've heard it all my life!  
 WILLARD Don't be too sure.  
 ETHEL We're a hard-working, God-fearing, beer-drinking, flag-waving bastion in the heartland of the greatest country in the world.  
 HORACE It's true.  
 MORRIS I love God.  
 ROSS I work hard.  
 DOLLY I adore beer  
 HORACE I salute the flag.  
 WILLARD I'm proud of Mayhem.  
 MORRIS Are you ashamed?  
 HORACE There's no better place to live.  
 WILLARD You sound ashamed.  
 HORACE Love it or leave it.  
 MORRIS That's what I say.  
 HORACE Mayhem forever – come hell or high water.  
 FILUS I'd be ashamed of myself, if I were you.  
 WILLARD We do a pretty good job.  
 ROSS We've survived one hundred and fifty years.  
 GERTIE I'm not sure. A list of each pastor and his followers? It sounds like a campaign.  
 ETHEL Isn't that what a zealot does? Marching about...shouting.... "Ethel, could you pull some books from the shelves of the library." "Ross, do you have Bibles in each of your guest rooms?"  
 GERTIE Morris asked you to do that!  
 ETHEL He and half the school board!  
 FILUS You have to admit, some books are awfully smutty.  
 MORRIS Look, it was only an idea.

GERTIE That's unconscionable.  
 MORRIS We withdrew the request.  
 ETHEL Only after I threatened a lawsuit.  
 DOLLY I have a shopping cart full of ideas.  
 ETHEL (Still miffed). This was supposed to be a planning session.  
 ROSS Nobody told us to *bring* things.  
 DOLLY Sorry. My girlfriends and I just got so excited.  
 THELMA What's your excuse, Filus, for jumping the gun?  
 FILUS The early worm gets the bird.  
 HORACE I figured it was easier to show the articles than explain them.  
 WILLARD Some of us may have been a bit premature.  
 DOLLY Where's Mayor Grimstad?  
 ETHEL Can we postpone any decisions until we've considered everybody's list?  
 HORACE I realize some of my items might seem a little corny.  
 ROSS I prepared a list.  
 HORACE Just so you know, I promised the Little League Team we'd include the uniform of their most valuable player.  
  
 GERTIE I didn't make a list.  
 DOLLY Soda, what's funny?  
 SODA Nothing.  
 FILUS Thelma, do you have a list?  
 DOLLY Oh, come now.  
 THELMA A small one.  
 FILUS Something's tickling your funny bone.  
 SODA I was picturing burying the capsule without anything in it.  
 FILUA What would be the point of that?  
 SODA That *is* the point.  
 FILUS Nothing inside?  
 WILLARD To be fair....  
 FILUS I guess I just don't think like the younger generation.  
 WILLARD We'll finalize the list at another meeting.  
 GERTIE In the meantime, I'll ask the Mayor for his ideas.  
 WILLARD Can we talk about the program now?  
 GERTIE It's scheduled for New Year's Day.  
 ROSS In the park.  
 MORRIS That's when we actually bury the capsule?  
 WILLARD We'll want a little ceremony.  
 THELMA What time?  
 GERTIE Yes.  
 WILLARD To celebrate the internment.  
 HORACE Won't the ground be frozen?  
 GERTIE Twelve noon.  
 WILLARD We're not actually going to dig the hole at the ceremony.  
 GERTIE It'll be done beforehand.  
 ROSS Has the site been selected?  
 GERTIE Probably by a backhoe.

WILLARD Between the gazebo and the fountain.  
 HORACE That's sidewalk.  
 DOLLY A ditch by the flag makes more sense.  
 THELMA How long will the ceremony last?  
 FILUS Two hours.  
 WILLARD (Said simultaneously with the line above). Thirty minutes.  
 GERTIE Remember, it's going to be cold.  
 FILUS What can you say in thirty minutes?  
 ROSS Some people might be fatigued from the night before.  
 FILUS Surely our efforts merit more than thirty minutes!  
 ROSS Well, I say we start big and invite the President of America.  
 DOLLY The president!  
 MORRIS He's never been in Mayhem.  
 FILUS Does he even know where Mayhem is?  
 GERTIE Who would contact him?  
 ROSS I'd be happy to compose the letter.  
 HORACE Would he hold it against us that most Mayhemites didn't vote for him?  
 FILUS Where would he stay?  
 THELMA I'm behind the idea – one hundred percent!  
 DOLLY Would you be willing to put him up at your B and B, Ross?  
 WILLARD What are your rates?  
 GERTIE Do you have discount rooms?  
 DOLLY He could stay at my home.  
 FILUS This calls for a facelift.  
 DOLLY His wife is the doll.  
 HORACE She's become quite the gardener.  
 GERTIE He's aged.  
 MORRIS Their coming changes everything.  
 WILLARD It happens to all of us.  
 ROSS What an ideal time to announce you're running for state assembly, Morris.  
 WILLARD Some faster than others.  
 FILUS He's sure to endorse you.  
 ETHEL This calls for an extravaganza.  
 DOLLY A gala.  
 FILUS Like the inauguration!  
 ROSS A costume ball.  
 DOLLY Oh!  
 FILUS Yes!  
 THELMA The perfect opportunity for you to buy a new wig, Filus.  
 FILUS We'll be the talk of the county.  
 DOLLY We'll be featured on *The Today Show*.  
 FILUS I'll volunteer for *Good Morning, America*.  
 DOLLY Thelma, will you join me? For the interview?  
 FILUS Ross, come along as my girlfriend.  
 WILLARD That's a perfect time to read your poetry, Thelma, on national TV.  
 ROSS Okay then, I'll be inviting the president.

