

Cape Morton

The Musical

Book, Lyrics & Music by

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SYNOPSIS

Cape Morton is set in a fictional seaside town during the summer of 1965, where tradition and routine guides daily life.

When shopkeeper Herman Jennings displays a daring new monokini swimsuit in his storefront window, the shocking sight sparks outrage among several citizens and ignites a town-wide debate about decency, change, and who should decide what the community allows.

The controversy leads to a formal town meeting where residents gather to vote on a proposed "Decency Controls" ordinance that would regulate what local businesses may display or sell.

As the votes are cast and the result hangs in the balance, Doris Kimball, wife of the town council chairman, finds herself reconsidering assumptions she's long held about the world in general and her town in particular.

In the end, her deciding vote prevents the ordinance from passing, leaving the town to move forward, uncertain but thoughtful about the changing times.

CAST OF CHARACTERS (11 in total, 5 male, 6 female)

Harold Kimball – Town Council Chair, professional, mid-50s

Doris Kimball – His wife, thoughtful and principled, mid-50s

Agnes Porter – Council member, practical, early 60s

Walter Pike – Council member and caretaker, mid-60s

Emily Carter – Shoreline Gazette reporter, novice, mid-20s

Eli Mercer – Quiet observer of town life, late 60s

Herman Jennings – Runs the Sandpiper Dress Shop, late 40s

Ruth Talbot – Local resident, town busybody, mid-60s

Mildred Kline – Local resident, assistant busybody, mid-60s

Benjamin Curtis – Editor of the Shoreline Gazette, late-50s

Mrs. Whitmore – The town's historian and vocalist, late 60s

Additional Townspeople – Portrayed by simulated silhouettes

SETTING

The story takes place in the fictional seaside community of Cape Morton, during the early summer of 1966.

PRINCIPAL LOCATIONS

Sandpiper Dress Shop (Interior with a visible front window). A small shop featuring a mobile mannequin decked out with such accessories as a beach ball, sunglasses, and a floppy sun hat. The mannequin stands inside the store wearing a controversial monokini swimsuit, but can readily be seen through the front window of the shop.

Shoreline Gazette newspaper office with the editor's desk and a chair for visitors.

Town Hall meeting room of Cape Morton, with a long table and chairs for the town council members, chairs for residents, space for public debate and voting, a piano and a small table and chair for the newspaper reporter.

A simple sidewalk cafe table and chairs where residents can gather for tea and conversation.

Doris' bedroom with a bed, dresser and full length mirror.

The area out in front of Town Hall with a functional exterior door leading down toward a simple bench situated by the sidewalk.

SCENE LOCATIONS AND TIMELINE

ACT I

Scene 1 - Sandpiper Dress Shop, early evening

Scene 2 - Town Hall meeting room, later that evening

Scene 3 - Shoreline Gazette office, the following day

Scene 4 - Sandpiper Dress Shop, later that day

Scene 5 - Town Hall meeting room, the following evening

Scene 6 - Sandpiper Dress Shop, the next morning

Scene 7 - Sidewalk Cafe, the next afternoon

Scene 8 - Town Hall meeting room, the following morning

Scene 9 - Doris' Bedroom, later that day

ACT II

Scene 1 - Town Hall meeting room, the following afternoon

Scene 2 - Sandpiper Dress Shop, later that afternoon

Scene 3 - Town Hall meeting room, that evening

Scene 4 - Town Hall exterior, shortly afterward

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT I

1. Sandpiper Theme (1:49)
2. Cape Morton, My Home - Mrs. Whitmore (3:38)
3. Just Breathe - Walter (4:29)
4. Do What It Takes - Benjamin (3:59)
5. Fabric And Thread - Herman (3:58)
6. Help Me With My Story - Emily (4:34)
7. What If - Ruth (3:28)
8. It Could Be A Doozy - Walter (3:59)
9. I Once Knew A Girl - Doris (4:03)

ACT II

10. It's Always Been This Way - Eli (4:26)
11. Good Luck To Us - Herman (3:54)
12. Meeting Protocol - Harold, Agnes, Walter (1:47)
13. Things Change Anyway - Harold (4:27)
14. I Learned Something - Emily (4:13)

ACT ONESCENE ONE

Sandpiper Dress Shop.

Before the lights come up, we begin to hear hear the "Sandpiper Theme".

After 12-13 seconds, dim lighting rises and we see the interior of the Sandpiper Dress Shop. The storefront window is visible at the stage right.

HERMAN is busily working on re-dressing the mobile window display mannequin.

He removes what was a rather modest house dress and sets it aside. He steps over to the sales counter, open a plain brown shipping box and removes a black garment, a garment which isn't quite visible to the audience. He then dresses the mannequin in that same black garment.

As he finishes, he steps back to review his work, steps forward a moment to make a small adjustment to the neck strap, steps back and nods with approval and then dims the store lights even further, leaving the mannequin to appear as nothing much more than a semi-darkened silhouette.

RUTH and MILDRED slowly and casually enter from stage right as if window shopping. DORIS follows just slightly behind. They all stop in front of the dress shop window.

RUTH glances in the window and nearly does a double-take, then leans forward a bit to peer into the semi-lit dress shop widow as best she can.

RUTH

(pausing)

Oh my God, what the, ... what the heck is that? Is it what I think it is?

MILDRED

(peering in)

I'm not sure, ... but if it's what I think it is, ... it's probably worse than you've imagined.

DORIS steps forward and peers in.

DORIS

(firmly)

Well, ladies... there's no doubt. It's exactly what you think it is.

RUTH

No, no, no. This simply can't stand. Not here in Morton.

MILDRED

It can't. It mustn't.

DORIS

Yes, ... I suppose it certainly shouldn't.

(to herself)

It surely is quite different.

RUTH

(urgently)

Doris, we need to go tell your husband.

MILDRED

Isn't there a council meeting tonight?

DORIS

Actually, yes. There is.

DORIS glances at her wristwatch

In fact, it should be going on right now.

RUTH

Then we need to be there.

Tonight.

MILDRED

Yes, right now!

DORIS

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE TWO

LIGHTS UP

As the lights come up, we view the interior of Cape Morton's Town Hall meeting room. A long folding table sits UPSTAGE CENTER. Seated at the table are HAROLD, Chair of the Town Council, AGNES, a Town Council Member and Recording Secretary, and WALTER, a Town Council Member.

Standing to one side behind the table is a bold American flag. Centered on the rear wall is a large replica of the town seal.

MID STAGE RIGHT is an upright piano, where MRS. WHITMORE is seated on its bench.

DOWNSTAGE CENTER are a number of folding chairs with an aisle down the center.

DOWNSTAGE RIGHT is the main entry door to the meeting hall.

MID STAGE LEFT is a small card table where EMILY, a newspaper reporter, is seated with notebook and pencils.

The only other person in attendance is ELI, who always wears a cap and always likes to sit STAGE LEFT in the back row of the folding chairs.

HAROLD

(banging gavel)

Alright, it's exactly 7:00 pm, so I now call to order this meeting of the Cape Morton Town Council. Madam Secretary, please call the roll.

AGNES

Chairman Kimball?

HAROLD

Present.

AGNES

Councilwoman Porter? ... Yes, I am here. Councilman Pike?

WALTER

Seriously Agnes, this place is nearly empty. Can't you see I'm here?

HAROLD

Walter, just go along, okay?

WALTER

(begrudgingly)

Yeah, yeah, I'm here.

AGNES

All present and accounted for, Mr. Chairman. We do have a quorum.

HAROLD

Thank you Agnes. Now, before we conduct business, let us all stand, face the flag and together recite the Pledge Of Allegiance.

Everyone in the room rises, places their hands across their hearts, as Eli removes his cap and they all mumble together.

ALL TOGETHER

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

(pause)

And now, Mrs. Whitmore, if you're ready for the annual presentation of our Town Anthem ...

WALTER

(head in hands)

Seriously, again? Must we?

HAROLD

(mildly annoyed)

Now Walter, you know very well it's tradition. It has been ever since VJ Day, and now some 20 years later, that tradition will most certainly continue, right here, just as we've always done during the first Town Council meeting of the summer. It's been designed to help keep us well-grounded. It's tradition and as you know, we live and breathe tradition around here.

(MORE)

HAROLD (cont'd)
 (turning back)
 Mrs. Whitmore, please?

MRS. WHITMORE begins to "play" the piano and then sings along.

CAPE MORTON, MY HOME

MRS. WHITMORE
 (singing)
 THERE'S A PLACE WHERE THE TIDE ROLLS IN WITHOUT HURRY
 WHERE YEARS PASS BY JUST LIKE OLD FRIENDS
 WHERE THE DOORS STAY UNLOCKED WITHOUT WORRY
 AND THE ROAD ALWAYS BENDS HOME AGAIN

WHERE THE CHURCH CHOIR SINGS HYMNS WITH DEEP EMOTION
 AND THE OLD TOWN CLERK REMEMBERS YOUR NAME
 THOUGH THE WORLD MAY CHANGE WITH RUSHED COMMOTION
 THINGS HERE SEEM TO STAY JUST THE SAME
 CAPE MORTON, MY HOME, BY THE WIDE FAITHFUL SEA
 JUST THE SAME AS YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN AND ALWAYS WILL BE
 CAPE MORTON, MY HEART, WHERE THE SHORELINE STANDS TRUE
 NOTHING CHANGES HERE THAT MATTERS, NOTHING EVER CHANGES YOU

THERE'S A BENCH BY TOWN HALL WHERE MEN GATHER
 AND THEIR STORIES GROW TALLER EACH YEAR
 WHERE PROMISES MADE HOLD TRUE FOREVER
 AND THE FUTURE IS NEVER UNCLEAR
 PEOPLE MAY COME AND STAY LONG PAST SEPTEMBER
 WHILE THEIR CHILDREN GROW STRONG IN THE SUN
 WHERE THE THINGS WE'RE MOST PROUD OF WE'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER
 AND FORGET THOSE WE WISH WE'D NEVER DONE

CAPE MORTON, MY HOME, BY THE WIDE, FAITHFUL SEA
 JUST THE SAME AS YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN AND ALWAYS WILL BE
 CAPE MORTON, MY HEART, WHERE THE SHORELINE STANDS TRUE
 NOTHING CHANGES HERE THAT MATTERS, NOTHING EVER CHANGES YOU

HAROLD, AGNES, EMILY and ELI
 applaud politely, while WALTER just
 sits and mildly fumes.

HAROLD
 Thank you, Mrs. Whitmore, that was lovely, as usual.

AGNES
 Yes, quite lovely.

HAROLD once again bangs the gavel.

HAROLD

Alright then, let's move along with our meeting agenda. First order of business is to approve the minutes of our last meeting, which were hand-delivered to each of you this morning. Are there any additions or correction to be made?

AGNES

No.

WALTER

(feigning interest)

If you say this is what happened, then it must have happened.

HAROLD gives WALTER a quick glare.

HAROLD

All in favor?

AGNES

Aye.

WALTER

Aye

HAROLD

Alright, on to our old business. We still have to decide if we're going to release funds to decorate the fire hydrant outside the Town Library for the upcoming Fourth of July celebration. Any thoughts?

At this moment, the entry door at
DOWNSTAGE RIGHT burst open and in
rush RUTH, MILDRED and DORIS.

RUTH

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chairman! Stop the meeting. We have an emergency!

MILDRED

(shaking her cane)

No, no, it's not an emergency, it's much worse, it's, ... well, it's an utter catastrophe!

DORIS

(somewhat calmly)

Yes, it really is quite bad I'd say.

All three women stand before the council table, clearly upset and very agitated.

HAROLD

What is it? Is someone hurt? Has there been a fire?

MILDRED

No, it's worse, much worse. It's scandalous! It's offensive. It's like nothing I've ever seen before!

