

# The River of Haircuts

A serious play

By Kyle John Schmidt

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### **Cast of Characters**

Mrs. Hadley – a gadfly

The Mayor – a businessman

The Schoolmaster – loves rules

The Mother – very pregnant

The Constable – carries a billy club

The Meatguy – works in the village supermarket

### **Setting**

A remote village in a poor country.

### **A Note on Style**

This play should move very quickly. Lines should overlap. Characters should speak over each other. This is passion and democracy in action.

Also, the actors should always remember that the events in the play are completely serious to the people portrayed. This is the worst day of their lives, and they may never recover.

### **Touchstones**

The following resources may prove helpful when approaching this play:

- *The Visit* by Dürrenmatt
- *Enemy of the People* by Ibsen
- FFA Conduct of Chapter Meetings Competitions
- The 2016 U.S. Presidential Primary and Election
- Current events debate television programs like *Crossfire*

*We find ourselves at the meeting of a village council.  
The COUNCIL sits at a long table.  
There's a plate of lemon bars in the middle.  
THE CONSTABLE stands near the door in a uniform and hat. He carries a billy club.*

MRS. HADLEY

I was at the grocery store.  
I was getting meat.  
And I'm looking at the meat guy.  
He's a nice looking guy.  
Nothing to write home about.  
But this time.  
Something's different.  
His hair.  
It's perfect here.  
Wonderful there.  
Like a wheat field on a summer's day.  
You want to get your fingers in there and let them run free.  
I mention it to my kid outside to make a joke.  
And he's smirking like he knows something.  
But he won't say.  
So the entire night I'm looking at my kid  
and I'm thinking:  
You know something.  
You know something.  
You.  
Know.  
*Something.*  
But he's just smirking and smirking.  
So, finally, I took a waffle, covered it with chocolate, pounded it on the table, and said:  
"Tell me what you know about that haircut."

*(A long pause.)*

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Can we talk about the library program?

MRS. HADLEY

This is Open Forum.

THE MAYOR

Open Forum is limited to civic issues.

Like the library.	THE SCHOOLMASTER
This is a civic issue.	MRS. HADLEY
Do you want me to throw her out?	THE CONSTABLE
You can't throw me out.	MRS. HADLEY
Constable.	THE MAYOR
I can throw anyone out.	THE CONSTABLE
There are rules.	MRS. HADLEY
Mrs. Hadley.	THE MAYOR
I move to close Open Forum.	THE MOTHER
Hey.	MRS. HADLEY
I second that motion.	THE SCHOOLMASTER
Wait.	MRS. HADLEY
All those in favor.	THE MAYOR
Aye.	THE SCHOOLMASTER, THE MAYOR, THE MOTHER
No. Stop.	MRS. HADLEY

THE MAYOR

All those opposed.

MRS. HADLEY

I want to talk about the meat guy's haircut.

THE MAYOR

According to the rules, the town council is not obligated to discuss anything brought up in Open Forum.

MRS. HADLEY

Well, FUDGE on your RULES.

THE MOTHER

I move to censure Mrs. Hadley.

MRS. HADLEY

Hey.

THE MOTHER

We don't allow cursing during council meetings.

MRS. HADLEY

I didn't curse.

THE MOTHER

*(Overlapping:)*

You cursed. She cursed.

MRS. HADLEY

*(Overlapping:)*

Fudge? Do you think fudge is a curse?

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley!

THE MOTHER

Again! She said it again.

MRS. HADLEY

It's not a bad word.

We don't allow it in school.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

See! See!

THE MOTHER

I was talking about dessert.

MRS. HADLEY

The F word is not about dessert.

THE MOTHER

Who cares?

MRS. HADLEY

Not the way you said it.

THE MOTHER

Really, who cares?

MRS. HADLEY

The rules care.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Oh please.

MRS. HADLEY

You're not allowed to flout the rules.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I'm not flouting. I didn't flout.

MRS. HADLEY

Can I get a second on the motion to censure Mrs. Hadley?

THE MOTHER

I second.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Come on.

MRS. HADLEY

All those in favor.

THE MAYOR

MRS. HADLEY

I didn't mean it.

THE SCHOOLMASTER, THE MAYOR, THE MOTHER

Aye.

MRS. HADLEY

All those opposed. Aye.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

You're not allowed to vote on your own censure.

THE CONSTABLE

I'll throw her out.

THE MAYOR

Constable.

MRS. HADLEY

Throw me out. I dare you.

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley is reminded—

MRS. HADLEY

I am—

THE MAYOR

—that if she is censured twice in one meeting—

MRS. HADLEY

—an elected official.

THE MAYOR

—you will be removed from these chambers—

MRS. HADLEY

You will not silence me.

THE MAYOR

—and strongly discouraged from returning.

*(Pause.)*

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Can we talk about the library?

THE MOTHER

If one of my kids came home popping off about—

MRS. HADLEY

Are you calling my kid a liar?

THE MOTHER

—a supernatural river—

MRS. HADLEY

I never said supernatural.