ETHEL Who will deliver the keynote address?  
 ROSS That goes without saying.  
 ETHEL He'll need a little coaching.  
 FILUS Send him your brochure on Mayhem, Ethel.  
 DOLLY Music!  
 FILUS We need lots of music.  
 HORACE Patriotic songs.  
 ROSS Songs that celebrate the qualities of Mayhem!  
 FILUS I love the high school marching band.  
 MORRIS We have gospel group that's quite good.  
 THELMA The choir at Grace Jubilee is exceptional.  
 WILLARD Ethel plays accordion.  
 ETHEL I'm not in favor of religious music at a state ceremony.  
 ROSS The Glee Club is fantastic this year.  
 FILUS A state ceremony!?  
 HORACE Some of their songs are a little racy.  
 FILUS This is a small town celebration!  
 WILLARD Soda?  
 MORRIS It has nothing to do with the state.  
 FILUS What's wrong with a traditional song that everyone loves?  
 WILLARD Soda, is there a music group you'd recommend?  
 SODA Sure.  
 FILUS This will be macabre.  
 SODA There's this garage band called *Annihilation*.  
 FILUS (Rolling her eyes). I can hear it now. Life is the mucks. Let's all slit our throats.  
 SODA They're a cross between heavy metal, Goth, grunge, reggae, hip hop and bluegrass.  
 ROSS What about a community choir, formed just for this purpose, to perform at the event?  
 WILLARD It would take a lot of work.  
 ROSS Two or three songs. Four, at the most.  
 ETHEL Perhaps someone could write a song.  
 ROSS An anthem to Mayhem!  
 MORRIS We sponsor a contest. Anyone is eligible to enter.  
 ROSS An original song...debuting on January first.  
 DOLLY You can't get much more *American Idol* than that.  
 WILLARD Thelma, this is right up your alley.  
 GERTIE Who should pick the winning entry?  
 FILUS Mr. Harris directs the glee club.  
 GERTIE Could he be impartial?  
 ROSS We need a judge who has no knowledge of music....  
 DOLLY Mr. Harris has hair in his ears.  
 ROSS To keep the decision from being biased.  
 FILUS Horace, what about you?  
 DOLLY Can you sing on key?  
 HORACE My wife says I'm tone deaf.  
 FILUS Well, there's our judge!  
 DOLLY You're the one.

ETHEL I like this contest idea.  
 THELMA It's very engaging.  
 DOLLY It invites participation!  
 ETHEL Can it be expanded?  
 ROSS What are you thinking?  
 WILLARD What do you have in mind?  
 THELMA Ethel, could you compose a test – little known facts about Mayhem – that people would try to solve?  
 ETHEL That would be so easy.  
 MORRIS Which is published in the Sentinel.  
 HORACE There has to be prizes. Big, irresistible prizes!  
 GERTIE What would it be?  
 DOLLY Gift certificates to Harvey's Liquor Store!  
 ETHEL Wouldn't that draw the wrong contestants?  
 DOLLY That is so not fair!  
 SODA Some of the best musicians are drinkers.  
 THELMA We should sell souvenirs. Mugs and such.  
 ROSS Matching t-shirts and caps.  
 DOLLY With a catchy logo.  
 FILUS In red, white and blue.  
 SODA Did you know if you take the letters of Mayhem, scramble them, take away the Y and add an R, it spells "hammer."  
 THELMA Can we have concessions?  
 FILUS I'd be happy to experiment in the kitchen....  
 ETHEL What happens when you scramble red, white and blue?  
 FILUS Until I come up with something unique.  
 ROSS Cupcakes! With little treasures buried inside!  
 THELMA (Breathless). Buried treasures!!  
 GERTIE Ross, you have such a gift....  
 DOLLY What about doves?  
 GERTIE For pulling the strangest ideas out of the air....  
 DOLLY That we release during the ceremony.  
 GERTIE And making them work.  
 FILUS What a preposterous idea!  
 ROSS Doves are for weddings!  
 DOLLY They represent love.  
 MORRIS Does are also a symbol of peace.  
 FILUS That's not what Mayhem is about.  
 HORACE I'd prefer a gun salute.  
 DOLLY Only if they're white.  
 ETHEL Can we not have guns?  
 GERTIE It's typically twenty-one shots, right?  
 ETHEL Soon we'll be pulling the time capsule – draped in a flag – through town on a horse-drawn carriage.  
 WILLARD Actually, that's workable.  
 HORACE What a striking image.