RUTH

She's right, Harold. It's well beyond sinful.

HAROLD

Ladies, I'm afraid I don't understand, please slow down a bit and explain yourselves.

DORIS

Yes, we just saw it, we all did, while we were out taking our early-evening walk. It was right there, Harold, plain as day, as bold as can be, and at the very least, quite surprising to see.

AGNES

What, what did you see?

MILDRED

That thing. In the window. At the Sandpiper. In the window!

WALTER

The Sandpiper? You mean Jennings's Dress Shop?

RUTH

Yes! The dress shop!

HAROLD

Okay, slow down and someone tell us exactly what you saw.

MILDRED

It was there, on display. It was that god-awful, horrid swimsuit. I'm telling you, we could see it inside right through the front window.

HAROLD

(grinning)

A swimsuit? Well then, what was wrong with it. Was it too skimpy? Was it made out of licorice sticks? C'mon ladies, what could possibly be the problem? Oh, I think I know, it was too expensive maybe? Or was it just too shoddy?

DORIS

No, of course not, ... actually, ... it appeared to be rather well-made.

RUTH

But, it wasn't there, I mean it wasn't complete.

HAROLD

Huh?

RUTH

It wasn't right, Mr. Chairman. The top was missing!

HAROLD

I'm sorry ladies, you are making no sense at all, but please, we must get back to our business. I'm sure we can discuss this later on.

DORIS

No, Harold. It can't wait. It really needs to be addressed now.

RUTH

Yes, right now.

MILDRED

Immediately, if not sooner.

HAROLD turns to each of his fellow council members.

HAROLD

Agnes and Walter. I don't see how we can do anything else right now but walk over to the Sandpiper and see what this is all about. So, this meeting of the Cape Morton Town Council will be temporarily adjourned for fifteen minutes, after which time we'll reconvene and determine what if anything needs to be done.

HAROLD bangs his gavel and all three members of the Town Council exit, as do the three women who had barged in. MRS. WHITMORE closes the piano lid and sits quietly in her place, leaving EMILY and ELI as the only others in the room.

ELI stands and slowly strolls over toward EMILY'S table.

ELI
(after a short pause)
Well, I guess the fire hydrant will just have to wait.

EMILY
(smiling faintly)
Sort of like it always does.

ELI
(another pause)
So, have you seen it?

EMILY
The swimsuit? No, but I've seen pictures and I'd heard rumors it might be coming. And to be perfectly honest, I'm not the only one in this town who knew about it.

ELI
How did you happen hear about it so soon?

EMILY
C'mon, Eli, you're the old-timer in this town and I've only been here less than two years. And don't forget, this is Cape Morton. We may not get earthquakes here, but sometimes we do seem to have a habit of manufacturing them.

ELI
(nodding)
So, Miss Reporter, do you think it's actually something scandalous?

EMILY
Well, I can't say, but from what I gather so far, it seems like we're simply talking about a piece of fabric. How can that in itself be scandalous?

ELI
(chuckling)
Hmm, you may have a point there.

EMILY
And from what I've been learned about this town, Mr. Jennings has been selling all sorts of clothing for more than twenty years. And supposedly, he's been selling swimwear nearly that long as well. Some I suspect were rather daring for their day. I mean, this is a beach town after all, so it makes sense a shop like his would want to be selling all the latest styles.

ELI
Well, you're certainly right about that. I remember when Herman first opened up his store.

EMILY
 (pondering)
 It is strange though.

ELI
 What's that?

EMILY
 Seems, people always like to brag how things never change around here, but then, if any change even starts to brew, they up and panic.

ELI
 (sarcastically)
 Well, maybe that's what makes our glorious anthem so special.

EMILY
 (chuckling)
 Yeah, maybe.

ELI
 So, are you going over there?

EMILY
 Me? Of course, but not right now. In time I will. I mean, I have to. I've got a responsibility to the Gazette.

They both look at each other, somewhat curious and somewhat amused.

The Town Council members and the three ladies who barged in earlier return to the meeting hall, only a tiny bit calmer, though much less agitated.

ELI returns to his seat.

HAROLD
 If the council members would please take their seats, ... and ladies, if you don't mind, please sit down as well.

MILDRED, RUTH and DORIS take seats in the front row of chairs.

HAROLD
 (pause)
 Alright, after our brief adjournment, I'd like to formally reconvene this meeting of the Cape Morton Town Council.
 (MORE)

HAROLD (cont'd)
(banging gavel)

Before I put forward my recommendation on this matter, do either of the other Council Members have anything they'd like to say.

AGNES

No thank you. Not me.

HAROLD

Walter?

WALTER

Sure, I've got a few thoughts to share.

AGNES
(sarcastically)

What else is new?

WALTER steps from behind the council table and stands off to the side of the meeting room so all can see and hear him.

HAROLD

Very well, go ahead.

JUST BREATHE

WALTER
(singing)

JUST FIFTEEN MINUTES AGO
WE WERE DISCUSSING HYDRANTS AND PAINT
BUT NOW CIVILIZATION'S IN PERIL
'CAUSE SOME FABRIC IS AND SOME FABRIC AIN'T
THERE'S GAS IN THE PUMPS
AND THERE'S FISH IN THE SEA
BUT LORD HELP US ALL
THE TOP'S NOT THERE WHERE IT ONCE USED TO BE

IS IT JUST ME
OR IS THE WHOLE TOWN GOING NUTS
WE TRUST IN THE FLAG
THEN PANIC WHEN FASHION TAKES CUTS
WE SWEAR NOTHING HERE WILL UNDERGO CHANGE
THEN TREMBLE WHEN SOMETHING DOES

IS IT JUST ME
OR ARE WE DRAMATIC BECAUSE
BECAUSE WE LIKE IT THAT WAY

LAST WEEK IT WAS MUSIC TOO LOUD ON THE BEACH
(MORE)

WALTER (cont'd)

AND BOYS GROWING SIDEBURNS WAY DOWN PAST THEIR CHEEKS
 THE RADIO'S SHAKIN' THE SODA SHOP WALLS
 BALLGAMES KEEP LOOKING MORE LIKE NEIGHBORHOOD BRAWLS
 KIDS ARE DANCING WAY TOO CLOSE
 AND THE PUNCH SEEMS MUCH TOO STRONG
 AND THEN PARENTS ARE TOLD
 THEY'RE SIMPLY DOING THINGS WRONG

IS IT JUST ME
 OR HAVE WE LOST ALL COMMON SENSE
 WE WHINE OVER HEMS
 LIKE THEY'RE MAJOR EVENTS
 WE WHISPER "DECAY" WHILE ADJUSTING OUR HATS
 AND FIGHT OVER FABRIC AND STITCHES AND STRAPS
 IS IT JUST ME
 OR ARE WE ALL FULL OF CRAP

WALTER does a bit of a soft shoe
 dance during the musical interlude.

NOW MAYBE I'M GUILTY
 YOU KNOW THINGS I'VE DONE
 MAYBE WE'RE ALL AFRAID
 OF THE WAY WE'VE BECOME
 BUT IF ONE LITTLE SWIMSUIT
 CAN KNOCK US ASKEW
 THEN WHAT WILL HAPPEN MY FRIENDS
 WHEN SOME REAL CHANGES COME THROUGH

WILL WE SHOUT
 WILL WE PRAY
 WILL WE HIDE IT AWAY
 OR WILL WE JUST BREATHE

SO IS IT JUST ME
 OR IS THE WHOLE WORLD COMING UNGLUED
 SEEMS WE GO THROUGH UPHEAVAL
 OVER NEWER ATTITUDES
 IF MODESTY HANGS BY A FEW SIMPLE THREADS
 THEN HEAVEN, PLEASE HELP US DO
 WE MUST HAVE ALL LOST OUR HEADS

IS IT JUST ME
 OR DO WE WISH TO EMBRACE
 THOSE MOMENTS OF PANIC
 THAT SMACK US IN OUR FACE
 OR WILL WE JUST BREATHE

BECAUSE IF THINGS STAYED JUST THE SAME
 WE'D HAVE NOTHING TO ARGUE ABOUT
 SEEM WE LIKE IT THAT WAY

ELI applauds quite slowly, yet emphatically, from the rear of the room.

HAROLD

(a patient pause)

Well, ... uh, thank you Walter. That was, ... umm, ... rather spirited.

(another pause)

So now, if we could, let us return to the matter at hand.

Without objection, WALTER returns to his seat.

MRS. WHITMORE begins the play her piano, but is quickly interrupted.

WALTER

Oh jeez ...

HAROLD

No, no Mrs. Whitmore. This is the same meeting. We don't need the anthem again.

MRS. WHITMORE

(embarrassingly)

Oh ... alright.

HAROLD

Now, as I see it, we have a bit of a dilemma. We have a private businessman attempting to run his store, and we have certain townspeople objecting to the ummm, ... let's call it, the candor of his merchandise. And of course, this Town Council most certainly has an administrative responsibility to step in and see if the matter can be settled amicably.

RUTH

You better believe it!

MILDRED

And do it quickly, please!

HAROLD

Alright, alright ladies, settle down. Shouting isn't going to help one bit.

HAROLD turns toward AGNES and slowly whispers in her ear. AGNES nods in agreement. He then turns toward WALTER and whispers in his ear. WALTER nods in agreement.

HAROLD

Okay then, it is the unanimous opinion of this council that no decision can be made at this time.

RUTH groans out loud.

HAROLD

Because, ... more information is needed. More detailed information. Therefore, I'm calling for a special meeting of all interested town residents to discuss this matter right here, in open forum.

(checking calendar)

Now, I see the ukulele club meets here tomorrow night, so we'll have to wait an extra day and hold this special meeting on Thursday night at 6:00 pm. I'll make sure we post proper notice on the Town Hall bulletin board. Anyone with thoughts or concerns will be encouraged to attend.

WALTER

(sarcastically)

Well, that should bring out the entire town.

HAROLD

(glaring at WALTER)

It will be during this open forum meeting when we'll determine just what, if any, next steps should be implemented. Feel free to spread the word to friends and neighbors.

(banging the gavel)

This meeting of the Cape Morton Town Council is hereby adjourned.

RUTH and MILDRED moan an groan, but quickly begin to exit the room, followed by a less upset DORIS.

RUTH

(to no one in particular)

C'mon, let's go, girls, we can start spreading the word tonight!

HAROLD, AGNES, WALTER and MRS. WHITMORE all exit the room.

ELI stands and slowly walks up to EMILY's table.

ELI

(grinning)

So, how your news story coming along now?

EMILY

(shaking her head)

Well, it's a bit hard to say at this point. I've already got a few bones of course, but certainly not much meat to speak of. I'm really not sure what to do next. I may have to seek out some professional advice.

ELI

(chuckling)

Well, welcome to the dramatic and ever-surprising world of Cape Morton, Emily. Goodnight to you and good luck.

ELI exits the room leaving EMILY to sit at her table pondering.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE THREE

LIGHTS UP

The next morning, EMILY goes to visit the newspaper office of BENJAMIN Curtis, editor-in-chief of the Shoreline Gazette, seeking advice about the developing story in Cape Morton.

BENJAMIN is seated at his very cluttered desk as EMILY knocks on the open door jamb.

EMILY

Mr. Curtis? Can I have a moment please?

BENJAMIN

Emily! Of course, come on in. What can I do for you?

EMILY

Well, I'm, not exactly sure. That pretty much why I'm here.

BENJAMIN

Then why don't you sit yourself down and explain, how about that?

EMILY sits in a chair facing
BENJAMIN'S desk.

Okay, thank you.

(hesitant pause)

Well, here's what's going on. I don't know if you've heard or not, but there's a bit of an uproar going on in Cape Morton right now.

BENJAMIN

Well, I am familiar with an ad recently placed in our paper, but let me guess, ... the fine people of Cape Morton think they've discovered something new to complain about yet again?

EMILY

Kind of, and it looks like their discovery could very well wind up involving a few prominent people. There might even be some potentially scandalous behavior.

BENJAMIN

Hmmm, ... how scandalous?

EMILY

Well, I'd like to not tell just yet. I don't want anything to color your thinking, but I do know I need your advice. I need to know how best to handle what could be a very delicate situation as I work on what has the makings of a very interesting, yet provocative, news story.

BENJAMIN

Town bigwigs?

EMILY

Yes, some.

BENJAMIN

What about the rest of the town?

EMILY

Well, it seems as though some of them have already formed an opinion. Or at least they're in development now.

BENJAMIN

(thinking a moment)

Well, I'm certainly no stranger to these parts, nor to its people, so okay, ... maybe you might want to ponder this just a bit ...

DO WHAT IT TAKES

BENJAMIN

(singing)

I'VE WATCHED THESE TOWNS, FOR THIRTY-SOME YEARS
 SEEN THE HAPPY TIMES, AND SEEN THE TEARS
 SOME MEN TELL THE TRUTH, WITHOUT A FIGHT
 WHILE OTHERS CHOOSE, TO LIE OUTRIGHT
 NOW, PEOPLE DON'T MIND, LITTLE WHITE LIES
 IF THEY TRULY HELP, TO KEEP THE OCEAN STILL
 BUT NEWSPRINT INK, SHOULD NEVER TRY
 TO CHANGE A TOWN, OR FORCE ITS WILL

EMILY pulls out her notebook and
 begins taking notes.

YOU DON'T WRITE TO WIN THE CROWD
 AND YOU DON'T WRITE TO KNOCK THEM DOWN
 SO, WRITE YOUR STORY CRISP AND CLEAN
 WRITE A STORY LIKE THEY'VE NEVER SEEN

DO WHAT IT TAKES, TURN OVER THE STONES
 HEAR WHAT THEY WHISPER, WHEN THEY'RE ALL ALONE
 IF IT RUFFLES SOME FEATHERS, IT WON'T BE YOUR FAULT
 'CAUSE THOSE WHO COMPLAIN, JUST AIN'T WORTH THEIR SALT

EMILY takes more notes.

IF SOMETHING'S A-BREWING, WITHIN THAT BEACH TOWN
 THEN HELP IT TO BREATHE, AND STAND ON ITS OWN
 OUR JOB'S NOT TO COMFORT, OUR JOB'S NOT TO CODDLE
 YOUR DEADLINE'S A-COMING, THERE'S NO TIME TO DAWDLE

YOU NEEDN'T KEEP YOUR NEIGHBORS GLAD
 OR BUFF AND POLISH EVERY NAME
 YOU WRITE BECAUSE A SILENT PRESS
 IS JUST A DWINDLING FLAME

SO, DO WHAT IT TAKES, FOLLOW IT THROUGH
 GO WHERE IT LEADS YOU, DON'T SOFTEN THE VIEW
 IF IT COSTS YOU A DINNER, OR YOU LOSE A HANDSHAKE
 I'LL MAKE SURE YOU'RE COVERED, SO DO WHAT IT TAKES

EMILY takes yet more notes.

THIS PAPER'S MORE THAN FOLDED SHEETS
 IT'S MEMORIES IN BLACK AND WHITE
 BUT IF WE LOOK AWAY FROM WHAT WE SEE
 WE LOSE THE RIGHT TO WRITE

SO, DO WHAT IT TAKES, AND WRITE WHAT YOU SEE
 NO NEED TO BE AFRAID, WE'RE A TEAM, YOU AND ME
 IF THE TRUTH GETS TOO HEAVY, I'LL HELP WITH THE WEIGHT
 DON'T EVER GIVE UP, JUST DO WHAT IT TAKES

EMILY SLOWLY closes her notebook
 and sits silently for a moment or
 two, just thinking.

BENJAMIN

Well, what do you think, can you do that?

EMILY

(confidently)

Yes, sir, I'm sure I can.

(beaming)

Thank you!

BENJAMIN

Anytime, Emily. You're more than welcome.

EMILY stands and exits.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE FOUR

LIGHTS UP

It's late the next afternoon as we see the interior of The Sandpiper Dress Shop.

HERMAN is folding clothes at the service counter when the entrance door warning bell rings.

HAROLD enters, glances about very briefly, sees the mannequin, and then walks over to the service counter.

HERMAN looks up while continuing his work.

HERMAN

Harold, you're quite the last-minute shopper, aren't you? It's nearly five-thirty. What can I help you with before I close up?

HAROLD

Well, to be perfectly honest, Herman, I'm not here as a shopper. I'm here on official business. Town business.

HERMAN

Oh?

HAROLD

It seems we had quite an uproar at last night's Council Meeting.

HERMAN

Yes, I heard a bit about it.

HAROLD

(surprised)

Oh, from who?

HERMAN

(grinning)

C'mon, Harold, Cape Morton is a fairly tight-knit community. Let's just say I have my sources. So, is that why you're here.

HAROLD

Yes.

HERMAN

Care to explain?

HAROLD

We're holding an open forum meeting for the townspeople tomorrow night in the Town Council Hall. I'd like you to be there.

HERMAN

I see.

(pause)

Am I being ordered there? Commanded to attend?

HAROLD

No, Herman, you're being invited. You deserve a chance to speak for yourself.

HERMAN stops what he's been doing and sort of stare out into space, glances over toward the mannequin and then pauses a moment or two.

HERMAN

Alright, fair enough, I'll be there.

HAROLD

The meeting will be called to order at exactly 6:00 pm. I'm hoping you'll arrive before the gavel strikes.

HERMAN

(firmly)

As I said, Harold, I'll be there.

HAROLD

Thank you, Herman. Have a good night.

HERMAN

I'll do my best.

HAROLD

As will I.

HAROLD turns to exit the store and notices the mannequin. He stops a moment to give it another lingering glance, then momentarily turns back toward HERMAN, shakes his head just a bit, and continues to exit the store.

HERMAN leans forward over the service counter and appears to be pondering something.

HERMAN
(to himself)
Official business, ... hmmm!

HERMAN goes to the front door and turns the lock, then tidies up his sales counter and even makes minor adjustments to the mannequin, all while singing.

FABRIC AND THREAD

HERMAN
(singing)
I KEEP THE LEDGERS, I COUNT THE TILL
SWEEP UP THE SAND SOME TOURIST MIGHT SPILL
I LOCK THE DOOR AND I DIM THE LIGHTS
JUST THE SAME AS I DO EVERY NIGHT
BUT TONIGHT THESE WALLS FEEL SO VERY THIN
LIKE THE WHOLE DAMN TOWN IS PEEKING IN
AT THE FABRIC, THE THREAD, AND EACH OF THE SEAMS
AS IF I'M PROMOTING SOME TERRIBLE SCHEME

WHY DO I FEEL LIKE I'M STANDING ON TRIAL
WHEN ALL I DID WAS DISPLAY A NEW STYLE?
I ORDERED THE STOCK, AND I PRICED THE WHOLE RACK
THEN HUNG IT ALL UP AND TOOK A STEP BACK
I SELL WHAT PEOPLE COME HERE TO SEE
I SIMPLY SELL WHAT THEY HOPE THEY CAN BE
SO HOW DID I WIND UP ON THIS CENTER STAGE
MIXED UP IN THIS TOWN'S LATEST OUTRAGE?

LAST YEAR IT WAS ALL ABOUT SHORTER SKIRTS
BELL BOTTOM PANTS AND PSYCHEDELIC SHIRTS
EACH SUMMER BRINGS ON ITS OWN FASHION WAR
BUT IN TIME FOLKS SETTLE DOWN JUST LIKE BEFORE
NOW THINGS IN THE AIR FEELS EVER SO TIGHT
MAYBE I LIT A MATCH I KNEW I SHOULDN'T LIGHT
BUT NOW SPARKS ARE FLYING AND STIRRING UP HEAT
ALL FROM MY WINDOW RIGHT HERE ON MAIN STREET

MAYBE I SHOULDN'T HAVE CROSSED THAT LINE
SHOULD HAVE KNOW WHAT WAS THEIRS AND WHAT WAS MINE
'CAUSE RUNNING A DRESS SHOP SHOULD NEVER CAUSE PAIN
BUT SOMEHOW, SOME WAY, THAT'S WHAT THIS BECAME

As HERMAN prepares to sing the next verse he finds himself standing by the mannequin, gently adjusting the fabric.

HERMAN

(still singing)

NO, I NEVER MEANT TO TAKE UP A SIDE
AND I NEVER MEANT TO STIR UP THE TIDE
I ONLY MEANT TO RUN THIS SIMPLE STORE
NOT BECOME THE SOURCE OF SUCH AN UPROAR

SO, TOMORROW AS THEY CALL OUT MY NAME
AND TRY TO FIND SOMEONE TO BLAME
I'LL HONESTLY SAY WHAT I'VE ALWAYS SAID
IT'S JUST A WINDOW DISPLAY
SIMPLY FABRIC AND THREAD

HERMAN turns off the store lights
and exits through the entry door,
locking it behind him.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE FIVE

LIGHTS UP

The Town Hall meeting room is already full with (silhouette) residents "milling, murmuring and deeply energized". The council table is set as before, with a microphone and stand out on front added for public comments.

The Council Members as well as various a few townspeople are milling about, chatting, murmuring and more.

In the midst of all this, HERMAN enters and finds a seat nearest the entry door.

After a few moments, HAROLD steps behind the Council table and speaks.

HAROLD

Ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats so we can get underway.

The other Council Members take their places at the table while the rest in the room moves about to find a seat. RUTH, MILDRED and DORIS take seats in the front row.

EMILY moves to her own table while ELI takes a seat in the back row of the audience seating area.

HAROLD waits a moment or two while scanning the room.

HAROLD

Please, ... everyone. take a seat.

MRS. WHITMORE finally finds a seat in the room near the other residents.

HAROLD
(banging gavel)

I now call this Special Forum of the Cape Morton community residents to order.

As you all know, concerns have been raised regarding Mr. Jennings' shop on Main Street. But, before this council even thinks of making any kind of decision or recommendation, we need to hear from you, the interested residents of Cape Morton.

HAROLD points softly to the front row.

Ruth Talbot has agreed to provide a summary of how this matter first came to our attention, after which time we'll then hear from the shop owner and manager himself, Mr. Herman Jennings.

Ms. Talbot? If you would, please step up to the microphone and state your name and address for the record.

RUTH rises with purpose, already enjoying the attention, as she leans into the microphone.

RUTH
Thank you, Harold, ... I mean, Chairman Kimball. I'm Ruth Talbot and as you all know, I live in the pretty pink bungalow on the corner of Pointe Avenue and Plum street.

Well, this all started a couple days ago when myself and the girls, Mildred and Doris ...

(out to the room)

Stand-up ladies.

MILDRED almost jumps to her feet and waves to the other residents with a sense of glee, while Doris simply remains in her seat, nods her head and softly smiles.

RUTH
We were out for our evening stroll, ... and that's then we saw it.

HAROLD
And what exactly did you see, Ms. Talbot.

RUTH
We saw it!

(MORE)

RUTH (cont'd)

(leaning in)

We saw it, ... through the shop window. It just, ... wasn't all there.

HAROLD

What do you mean it wasn't all there?

RUTH

The top. It was supposed to be a swimsuit, but the top simply wasn't there. The mannequin, ... it was exposed!

MRS. WHITMORE gasps.

HAROLD

Just so everyone here is clear in their mind, was this a mannequin Mr. Jennings was still in the process of dressing?

RUTH

No, Harold, not at all. Because now, two days later, I know it was supposed to look exactly the way I saw it. It's one of those swimsuits invented by some crazy French designer, ... out in California of all places.