GERTIE Very photographic.  
MORRIS Who will take the photos?  
GERTIE We could post the pictures on-line, on our web site.  
DOLLY I can round up the horses.  
ROSS Derek's a good photographer – and cheap.  
FILUS God no! Not Derek!  
GERTIE I like Derek.  
FILUS He took our anniversary photos last year and the result was appalling.  
WILLARD Did the film not develop?  
FILUS Oh no, the pictures came out. It was our expressions!  
HORACE Did you get a refund?  
GERTIE Could we televise the ceremony?  
FILUS No, that's the impudence of it.  
ROSS Do you think the station from Denison would cover us?  
FILUS He said the fault was ours!  
ROSS They tend to broadcast events about Mayhem when nobody is watching television.  
FILUS Imagine!  
WILLARD It's discrimination.  
HORACE Folks from Denison just can't accept Mayhem has more to offer.  
MORRIS Willard, how much does it cost to rent one of your billboards?  
FILUS I do miss not having a hospital.  
WILLARD The prices vary.  
ETHEL They average about two deaths a day.  
WILLARD Depending on size and location.  
DOLLY My cousin had her foot amputated there.  
MORRIS Give me a ballpark figure.  
FILUS If more people took supplements our health care would go up.  
WILLARD Roughly four hundred a month.  
MORRIS Let's ask city council to sponsor two billboards to promote the anniversary.  
GERTIE Pick one outside Denison  
WILLARD No need to solicit the council for funds.  
DOLLY Rub it in their face.  
WILLARD I'll donate a couple.  
GERTIE That's very generous of you.  
THELMA It was you, Willard.  
WILLARD What?  
THELMA It was you, wasn't it?  
SODA How many years are there in a generation?  
ROSS I don't know. It varies, not?  
ETHEL It depends on when children have children.  
THELMA I see it now.  
ETHEL Twenty or thirty. Why?  
SODA It could be our great great grandchildren who open the capsule.  
FILUS That's a thought.  
THELMA It's so clear.  
DOLLY What, Thelma?

THELMA The last time I was hospitalized, no one would tell me who paid the bill.  
 DOLLY In one hundred and fifty years, we'll all be gone.  
 THELMA Now I know.  
 WILLARD A sobering thought.  
 FILUS I don't think about my great great grandparents....  
 ROSS That's sad, isn't it?  
 FILUS Why would my great great grandchildren think about me?  
 ROSS Don't make us do another list, Filus.  
 DOLLY I'm afraid to die...and get lost in all that history.  
 FILUS We all have to do it.  
 DOLLY Is anybody else afraid to die?  
 GERTIE It's the pain that frightens me. Not the thing itself.  
 FILUS I've begun to sense most things I see, I've seen before....  
 WILLARD There is that.  
 HORACE It's a sign that we're getting older.  
 FILUS Eventually, when nothing is new, I suppose, I'll be ready to die.  
 GERTIE It's all new! Each day.  
 FILUS There's that, too.  
 HORACE The more people I lose, the more familiar death becomes.  
 FILUS Yes.  
 HORACE At some point, I suppose, death itself becomes a friend.  
 DOLLY Why are we talking about this?  
 GERTIE Because we are preparing our grave, are we not?  
 SODA Would anybody mind....  
 GERTIE Did anybody ever Google Mayhem?  
 SODA If I took a picture?  
 ROSS Yes.  
 DOLLY Not at all.  
 FILUS Had I known there were photos, I would have worn a prettier wig.  
 GERTIE Did you click on the satellite option....  
 ROSS Yes.  
 MORRIS No.  
 FILUS What do we look like from outer space?  
 GERTIE And click on the zoom bar?  
 HORACE What does that do?  
 GERTIE You can focus in...  
 THELMA What do you see?  
 GERTIE Or pull back.  
 WILLARD What do you see?  
 SODA (Asking the group to face the camera). Everybody...  
 GERTIE You can't really see people.  
 FILUS Oh?  
 GERTIE Just buildings...roads...fields...and sunlight...and shadows.  
 (Everyone, seated, turns to SODA. Without prompting, they all hold hands. The flash of the camera, which records the moment).