MILDRED

Beyond crazy, I'd say!

RUTH

Yes, and it caused nothing but trouble in Chicago with hundred dollar fines and arrests and more. It was covered on the TV news and everything. I actually had to cancel my subscription to Look magazine because of it. And now, well here it is, right here, in our lovely town, and it's already starting to stir up the same kind of trouble!

HAROLD

Okay, so to be very clear, you're referring to what some call a topless swimsuit, what others might call a monokini... correct?

RUTH

Yes, and you can use all the tricky words you want, Harold, but it's trash, it's degrading, and it should be illegal. Cape Morton needs to put a stop to this at once.

HAROLD

(patiently taking a
deep breath)

Alright, thank you Ms. Talbot, you may be seated.

RUTH returns to her seat, almost as if strutting with a sense of pride.

MILDRED

(standing)

So, tell us Harold, what is this Town Council going to do about it?

MRS. WHITMORE

Yes, I'd like to hear that answer as well. I have two young nieces coming to visit very soon and they certainly don't need to be seeing things of this nature.

HAROLD

Alright, patience, please, ... everyone, ... we'll get to possible action steps eventually, but it's really only fair for us to hear the other side of the story.

Herman Jennings, owner and operator of the Sandpiper Dress Shop is here to answer a few questions.

Herman, would you please step up to the microphone?

And like before, state your full name and address for the record.

HERMAN

Certainly.

HERMAN steps forward, smartly dressed, quietly confident.

HERMAN

My name is Herman Jennings and I live at 227 Huckleberry Lane.

HAROLD

Thank you, Mr. Jennings. It's my understanding you've owned and operated the Sandpiper Dress Shop for quite some time. Is that correct?

HERMAN

Yes, my wife and I opened this store back in 1947. She passed away in 1956, but I decided to stay on here in this community and continue to operate the store.

HAROLD

Of course, and we're all very sorry for your loss.

HERMAN nods graciously.

HAROLD

So let me get right to the point, Herman. Are you currently selling something known as a topless bathing suit?

HERMAN

Yes, I am.

HAROLD

And how long have you been doing so?

HERMAN

I received my initial delivery about a week and a half ago.

HAROLD

And how many suits did you order?

HERMAN

Just three. They were a bit on the expensive side so I decided to limit my trial investment to see how they sold.

HAROLD

And how much is expensive?

HERMAN

I set my retail price at \$24.50.

A gasp is heard from an attendee.

RUTH

Can you believe it? Half of it's missing and he has the never to charge nearly five times what any other swimsuit would cost?

HAROLD

(banging the gavel)

And you still possess all three of those swimsuits?

HERMAN

No, I only have one left, I already sold the other two.

HAROLD

You sold them to townspeople?

HERMAN

No, I sold them to tourists who happened to visit the shop. The only one I have left is the one the ladies saw on the mannequin.

AGNES

Are you telling us Mr. Jennings that two tourists just happened to stop into your shop and coincidentally purchased the other two swimsuits?

HERMAN

No, Ma'am, I'm not suggesting that at all. I run a successful clothing business. I don't wait for customers. I
(MORE)

HERMAN (cont'd)
 advertise. This town's been good to me. I don't intend to offend it.

HAROLD
 Herman, do you think this swimsuit is offensive?

HERMAN
 I think it's a swimsuit.

HAROLD
 Yes, but would you call it obscene?

HERMAN
 I'd call it fabric and stitching.

HAROLD
 I see.

HERMAN
 Don't misunderstand me.

HAROLD
 Alright. Thank you.

Are there any further questions for Mr. Jennings from either of my fellow Council Member?

AGNES
 No, not me. I've heard quite enough.

WALTER
 Well, I have only one question, ... have you ever considered retiring the mannequin, ... and maybe finding a model who could at least blush?

ELI
 (chuckling)
 Well said, Walter.

HAROLD
 Walter, I think we best let that one fade off into the night.

(back toward HERMAN)
 Alright. I thank you Mr. Jennings for attending this meeting and for answering our questions.

HERMAN nods toward the Council Members and quietly exits the meeting room.

HAROLD
 Well, I'd say we've all be given quite a bit to think about.

RUTH

So, what are you going to do about it?

HAROLD

I'll be honest, Ruth. I anticipated we might have ended up with two vastly different points of view in this matter, so I've had preliminarily discussions with Councilors Talbot and Pike and we've unanimously agreed, ... this matter will not be decided quietly ... or simply by those behind this table. It will be decided by the good people of Cape Morton. This Monday. Seven o'clock. Right here.

(banging the gavel)

I hereby declare this Special Forum adjourned.

All three Council Members rise and begin to exit, while RUTH, MILDRED, DORIS and MRS. WHITMORE mill about briefly before exiting.

EMILY rises to exit and briefly looks to the back of the room where ELI is standing.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE SIX

LIGHTS UP

The entry bell jingles as EMILY enters the Sandpiper Dress Shop and seeing Herman is on the phone, she begins to browse around a bit.

She quickly spots the mannequin and can't help but stroll over to get a closer look.

But, as she steps toward the mannequin, HERMAN finishes his call, turns and speaks to her, so she returns his way.

HERMAN

Miss Carter, good morning. I'd offer you the proper Sandpiper welcome I give all my customers, ... but somehow I suspect you're more likely here on newspaper business.

EMILY steps up to HERMAN'S sales counter.

EMILY

Yes, sir, you're right, I'm not here to shop. I'm here to try and understand a bit better what's going on with what appears to be a rather unusual news story in the making.

HERMAN

Seems to me, it's the town's reaction that's most unusual.

HERMAN points toward the mannequin.

You've seen it. What's your reaction?

EMILY

Well, I really try my best to stay as neutral as possible, but I must admit, it certainly seems to be a bit on the radical side, don't you think?

HERMAN

Maybe yes, maybe no. But it is a new fashion style and it seems some people have taken an interest. Some very positive, and of course, some very negative. But all in all, it is just a swimsuit, right?

EMILY

I suppose so. But the real reason I'm here, sir, is because of my news article. I certainly don't want to be writing based solely on conjecture or supposition, so who better to get the real story from than the man who now seems to be at the very center?

HERMAN

I'm sorry, Miss Carter, but I can't imagine anything I might be able to offer that you don't already know.

EMILY

Well, for starters, the two suits you sold, were they locals? Tourists? Were they purchased together or were they totally separate sale?

HERMAN

(pausing)

Okay, I realize you have a story to write, but you should know Miss Carter, ... I run my business. What my customers buy, and why, ... that's their business. It's just not mine to share. I hope you can understand.

HELP ME WITH MY STORY

EMILY

Maybe I do, but I really am at a loss here.

(singing)

I'VE HEARD THE RUMORS FLYING
I'VE HEARD BOTH SIDES DECLARE
BUT SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE
SEEMS THE TRUTH IS NOT QUITE THERE

I CAN QUOTE WHAT'S BEING SHOUTED
I CAN PRINT WHAT'S PLAIN TO SEE
BUT THERE'S SOMETHING MORE BENEATH IT ALL
THAT DOESN'T MAKE MUCH SENSE TO ME

SO PLEASE, HELP ME WITH MY STORY
HELP ME FIND THE THREAD
HELP ME STITCH TOGETHER
WHAT'S BEEN WHISPERED AND WHAT'S BEEN SAID

I'M NOT TRYING TO CAUSE AN UPROAR
AND I DON'T NEED ANY FAME OR GLORY
I JUST WANT TO GET IT RIGHT
WON'T YOU HELP ME WITH MY STORY

BUT YOU'VE DODGED ALL MY QUESTIONS
LIKE YOU SWORE YOU'D NOT BETRAY
(MORE)

EMILY (cont'd)

MUST BE THE TRUTH IS SOMEONE'S SECRET
AND IT MUST BE KEPT THAT WAY

YOU'VE SOLD MANY SKIRTS AND DRESSES
AND NOW THIS SWIMSUIT, SO IT SEEMS
BUT YOU SAY THE SHOPPERS PASSING THROUGH
DON'T OFTEN SHARE THEIR DREAMS

I SENSE THERE'S MORE BELOW THE SURFACE
MORE THAN JUST WHAT'S ON DISPLAY
I FEEL THERE'S SOMETHING JUST BENEATH IT ALL
AND IT'S EATING ME AWAY

I'M NOT TRYING TO CAUSE AN UPROAR
AND I DON'T NEED ANY FAME OR GLORY
I'M JUST TRYING TO UNDERSTAND
WON'T YOU HELP ME WITH MY STORY

SO MAYBE IT'S NOT THE SWIMSUIT
MAYBE THAT IS JUST THE SPARK
COULD BE SOMETHING SO MUCH DEEPER
THAT MOVES SO QUIETLY IN THE DARK

SOMETHING NO ONE WANTS TO NAME
BUT FOLKS HERE CLEARLY SEEM TO FEEL
IT'S SOMETHING HIDDEN JUST BELOW
WHAT'S POLITE AND WHAT IS REAL

IF I LISTEN TO THEIR SHOUTING
I MIGHT MISS WHAT ISN'T SAID
SO I'LL FOLLOW EVERY SILENCE
NO MATTER WHERE I'M LED

I'LL TRY TO FIND THE ANSWER
FOR THOSE THINGS I CAN'T DEFINE
AND THEN MAYBE MAKE A DIFFERENCE
WITH THE TRUTH I HOPE TO FIND

SO I'LL FINISH UP MY STORY
AND I'LL FOLLOW WHERE IT LEADS
I WILL DIG BELOW THE SURFACE
AS I TEAR THROUGH ALL THE WEEDS

IT'S NOT MY PLAN TO STIR UP A SCANDAL
AND I DON'T NEED A GRAND DESIGN
BUT WHATEVER TRUTH IT SEEMS YOU'RE HIDING
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I KNOW I NEED TO FIND

SO I WILL KEEP ON DIGGING TILL IT'S FOUND
I'M SURE I'LL FIND IT SOON WHATEVER IT MAY BE
AND THEN I'LL WRITE MY STORY, OH SO CLEARLY
AND THIS WHOLE TOWN WILL FINALLY GET TO SEE

As the song ends, the store's entry bell jingles and in walks DORIS.

She hesitates a brief moment when she notices EMILY, but then walks right up to HERMAN'S sales counter.

EMILY steps back a bit and observes silently.

DORIS

Mr. Jennings, good morning.

HERMAN

(nodding)

Mrs. Kimball, hello, and yes, it certainly is a glorious morning here in Cape Morton. So, what can I do for you?

DORIS

(a bit flustered)

Well, umm, ... I was actually wondering if the, uh, necktie I ordered for Harold has arrived yet. After all, his birthday is fast approaching and if I need to make other arrangements I'll have to get moving on that rather soon.

HERMAN

Of course, I think it has arrived, but let me go check.

HERMAN exits to an unseen storeroom, leaving the two ladies alone.

DORIS

(after a pause)

So, Miss Carter, doing a bit of shopping are you?

EMILY

Oh, no Ma'am, I'm actually doing research for a news article regarding last night's meeting.

DORIS

(a bit nervously)

Oh? And uh, ... have you come across anything of interest?

EMILY

Not really. I mean I probably know as much as you do, but I'm afraid Mr. Jennings isn't much of an open book, if you know what I mean.

Before DORIS can respond, HERMAN returns from the back room with a necktie wrapped in tissue paper.

HERMAN

It's right here Mrs. Kimball.

HERMAN fold back the tissue paper
to show the tie to DORIS.

Here, let me box it up for you.

HERMAN pulls out a pale blue box
with a white ribbon-covered lid. He
places the tissue-wrapped tie
inside, covers it with the lid and
hands it to DORIS.

Is there anything else I can help you with today?

DORIS

No, I don't think so, not at the moment anyway, but thank
you very much, Herman. Good day, Miss Crater

Emily watches Doris turn and exit,
... then looks to the mannequin,
... then to Herman.

A question is forming in her mind
that she doesn't quite know how to
ask.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE SEVEN

LIGHTS UP

RUTH and MILDRED are sitting at a sidewalk table enjoying afternoon tea as they wait for Doris to come join them.

RUTH

I know, and so then I told him, "Ninety-three cents a pound for ribeye steak? That's crazy. For that price you should deliver it, come cook it and serve it up as well!"

MILDRED

(giggling)

And then what happened?

RUTH

Well, I had no choice, I told him to wrap up four steaks. I put them in the freezer and I'll be glad to have them when the price goes up even more.

MILDRED

I think it's just crazy, so I know what you mean. I was in there last week and paid twenty-nine cents a pound for a stewing chicken. That President of ours needs to do something about this. Sometimes I get so mad, but then I think of his oh-so-sweet wife and I calm down again. But all these high-in-the-sky-prices are simply getting too far out of control. I just can't stand it.

RUTH

I agree, they really are crazy. And speaking of crazy, is it just me or does it seem as though Doris has grown a bit distant lately? I mean, I saw her just this morning. She was out shopping and when she saw me she acted like she didn't even want to be seen. So, I can't help but wonder what's going on with her. I just don't know. Maybe she's got something important on her mind.

MILDRED

Oh my God, Ruth, I thought it was just me, and yes, she does seem a bit off, but it's not something I've been quite able to put my finger on.

RUTH

Well, I admit I have been doing my share of thinking.

WHAT IF?

RUTH

(singing)

THERE'S COMFORT AT A SIDEWALK TABLE
IN THE SAME SEAT EVERY DAY
WHERE THE TEA TASTES JUST THE WAY IT SHOULD
AND THE BREEZE BEHAVES ITS WAY

WHERE THE SHOP SIGNS NEVER WANDER
FROM THE COLORS THAT WE KNOW
AND THE TIDE COMES IN ON SCHEDULE
LIKE IT ALWAYS HAS BEFORE

IT'S NOT THAT WE RESIST THE WORLD
OR THINK IT'S ALL A BLUFF
IT'S JUST THAT WHAT WE'VE BUILT RIGHT HERE
HAS ALWAYS BEEN ENOUGH

DORIS KNOWS THIS TOWN AS WELL AS WE DO
KNOWS THE RHYTHM, KNOWS THE LINE
SHE'S THE LAST ONE I'D IMAGINE
EVER CHOOSING TO DECLINE

BUT SHE'S QUIETER LATELY ABOUT IT
DOESN'T SPEAK AS FIRM OR FAST
AND I CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER
WHAT IF SOMETHING'S CHANGED AT LAST

WHAT IF ONE SMALL DOOR IS OPENED
AND IT DOESN'T CLOSE AGAIN
WHAT IF SOMETHING SHIFTS AN INCH
AND NOT THE WAY IT'S ALWAYS BEEN
NOT DISASTER, NOT A FALL
JUST A DIFFERENT KIND OF START
WHAT IF CHANGE BEGINS SO GENTLY
YOU DON'T FEEL IT IN YOUR HEART

RUTH and MILDRED do a bit of light
dancing during the musical
interlude.

IT ISN'T FEAR THAT DRIVES US
OR A WISH TO SCOLD OR SCORN...
IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT ONCE YOU LOOSEN
WHAT WAS TIDY AND WELL-WORN
WHERE DOES IT REST
WHERE DOES IT LAND
WHO DECIDES
WHAT WILL STAND

(MORE)

RUTH (cont'd)

WHAT IF DORIS SEES IT CLEARER
 THAN THE REST OF US CAN SEE
 WHAT IF HOLDING ON TOO TIGHTLY
 ISN'T STRENGTH, BUT SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY
 WHAT IF WE'RE JUST WATCHING HISTORY
 FROM THE SAME OLD CAFÉ CHAIRS
 WHAT IF NOTHING TRULY CHANGES
 AND WHAT IF IT DOES ANYWAY

MILDRED

And what if, what if, what if? The truth is, you or I simply don't know and if she knows, well, I'm sure she'll tell us. After all, we are her very best of friends.

DORIS enters and joins them at the table.

RUTH

Well, there you are, we were beginning to wonder if we'd ever see you today. Your tea is probably already getting cold.

MILDRED

(nervously)

Oh, ... Doris, hi. We were just ... wondering what was keeping you.

DORIS

I'm sorry, girls, I guess I got a bit distracted while running a few errands and I totally lost track of time.

MILDRED

Ughh, I hate running errands on such a beautiful day.

DORIS nods in agreement.

RUTH

(pausing)

So, is everyone ready for tomorrow night's meeting? I really can't believe what all this has come to. Just imagine, an official Cape Morton town meeting called to vote on an obscene garment. I'm simply beyond words.

MILDRED

I agree. Doris, have you been stewing over this as well? It's been driving you crazy, right?

DORIS

Well, I try to avoid getting too worked up over things I can't control. But, it certainly has the makings of an
 (MORE)

DORIS (cont'd)

unusual meeting, I don't doubt that. Still, when all is said and done, I suppose we'll all be glad to finally put this to bed. I just hope the night doesn't drag on too long. That's when things seems to always take a wrong turn.

RUTH

I can't imagine it will take very long for people to vote on getting rid of that horrible garment. Mildred and I are thinking of bringing some "My Vote Is No!" signs. Do you want us to bring one for you too?

DORIS

Oh, no, but thank you. Besides, I'm pretty sure there's a Town Council rule about signs and such. I just think as long as everyone votes their conscience, things will turn out just fine. I'm quite sure of that.

MILDRED

Alright, so no signs, but I can at assume there's a big no vote planned for you, am I right?

DORIS

Now, Mildred. Let's not forget, a vote should always be private until it's cast.

RUTH

But you will be voting no, correct?

DORIS

I'll do just as I expect everyone else will do, I'll vote my conscience.

RUTH and MILDRED look a bit quizzically at each other as all three drink their tea in silence.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE EIGHT

LIGHTS UP

At mid-morning, HAROLD, AGNES and WALTER huddle in the Town Hall, meeting room planning their strategies, depending on how the community vote goes later that evening.

HAROLD

Alright, you know why I called this meeting. We need to be prepared. None of us knows how tonight's meeting will go, so we need to make sure we're ready. We need to have a couple of contingency plans in place.

AGNES

For what?

WALTER

For the inevitable.

HAROLD

So the meeting doesn't get out of hand. So we don't lose control. Who knows what might happen if people get all riled up, as I suspect some may very well do.

WALTER

So, what do you propose?

HAROLD

A plan B.

AGNES

Which is what?

HAROLD

It will be our escape route. I already met with Herman and I honestly don't know what to expect from him. And we already know how wound up some of the ladies are.

AGNES

You mean Ruth, Mildred, and Doris?

HAROLD

Yes.

WALTER

Harold, why can't you control Doris. After all, she is your wife.

HAROLD

(chuckling)

Walter, you've never been married. If you ever had been, you'd know how foolish a thing you just said.

AGNES

Alright then, so what will our Plan B look like.

HAROLD

Well, most people are coming tonight to vote on whether Herman can sell the swimsuit. But others may be looking for something more, something bigger.

WALTER

Such as?

HAROLD

A policy change. A new rule. Maybe even a new town ordinance. People may want us to put something in place that goes well beyond this particular incident and helps to protect the town from all kinds of similar situations across a wide variety of instances.

AGNES

What do you mean, Harold?

HAROLD

Well, you tell me. What if the town movie house decided to start showing X-rated movies, or if the Bayside Tavern decided to bring in barely-dressed young ladies and stripper poles? Or what if the corner newsstand displayed some of those Playboy magazines right out on the street side where school boys pass by every day?

AGNES

Well that would be horrible of course, but do you honestly think those things could happen here in Morton?

WALTER

Did you ever think topless bathing suits would be displayed for sale here in Morton?

AGNES

No, I suppose not.

HAROLD

That's my point. None of us want to have to deal with this kind of thing over and over again. Sure, we know the world is changing, but that doesn't mean we have to change as deeply or as quickly as the rest. So, I think we need to be ready to offer up a motion concerning a new ordinance. A decency ordinance if you will.

WALTER

I think that makes sense. Be prepared. I agree.

AGNES

Alright. So, how do we do that? The meetings only a few hours away.

HAROLD

Well, if it's okay with you two, I'd be happy to go home and draft a motion and ordinance for the voters to consider. The wording can easily be altered by them, or by us, during the meeting. I'll have no problem getting it ready in time.

AGNES and WALTER nod in agreement.
All three stand. HAROLD and AGNES
head toward the exit as WALTER
stays behind.

WALTER

You two go ahead, I want to do a bit of cleaning up here before tonight.

HAROLD and AGNES exit as WALTER
grabs a broom and starts to sweep
the floor.

IT COULD BE A DOOZY

From time to time, WALTER is liable
to simulate a bit of dancing with
the broom as he sings this song.

WALTER

(singing)

WELL, I'VE SEEN TOWN HALLS FILL UP FAST
FOR MATTERS SMALL AND THIN
I'VE SEEN DEBATES AND ARGUMENTS
TURN NEXT OF KIN TOWARD KIN
SO, IF TONIGHT'S ABOUT A TINY SUIT
THAT COULD FIT INSIDE A HAT
I'D SAY WE MIGHT BE IN FOR
A LOT OF THIS AND THAT

IT COULD BE A DOOZY
IT COULD BE A SIGHT
IT COULD BE THE KIND OF MEETING
FOLKS RECALL FOR YEARS BEYOND TONIGHT
WITH VOICES FIRM AND SHOULDERS SQUARED
WITH MINDS THAT ARE DETERMINED
TO HOLD A LINE FOR WHICH THEY CARE
IT COULD BE A DOOZY

(MORE)

WALTER (cont'd)

NOW HERMAN'S JUST A DRESS SHOP MAN
 HE MOVES WHATEVER SELLS
 BUT TAKE A THING LIKE THIS TONIGHT
 IT MIGHT NOT GO SO WELL
 ONE SIDE TALKS OF LIBERTY
 ONE SIDE TALKS OF GRACE
 AND SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN IT ALL
 THERE'S COMMON SENSE MISPLACED

IT COULD BE A DOOZY
 IT COULD KNOCK US OFF OUR FEET
 AND BLOCK THOSE AISLES WE'VE SHARED SO LONG
 FROM PEWS TO COURTHOUSE SEATS
 WITH NEIGHBORS FLASHING TIGHT-LIPPED SMILES
 WOND'RING HOW THE VOTE WILL GO
 BUT IF THIS THING DRAGS ON A WHILE
 IT COULD BE A DOOZY

TRUTH IS, I DON'T OPPOSE DEBATE
 THAT'S HOW TOWNS LIKE OURS ENDURE
 BUT SOMETIMES PRIDE OUTGROWS THE TRUTH
 AND NOTHING FEELS SECURE
 IT'S RARELY FACTS THAT STIR THE POT
 OR FANS THAT WIN THE GAME
 BUT FOLKS AFRAID THE WORLD'S MOVED ON
 JUST MIGHT WONDER WHO'S TO BLAME

IT REALLY COULD BE A DOOZY
 OR IT REALLY MIGHT BE OKAY
 I DON'T HAVE A CLUE WHAT'LL HAPPEN
 IT'S REALLY THAT HARD TO SAY
 BUT EITHER WAY, I HOPE IT'S FAIR
 AND SOMEHOW WE ALL CAN WIN
 'CAUSE WHEN IT'S DONE AND NO ONE CARES
 THEN IT REALLY WOULD HAVE BEEN
 ONE HECK OF A DOOZY

Walter puts the broom away, walks
 toward the exit, turns out the
 light and leaves the stage.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE NINE

LIGHTS UP

DORIS returns home and enters her bedroom, gently locking the door behind her. She opens a dresser drawer and removes a blue box with white ribbon, obviously from the Sandpiper Dress Shop. She opens the box and lifts out the monokini, secretly examining and pondering its true meaning.

At first she simply sits on the edge of her bed holding it in her lap, and in time she stands, slips out of her dress and shoes and while standing barefooted in her pure white slip, holds it in front of her, even smoothing it at times against her body, while she studies herself in the full-length mirror.

DORIS

(to herself)

Yes, yes, ... I know it was so silly of me to buy it, but something inside of me made me do it. A voice told me I had to. And Herman couldn't have been any more polite. Not a single word from him. No teasing or anything.

I ONCE KNEW A GIRL

(singing)

I ONCE KNEW A GIRL, SEEMS NOT LONG AGO
WHO WANDERED THE SHORE, BY THE BEAUTIFUL SEA
WITH SALT IN HER HAIR AND SAND ON HER SKIN
SHE NEVER ONCE WORRIED WHAT OTHERS MIGHT SEE

I ONCE KNEW A GIRL WHO WOULD LAUGH OUT TOO LOUD
AND WHO'D DANCE NO MATTER THE HOUR
WHO NEVER ONCE WORRIED OF HOW SHE MIGHT LOOK
NEVER QUESTIONED HER OWN QUIET POWER

I ONCE KNEW A GIRL BEFORE BORDERS WERE SET
BEFORE RISKS WERE CONSIDERED AND THE RULES WERE ALL MET
YES, I ONCE KNEW A GIRL WHO NEVER WOULD CHOOSE
BETWEEN WHAT FED HER HUNGER AND WHAT SHE MIGHT LOSE

(MORE)

DORIS (cont'd)

I ONCE KNEW A GIRL WHO'D OFTEN DRESS DARING
TO FEEL THE SUN'S WARMTH BEAR DOWN ON HER SKIN
SHE NEVER CONSIDERED WHAT PEOPLE MIGHT THINK
OR IF BEHAVIOR LIKE HERS WAS A SIN

I ONCE KNEW A GIRL WHO WOULD NEVER LOOK BACK
TO MEASURE EACH YEAR AS TIME PASSED HER BY
SHE WOULD NEVER COMPARE WHO SHE ONCE USED TO BE
TO THE GIRL SHE BECAME OVER TIME

I ONCE KNEW A GIRL WITH NOTHING TO PROVE
THAT GREW UP AND CHOSE THE WAYS SHE SHOULD MOVE
I ONCE KNEW A GIRL WHO'D NOT SHY AWAY
FROM THE TIME THAT REMAINED FOR THINGS WAITING THEIR DAY

During the instrumental portion of
this song, DORIS gently dances in
front of the mirror while holding
the monokini close to her

SHE'S HERE IN THIS ROOM, STILL WONDERING WHY
HOW TIME SLIPPED RIGHT IN TO HELP HER DECIDE
BUT SHE'LL ALWAYS BE NEAR SHE WILL NOT RUN AWAY
BUT SHE WONDERS ALOUD IF SHE'LL EVER BE READY TO SAY ...

I ONCE WAS THAT GIRL AND MAYBE STILL AM
BUT NOT HERE AND NOW IT'S NOT MY BEST PLAN
STILL I ONCE WAS THAT GIRL THOUGH TIME HAS MOVED ON
I'M PROUD OF WHO I AM AND PROUD I ONCE WAS THAT GIRL

DORIS stands silently and then
turns to carefully fold the
swimsuit, place it back in its box
and return the box to the dresser
drawer. She then sits down on her
bed, silently thinking.

LIGHTS DOWN

INTERMISSION

ACT TWOSCENE ONE

LIGHTS UP

Inside the dimly-lit Town Hall meeting room, ELI sits in the back row of seats as usual.

EMILY enters and sits at her small table.

No one else is in the room.

EMILY places her notebook and pencils down on the table and sits in a folding chair and begins to study her notes.

ELI speaks from the shadows.

ELI

You're here early.

EMILY

(startled, looking up)

Oh, ... I didn't think anyone else would be here this soon.

ELI

(smiling)

I like to get a sense of the room before the crowd moves in.

EMILY

And I wanted to get things right. In my head I mean.

ELI

Everything?

EMILY

Yes, about whatever might happen here tonight.

ELI

(standing up)

You know, the people in this town have been worrying over "whatever might happen here tonight" a lot longer than you might think.

EMILY

You sound like you seen this sort of thing before.

ELI
 (chucking)
 Yeah, a time or two.

ELI walks slowly toward the front
 of the room eyeing the empty
 chairs.

ELI
 Funny thing about this town ... every time the wind changes
 direction, people start thinking the whole place is about to
 be blown away.
 (looking toward EMILY)
 But it never quite does.

EMILY
 How do you mean?

IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THIS WAY

ELI
 (singing)
 I'VE BEEN HERE LONG ENOUGH TO SEE
 HOW QUICK SOME WORRIES GROW
 HOW SOMETHING SMALL CAN GATHER WEIGHT
 BEFORE A BODY EVEN KNOWS
 I'VE SEEN A BREEZE TURN INTO WIND
 WITHOUT SO MUCH A WARNING SIGN
 I'VE SEEN THIS TOWN SURVIVE ITSELF
 EACH AND EVERY SINGLE TIME

IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THIS WAY
 RISING UP, SETTLING DOWN
 SOMETHING NEW COMES WALKING IN
 AND THE TOWN ALL GATHERS 'ROUND
 THEY SAY THIS ONE'S THE TURNING POINT
 LIKE THEY'RE STUCK IN SOME BAD DREAM
 BUT OVER TIME, THINGS ROLL ON BY
 LESS TROUBLING THAN THEY SEEMED

I'VE SEEN THE HEMS GET HIGHER
 SEEN THE GOSSIP TALK GO LOW
 I'VE SEEN THE YOUNGSTERS MAKE A MOVE
 BEFORE THE OLD ONES EVER KNOW
 I'VE SEEN THE OLD ONES SHAKE THEIR HEADS
 THINKING CERTAIN THINGS WON'T LAST
 THEN WATCH 'EM SIT AND LAUGH IT OFF
 THE MOMENT TROUBLE'S PASSED

SEEMS IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THIS WAY
 WHEN VOICES SPEAK WITH FORCE
 (MORE)

ELI (cont'd)

FOR EVERY WORRY SOUNDS LIKE THUNDER
TILL THE STORM HAS RUN ITS COURSE
WE CLOSELY GUARD THINGS THAT WE KNOW
THOUGH QUESTION THINGS WE FEAR
I'VE WATCHED THIS TOWN FOR DECADES NOW
AND BY GOD, WE'RE STILL RIGHT HERE.

THERE'S A BIG OLD CLOCK ABOVE TOWN HALL
IT KEEPS THE SAME OLD TIME
IT DOESN'T RUSH FOR ANYONE
OR SLOW DOWN WHEN IT CHIMES
IT'S HEARD SO MANY HOT DISCUSSIONS
INSIDE THESE TOWN HALL DOORS
AND THEN WATCHED THE WORRIES FADE AWAY
LIKE SO MANY TIMES BEFORE

MANY STORMS HAVE CROSSED THIS HARBOR
TALES TO WRITE ABOUT SOMEDAY
SOME MAY FUSS AND FIGHT THE WEATHER
BUT THE WIND WILL HAVE ITS WAY
AS YEARS GO BY AND FOLKS REMEMBER
WHO STOOD FIRM AND WHO GAVE GROUND
IN EVERY BATTLE WE'VE ENDURED
WHILE FIGHTING FOR THIS TOWN

SO GIVE YOUR STORY ALL IT'S DUE
JUST TRY YOUR VERY BEST
TO TELL THE WORLD THIS SEASIDE TOWN
STOOD UP TALL AND PASSED THE TEST

IT SEEMS IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THIS WAY
TIDES COME IN AND ROLL ON BACK
WE FEAR WE'RE RUNNING OFF THE RAILS
BUT THEN WE FIND A SMOOTHER TRACK
AT TIMES THIS TOWN'S BEEN CHALLENGED
BUT ITS NEVER COME UNDONE
WE'VE HAD OUR SHARE OF HARD TIMES
YET STILL, WE KEEP ON STANDING HERE
AFTER EACH AND EVERY ONE.

EMILY simply sits, pondering what
she's just heard while looking up
at ELI.

ELI eventually walks over toward
EMILY's table and extends his hand.

ELI

(smiling)

You know, we've got plenty of time yet. How about you and I
go share one of the Moonbeam Diner's famous blue plate

(MORE)

ELI (cont'd)
specials? It just might help us build enough energy for
whatever's headed our way.

EMILY hesitates, but takes ELI's
hand, stands up and silently
follows him out the door.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE TWO

LIGHTS UP

The interior of the Sandpiper Dress Shop where Herman readies himself to attend the critical vote meeting later that night. He's seen fitting the now-naked mannequin with a colorful sundress.

The phone on the service counter rings and HERMAN walks over to answer it.

HERMAN

(into the phone)

Hello, Sandpiper Dress Shop, Herman speaking.

Yes, I'm just finishing up a few things.

Of course I'll be there.

Yes, just before 7:00.

No, it's perfectly fine, you needn't worry.

Because I'm a man of my word. I promised you then and I still promise you now.

Of course, I'm sure I'll see you there.

Really, there's no need to thank me.

Because my customers always come first.

Certainly, you're very welcome.

Thank you for calling.

Goodbye.

HERMAN hangs up the phone, smiles satisfactorily and walks back over toward the mannequin.

He stops short and chooses to then "greet" the mannequin.

GOOD LUCK TO US

HERMAN

(singing)

WELL, THERE YOU STAND, MY SPECIAL GIRL
 THE STAR OF MY WINDOW DISPLAY
 WE NEVER MEANT TO CAUSE A FUSS
 BUT SEEMS IT HAPPENED ANYWAY
 HOLD YOUR CHIN UP HIGH, NO NEED TO SLOUCH
 LET'S CHANGE YOUR LOOK TODAY
 WE'VE WEATHERED WORSE THAN THIS BEFORE
 THAT'S WHAT I ALWAYS SAY

GOOD LUCK TO US, MY SILENT FRIEND
 I LIKE HOW MUCH YOU'VE GROWN
 WITH EVERY HEM WE'VE EVER PINNED
 AND EVERY STITCH WE'VE EVER SEWN
 IF TONIGHT SHOULD BRING A STORM OUR WAY
 WE'LL SEE IT THROUGH AND THROUGH
 GOOD LUCK TO US, MY WINDOW QUEEN
 GOOD LUCK TO ME AND YOU

YOU'VE SEEN THEM STOP AND POINT AND STARE
 YOU'VE HEARD THE THINGS THEY'VE SAID
 SOME CALLED IT ART, SOME CALLED IT SHAME
 WHILE OTHERS CALLED IT TRASH INSTEAD
 WE'VE CHASED THE FASHIONS YEAR TO YEAR
 I'VE TRIED TO STOCK WHAT LOOKS THE BEST
 BUT NOW IT'S ALL COME DOWN TO THIS
 A FINAL VOTE AT THEIR REQUEST

GOOD LUCK TO US, MY PAINTED DOLL
 GOOD LUCK TO THREAD AND LACE
 GOOD LUCK TO THOSE THAT SPREAD THEIR WINGS
 IN LIFE'S EVER-CHANGING RACE
 MAY COMMON SENSE AND DECENCY
 SHAKE HANDS BEFORE THEY'RE THROUGH
 GOOD LUCK TO US, MY WINDOW QUEEN
 GOOD LUCK TO ME AND YOU

During the musical interlude,
 HERMAN casually dances a bit with
 the mobile mannequin.

YOU KNOW, I NEVER THOUGHT WE'D CAUSE A FUSS
 I JUST OPENED UP THE DOOR
 I TRIED TO SMOOTH THINGS OVER
 BUT FOLKS WANTED SOMETHING MORE
 I TRIED TO BUILD THIS SHOP ON SIMPLE THINGS
 I ALWAYS HOPED I DID IT RIGHT
 BUT EVERYTHING RELIES UPON

(MORE)

HERMAN (cont'd)

HOW THE TOWN FOLKS VOTE TONIGHT

GOOD LUCK TO US, MY STEADY GIRL
HERE'S HOPE FOR ME AND YOU
FOR QUIETER DAYS AND BETTER TIMES
WHEN TROUBLES HERE ARE THROUGH
FATE MIGHT KNOCK UPON OUR DOOR
WITH RESULTS WE CAN'T UNDO
SO, LET'S KEEP OUR FINGERS CROSSED TONIGHT
GOOD LUCK, I SAID GOOD LUCK
I MEAN GOOD LUCK, TO ME AND YOU.

HERMAN admires his handiwork and
then positions the mannequin so it
can easily be seen through the
store's front window.

He then dims the lights and exits
offstage.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE THREE

LIGHTS UP

The interior of the Town Hall meeting room is bustling with people. Some are seated, while others are signing at a small table near the entry door to the room.

A number of attendees, in order to facilitate the staging and scene set-up, will be casually carrying in cardboard silhouettes of "attendees" which they'll put in place on various empty chairs to help the room look "fuller".

Some residents are talking with each other and the Town Council members are talking among themselves.

A couple of residents are carrying double-sided, hand-painted signs. One reads, "Demand Decency!" and another reads, "No Top, No Beach!" One even reads, "Let It All Hang Out!"

EMILY and ELI are chatting privately at her table, unheard by anyone.

After a short time, AGNES and WALTER take their seats at the head table as HAROLD stands and gavels the crowd toward silence.

HAROLD

(banging gavel)

If everyone will please find a seat we'll try to get things going.

Most of the crowd finds a seat while HERMAN enters and takes a

seat in the front row, closest to the entry/exit door.

MILDRED, RUTH and DORIS take seats in the center of the front row.

ELI moves to his normal seat in the back row while MRS. WHITMORE finds a seat in one of the other rows.

EMILY remains seated at her own table.

HAROLD

(banging gavel)

Everyone, please make sure you've signed in if you intend to vote. There's an alphabetical list on the table where you came in. Sign in and then find yourself a seat. And for those of you carrying signs, I do appreciate your enthusiasm, but I have to remind you, ... they're not allowed to be displayed during any official town meeting, so please, I ask you to lower them at this time.

A couple residents finish lingering before finally taking their seats.

Those with signs reluctantly lower them.

HAROLD

Thank you.

(banging gavel)

Okay, at this time I'd like to call this special meeting of the Cape Morton community to order.

It's obvious all three of the Council members are in attendance, so we'll dispense with the formal roll call, but be advised, Councilor Porter will be taking the minutes as our official record of these proceedings. Are you ready to begin Agnes?

AGNES

Yes, Mr Chairman, I'm all set.

HAROLD

Good. Thank you. Now, before we get underway, your Town Council would like to take a moment or two to remind everyone of what's important whenever we conduct such a meeting that calls for the citizens of our town to vote. It's what we call the Cape Morton Town Meeting Protocol. So please, bear with us.

As HAROLD makes this announcement, AGNES and WALTER stand up and take their positions on either side of HAROLD.

AGNES and WALTER will be functioning as the back-up vocalists (imagine something like the Temptations performing "My Girl) as they support HAROLD's rendition of the following song.

MEETING PROTOCOL

HAROLD

(singing)

HERE WE MEET AS NEIGHBORS GATHERED,
UNDER WATCH OF SEA AND SKY,
BOUND BY LAWS OUR TOWN HAS WRITTEN
SO THAT FAIRNESS SHALL NOT DIE.
EVERY VOICE MAY SPEAK ITS CONSCIENCE,
EVERY HEART MAY HAVE ITS SAY,
FOR THE GOOD OF ALL CAPE MORTON
WE'RE GATHERED HERE TODAY.

LET US WEIGH OUR WORDS WITH HONOR,
LET NO ANGER RULE THIS FLOOR,
WHAT WE GUARD IS MORE THAN CUSTOM,
IT IS WHAT WE ALL STAND FOR.
HERE WE MEET IN OPEN FORUM
SEEKING WHAT IS JUST AND TRUE,
FOR THE GOOD OF ALL CAPE MORTON
TRUST IS HEREBY PLACED IN YOU

As the music winds down, HAROLD, AGNES and WALTER take their seats, and an appreciative shout or two is heard.

ANONYMOUS MALE VOICE

Okay, already, let's get this vote underway!

ANONYMOUS FEMALE VOICE

Yes, please, let's rid this town of that horrid swimsuit display!

HAROLD

(banging gavel)

Alright, alright, let's just settle down. We will address all that needs to be done, but we must do it in an orderly fashion, fair enough?

A few murmurs linger, but the attendees eventually quiet down.

HAROLD

Now, since many of you were not here at last week's preliminary meeting, I feel it makes sense to ask Mr. Herman Jennings, owner and operator of the Sandpiper Dress Shop, to share a bit of information for the benefit of us all.

Herman, do you mind stepping up to the microphone?

HERMAN

(standing and
stepping forward)

No, of course not. I'm happy to oblige.

HAROLD

Thank you.

Now, I do have a couple of questions to make sure we're all up to speed on the facts.

Number one, is it true you've been displaying what's come to be known as a topless bathing suit, visible through your storefront window?

HERMAN

Yes, that is correct.

HAROLD

And you told us last week that you has originally acquired three of those swimsuits, correct?

HERMAN

Yes.

HAROLD

And I believe you also told us that two of those swimsuits had been sold even before your display was set up in the window?

HERMAN

Yes, that's also correct. I sold them both to out-of-town tourists.

HAROLD

How is it you were able to sell those two swimsuits when they hadn't even been on display?

HERMAN

Advertising.

HAROLD

Excuse me?

HERMAN

Newspaper advertising. I routinely take out ads in the Shoreline Gazette for special sales and upcoming promotions. Apparently these two customers noticed the ad and sought out my shop as a result.

HAROLD

Alright, so that now leaves you with one swimsuit remaining, yes?

HERMAN

No.

HAROLD

No?

HERMAN

No, Harold, I recently sold the last suit.

HAROLD

To another out of town tourist?

HERMAN

No, it was sold to a local.

A gasp or two is heard from the meeting attendees.

HAROLD

Are you telling us that one of Cape Morton's residents purchased the last topless swimsuit from your shop?

HERMAN

That's correct.

HAROLD

And if I may ask, who was it that made that purchase?

HERMAN

Well, you certainly may ask, but I'm not at liberty to disclose that information. I was requested by the customer to not divulge the shopper's name.

HAROLD

I see, so now you have no more inventory of the swimsuits?

HERMAN

Correct.

HAROLD

And do you plan to order more?

HERMAN

I'm not sure. I might. I might not.

HAROLD

And the window display mannequin?

HERMAN

It's recently been re-purposed.

HAROLD ponders a bit.

HAROLD

(to the room)

If you all could give me a moment ...

While HERMAN remains at the microphone, HAROLD turns toward each of his fellow council members and all lean in together in a whispering huddle. After a few moments, they all sit back as they were.

HAROLD

Herman, you can take your seat again.

HERMAN returns to his seat.

HAROLD

(clearing throat)

Ladies and gentlemen, ... this meeting was called in order to vote on whether the Sandpiper Dress Shop would be allowed to continue displaying and selling the topless bathing suit. But since those suits no longer exist in that shop, we're at a bit of an impasse. We certainly can't vote on something that's no longer an issue. However, your Town Council members anticipated this meeting might very well require a different course of action. As a result, we've put together a new Town Ordinance to deal with what could be similar situations in the future. This new ordinance would apply to the Sandpiper Dress shop, for every commercial enterprise currently in existence, or as may come to be in existence, in the future. This will apply to businesses anywhere within the town limits. This new ordinance is entitled, "Cape Morton's Decency Expectations".

Murmurs are heard through the meeting room.

HAROLD

It's a brief document, so I'll read it to you now.

"Effective immediately, it will be the official policy that any and all displays, events, activities and/or items for sale, that can possibly be considered indecent, when brought to the attention of your Town Council, and then determined by a majority vote of that Town Council members to be indecent, will then be prohibited from being sold within the town limits of Cape Morton."

A hush comes over the room,
followed by more murmurs.

HAROLD

At this time, I ask, ... is there any resident of this community, in attendance here tonight, who would like to make a motion regarding this proposed ordinance?

MILDRED almost jumps out her her shoes as she stands up.

RUTH

Yes, yes, yes!

HAROLD

Alright Ruth, go ahead.

RUTH

I move that we immediately approve the adoption of this ordinance for the betterment of our community and all of its fine citizens.

HAROLD

Is there any ...

MILDRED

Me, I second it.

HAROLD

Alright we have a formal motion and a qualified second. It's now time for us all to vote. As each of your names is called out, please speak slowly and clearly and cast your vote to either, "Approve" or "Deny". Vote "Approve" if you want to adopt this ordinance, or vote "Deny" if you do not want it adopted. As always, any voter can choose to "Pass" their vote until a bit later in the process, or they can "Abstain" if they choose not to vote at all. Any questions?

The room remains silent.

HAROLD

Okay then, Agnes, as the town's official Recording Secretary, will you please call each person's name who signed in, in alphabetical order, by means of their last name, at which time each community member may register their vote.

AGNES

Arthur Bell?

ANONYMOUS MALE VOICE

Approve.

AGNES

Clara Benton?

ANONYMOUS FEMALE VOICE

Approve.

AGNES

Thomas Caldwell?

ANONYMOUS MALE VOICE

Deny.

A few murmurs are heard.

HAROLD

(banging gavel)

Please everyone, try to refrain from making any comments during the voting process.

AGNES

Emily Carter?

EMILY

On behalf of the Shoreline Gazette, I respectfully abstain.

AGNES

Eleanor Duffy?

ANONYMOUS FEMALE VOICE

Deny.

AGNES

George Ellsworth?

ANONYMOUS MALE VOICE

Deny.

AGNES

Franklin Foster?

Approve. ANONYMOUS MALE VOICE

Margaret Grainger? AGNES

Approve. ANONYMOUS FEMALE VOICE

Henry Haskins? AGNES

Approve. ANONYMOUS MALE VOICE

Lillian Ingersoll? AGNES

ANONYMOUS FEMALE VOICE
(inaudible whisper)

AGNES
I'm sorry ... I couldn't hear that.

HAROLD
Miss Ingersoll, please speak up so the clerk can hear your vote.

Oh, .. I approve. ANONYMOUS FEMALE VOICE

Samuel Jenkins? AGNES

Deny. ANONYMOUS MALE VOICE

Herman Jennings AGNES

The room goes absolutely silent.

HERMAN
(pausing)

I abstain.

The murmurs grow louder again
causing HAROLD to bang his Gavel.

HAROLD
Please, let's all settle down, ... alright, go ahead and
continue Agnes.

AGNES
Doris Kimball?

DORIS
(firmly)
I pass.

RUTH and MILDRED look at each
other, rather amazed.

RUTH
What do you mean, Pass. She can't pass. Why should she?

HAROLD
Calm down Ruth. It's perfectly acceptable for someone to
pass rather than vote immediately. Sometime a person wants
to see how the vote is going before they take a position.
Many times it turns out their vote won't even matter, so
let's not get all worked up and just continue on with the
roll call.

AGNES
Harold Kimball?

HAROLD
(a slight pause)
Approve.

AGNES
Simon Kingsley?

ANONYMOUS MALE VOICE
Deny.

AGNES
Mildred Kline?

MILDRED
(firmly)
Approve.

AGNES
Jessica Langley?

ANONYMOUS FEMALE VOICE
Deny.

Eli Mercer?	AGNES
Deny.	ELI
Jacob Merritt?	AGNES
Approve.	ANONYMOUS MALE VOICE
Nancy Merritt?	AGNES
Deny.	ANONYMOUS FEMALE VOICE
Oliver Peabody?	AGNES
Deny.	ANONYMOUS MALE VOICE
Walter Pike?	AGNES
Deny.	WALTER
Agnes Porter?	AGNES
Approve.	ANONYMOUS FEMALE VOICE
Benjamin Porter?	AGNES
Deny.	ANONYMOUS MALE VOICE
Martha Quincy?	AGNES
Approve.	ANONYMOUS FEMALE VOICE
Edgar Rowley?	AGNES

Deny. ANONYMOUS MALE VOICE

Judith Rowley? AGNES

Approve. ANONYMOUS FEMALE VOICE

Beatrice Sawyer? AGNES

Deny. ANONYMOUS FEMALE VOICE

Ruth Talbot? AGNES

I approve. I approve. I approve. RUTH

Nice try, Ruth, but you only get one vote. WALTER

HAROLD glares over at WALTER.

Go ahead, Mrs. Porter, please continue. HAROLD

William Underwood. AGNES

Deny. ANONYMOUS MALE VOICE

Catherine Whitmore? AGNES

Approve. MRS. WHITMORE

Alright Mr. Chairman, that's everyone. AGNES

Very good. Is there anyone here who signed in but whose name was not called? HAROLD

You forgot Doris. She hasn't voted yet. MILDRED
(rising)

HAROLD

Please be patient Mildred. We have procedures to follow.

HERMAN stands and heads toward the exit door.

AGNES is seen tabulating the results.

HAROLD

Does the clerk have a preliminary result?

AGNES

One second please ... okay, yes, ... the votes as collected so far are 14 Approve and 14 Deny.

Gasps are heard throughout the room, lots of murmurs.

HERMAN pauses at the exit door and looks back into the room.

RUTH

You forgot Doris, she hasn't voted yet.

HAROLD

And she doesn't have to vote if she doesn't wish to. As it stands now, the vote is tied, which mean, at least at the moment, the motion is defeated.

Some groans are heard, some elation is heard.

HAROLD

Mrs. Kimball, you passed earlier, do you now wish to vote.

DORIS rises from her seat, looks straight ahead at the Council members, nowhere else.

DORIS

My vote is ...

(heavy pause)

My vote is ... Deny.

The room erupts into a mass of chatter as DORIS sits back down.

RUTH and MILDRED stare at DORIS in utter disbelief. They each start shaking their heads in utter disgust.

WALTER

(with admiration)

Wow, I must say, that certainly took a bit of courage.

HERMAN stares down at the floor for a moment and then slowly exits the hall.

HAROLD

(banging the gavel)

The motion for the new ordinance has been defeated. With no other business to be addressed, this meeting of the Cape Morton community is hereby adjourned. Thank you all for your participation.

(banging the gavel)

RUTH and MILDRED are up quickly and storm out.

Slowly, other attendees begin to exit the meeting hall.

With DORIS is already leaving the room, HAROLD starts to gather up his papers.

AGNES and WALTER do the same and they both follow the remainder of the crowd out the door.

HAROLD remains seated at the table.

ELI walks over to EMILY's table and quietly shares some words.

ELI

Well, I think you found your headline, yes?

EMILY

Maybe, but it's now more likely the real story will be about how this very traditional town is going through a rather significant change.

EMILY begins to gather up her notebook and pencils as ELI nods and quietly retreats to the back of the room.

EMILY exits through the main door.

HAROLD sits and ponders a bit,
seemingly unaware ELI is still in
the room.

THINGS CHANGE ANYWAY

HAROLD

(singing)

THERE WAS A TIME I KNEW CAPE MORTON
LIKE THE BACK OF MY OWN HAND
I KNEW EVERY NAME AND BUSINESS
KNEW THE FEATURES OF THIS LAND
I WAS YOUNG AND FULL OF THUNDER
THOUGHT THE YEARS WOULD WAIT THEIR TURN
BUT THEN YOU WAKE UP ONE BRIGHT MORNING
FIND THE TIME HAD NO CONCERN

THINGS CHANGE ANYWAY
NO MATTER WHAT YOU SAY
YOU CAN NAIL THE SHUTTERS TIGHTER
STILL THE WIND WILL FIND A WAY
YOU CAN STAND UPON THE BEACHFRONT
DRAW A LINE ACROSS THE SAND
BUT THE WATER KEEPS ON MOVING
NEVER CARES WHERE YOU MIGHT STAND
THINGS CHANGE ANYWAY

I REMEMBER DORIS LAUGHING
HAIR ALL CAUGHT UP IN THE BREEZE
BACK WHEN RULES WERE JUST SUGGESTIONS
AND THE WORLD WAS OURS TO TEASE
NOW SHE'S FIGHTING FOR THE ORDER
SHE BELIEVES WE'RE MEANT TO KEEP
AND I SEE THAT GIRL I MARRIED
NOW SO THOUGHTFUL AND SO DEEP

THINGS CHANGE ANYWAY
AND THERE NO ONE YOU CAN BLAME
YOU CAN CALL IT MODERN NONSENSE
YOU CAN CURSE IT BY ITS NAME
YOU CAN GUARD THE DOOR TILL MIDNIGHT
YOU MIGHT SWEAR TIME CAN'T COME THROUGH
BUT A CLOCK WON'T ASK PERMISSION
IT JUST DOES WHAT CLOCKS WILL DO
THINGS CHANGE ANYWAY

COULD BE WHAT WE'RE REALLY GUARDING
IS NOT A WINDOW OR A VIEW
COULD BE THE SOUND OF YOUNGER VOICES
THINKING OLD WAYS SHOULD BE THROUGH

(MORE)

HAROLD (cont'd)

BUT THINGS CHANGE ANYWAY
THAT'S THE BARGAIN THAT WE MAKE
EVERY SEASON LEAVES US SOMETHING
EVERY SEASON HAS ITS ACHE
SO I'LL STAND BESIDE MY DORIS
EVEN THOUGH WE DISAGREE
'CAUSE THE ONLY THING THAT HASN'T CHANGED
IS WHAT SHE MEANS TO ME

AND THAT WON'T EVER CHANGE, NOT FOR ME.

HAROLD stands, dims the lights just
a bit and heads toward a rear door
of the meeting room.

He takes a moment to glance back
into the hall.

HAROLD

(a cappella meeting
protocol song)

FOR THE GOOD OF ALL CAPE MORTON ...

HAROLD turns and exits the hall.

After a few moments, MRS. WHITMORE
enters through the main entry door.
She sees ELI sitting in the back of
the room, but doesn't speak to him.
She takes a seat at her piano.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE FOUR

A simply stone bench outside the entrance of Cape Morton's Town Hall. The facade of Town Hall is upstage with a functional entry door.

The Town Council members and other attendees at the vote meeting exit the Town Hall by walking down the main entry steps and disperse in various directions.

A single lit window glows beside the now-closed entry door.

Eventually, EMILY walks out, closes the door and heads toward the stone bench. She sits down on one end of the bench and ponders for a few moments.

I LEARNED SOMETHING

EMILY

(singing)

I CAME HERE TO WATCH A MEETING
AND WRITE WHAT I COULD SEE
A QUESTION ON A MOTION
A VOTE ON DECENCY
I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE SIMPLE
JUST WHO WAS WRONG OR RIGHT
BUT NOTHING FELT THAT SIMPLE
AS I WALKED OUT TONIGHT

I LEARNED SOMETHING HERE TONIGHT
IN THAT CROWDED LITTLE HALL
IT ISN'T CLOTH OR CUSTOM
THAT UNSETTLES US AT ALL
IT'S THE FEAR OF SOMETHING MOVING
WHEN WE'VE SWORN TO STANDING STILL
IT'S THE QUIET IN THE DOORWAY
WHEN A VOICE DEFIES THE WILL

NO ONE RAISED A BANNER
NO ONE STORMED THE GATE

(MORE)

NO ONE BROKE A WINDOW
 OR CHANGE THIS OLD TOWN'S FATE
 JUST HANDS THAT TREMBLED SLIGHTLY
 JUST WORDS THAT CARRIED WEIGHT
 AND SOMETHING SHIFTED SOFTLY
 THAT NO ONE COULD QUITE STATE

I LEARNED SOMETHING HERE TONIGHT
 AS THE VOTE WAS COUNTED CLEAR
 SOME CHANGES DON'T ARRIVE WITH NOISE
 THEY SIMPLY DRAW US NEAR
 THIS TOWN WILL STILL BE STANDING
 WHEN TOMORROW GREETES THE SHORE
 BUT I DON'T SEE IT QUITE THE WAY
 I SAW IT ONCE BEFORE

During the musical interlude, EMILY wanders about the stage, staring up at Town Hall, looking out over the community and quietly reflecting on what she observed during the meeting.

I LEARNED SOMETHING HERE TONIGHT
 THOUGH I CAN'T YET NAME IT TRUE
 SOMETHING BETWEEN WHAT STAYS THE SAME
 AND WHAT IS BREAKING THROUGH

As the music ends, EMILY sits back down on one stage left side of the bench.

DORIS enters gingerly from STAGE RIGHT, carrying a small gift-wrapped box, She pauses momentarily.

EMILY silently glances up toward her.

DORIS sits down on the opposite end of the bench from EMILY.

DORIS
 (a long silence)
 You knew it was me all along didn't you?

EMILY
 (a shorter pause)
 I suspected.

DORIS nods slightly and places a pale blue box with a white-ribboned top down on the bench between them. Again, obviously from the Sandpiper Dress Shop.

DORIS

It wasn't the fabric you know. It wasn't even the style. It was a feeling. A feeling long forgotten.

(a brief pause)

But it didn't take very long for me to realize, it just doesn't belong to me anymore.

DORIS nudges the box toward EMILY.

EMILY stares down at the box a moment and then gingerly rests her hand on top of the box.

She pauses a moment and then looks over at DORIS.

EMILY

Are you certain?

DORIS

Quite.

Both DORIS and EMILY pause silently.

EMILY then draws the box into her lap and lifts the lid slightly, just to take a peek. She closes it again.

DORIS rises and smooths her skirt.

DORIS

Please do us both a favor. Take good care of it.

EMILY gently nods.

DORIS calmly, yet confidently, exits STAGE RIGHT.

EMILY remains seated a few moments, then gathers up her notebook and rises, tucking the gift box under her arm and slowly exits STAGE LEFT.

The primary lighting remains
focused on the empty bench.

From inside the Town Hall, what
appears to be MRS. WHITMORE'S
profile is seen through a glowing
window as she rehearses the Town
Anthem.

CAPE MORTON, MY HOME

MRS. WHITMORE
(offstage)

CAPE MORTON, MY HOME
BY THE WIDE, FAITHFUL SEA
YOU ARE JUST AS YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN
AND JUST AS YOU ALWAYS WILL BE

As the instrumental portion of the
anthem continues, the Town Hall
door opens and ELI appears,
standing still in the doorway.

He looks down toward the empty
bench.

He lifts his gaze outward briefly,
as if scanning the horizon, then
lowers it.

He turns slowly and re-enters the
building, closing the door behind
him.

CAPE MORTON, MY HOME

MRS. WHITMORE
(offstage)

CAPE MORTON, MY HEART
WHERE THE SHORELINE STANDS TRUE
NOTHING CHANGES HERE THAT MATTERS
NOTHING EVER CHANGES YOU

LIGHTS FADE
SLOWLY TO BLACK

FINAL CURTAIN