THE MOTHER

—that STYLES HAIR.

MRS. HADLEY

CUTS. HAIR.

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley.

THE MOTHER

Do not raise your voice at me.

MRS. HADLEY

My kid says there's a river in the woods that—

THE MOTHER

DO NOT RAISE YOUR VOICE.

MRS. HADLEY

—CUTS HAIR.

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley.

THE CONSTABLE

I'm throwing her out.

*(THE CONSTABLE grabs MRS. HADLEY.)*



MRS. HADLEY

*(Overlapping:)*

Get your hands off me.

THE MAYOR

*(Overlapping:)*

Order! Order!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

*(Overlapping:)*

The library.

What about the library?

THE MOTHER

*(Overlapping:)*

She raised her voice at me.

THE MAYOR

Release Mrs. Hadley.

THE CONSTABLE

Someone said to throw her out.

THE MAYOR

No one said to throw her out.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I thought this council voted.

THE MOTHER

If one of our members—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Deliberated.

THE MOTHER

—is going to be unruly—

MRS. HADLEY

You're unruly.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Democracy.

THE MOTHER

—then the Constable should throw her out.

MRS. HADLEY

My kid is not a liar.

THE MAYOR

The town council is not in the practice—

MRS. HADLEY

Go to the grocery store.

THE MAYOR

—of discussing—

MRS. HADLEY

Ask the meat guy.

THE MAYOR

—magical supposition.

MRS. HADLEY

WHERE DID HE GET THAT HAIRCUT?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Can we please talk about funding the library?

THE MAYOR

The Schoolmaster is recognized.

MRS. HADLEY

But.

THE MAYOR

I have recognized the Schoolmaster.

MRS. HADLEY

Mayor.

THE MAYOR

We are moving on to the next item of business on the agenda.

MRS. HADLEY

But I'm not done.

We let you talk during Open Forum.

THE MAYOR

I wasn't done.

MRS. HADLEY

And now we have moved on.

THE MAYOR

I haven't moved on.

MRS. HADLEY

I don't know how you acted the last place you lived—

THE MAYOR

I have lived here for years.

MRS. HADLEY

You weren't born here.

THE MOTHER

—but—

THE MAYOR

I am just as much—

MRS. HADLEY

She wasn't born here.

THE MOTHER

—a part of this village—

MRS. HADLEY

—in our village—

THE MAYOR

—as anyone else.

MRS. HADLEY

You weren't born here.

THE MOTHER

—council members respect the authority of the Mayor.

THE MAYOR

THE SCHOOLMASTER

The rules. We respect the authority of the rules.

THE MAYOR

That's what I said.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

You said "council members respect the authority of the Mayor."

The Mayor is not a king.

He is subject to the same rules as the rest of us.

Ergo we respect the authority of the rules, not any one person or office.

THE MAYOR

It's the same thing.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

It's not.

THE MAYOR

It's basically—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

It's not.

*(Pause.)*

THE MAYOR

Proceed, Schoolmaster. You have been recognized.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Thank you.

Finally.

*(The SCHOOLMASTER pulls out a speech.*

*They clear their throat and begin:)*

The library—

THE MAYOR

I don't see how we keep the funding.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I wasn't finished.

THE MAYOR

But the funding, I don't see it.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I didn't get to make my case.

THE MAYOR

Funding is part of your case, and we don't have it.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

You have always supported the library.

THE MAYOR

I've changed my mind.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Mayor.

THE MAYOR

Look at our financials.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

It's an investment in the future.

THE MAYOR

We have exhausted our budget.

THE MOTHER

On pet projects.

THE MAYOR

We do not have pet projects.

THE MOTHER

Pork barrel spending.

THE MAYOR

People have needs—

THE MOTHER

Do you know how much money we spent—

THE MAYOR

—and it is our duty—

THE MOTHER

—on a fountain with filthy water?

THE MAYOR

—to meet those needs.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

The fountain is a nice place to read.

THE MOTHER

My kid got sick.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

But there won't be any new books—

THE MOTHER

A fever.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

—to read at the fountain—

THE MOTHER

Diarrhea.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

—if we don't fund the library.

THE MOTHER

All from that disease fountain.

THE MAYOR

MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE LET YOUR KID DRINK THE WATER.

THE MOTHER

Maybe we could have put a clean faucet—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

There is a sign.

THE MOTHER

—that people could actually use—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

The sign says don't drink.

THE MOTHER

—instead of wasting our hard-earned tax money—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Don't. Drink.

THE MOTHER

—on a fountain that makes children sick.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Maybe your kids could read the sign at the fountain,  
if we would fund the library program.

THE MOTHER

My kids read just fine.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

APPARENTLY NOT.

THE MAYOR

Order! Order!

MRS. HADLEY

Billions of dollars.

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley.

MRS. HADLEY

I can promise you.

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley.

MRS. HADLEY

With tourism.  
Licensing fees.  
PILGRIMAGES.

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley.

MRS. HADLEY

If we use this river that cuts hair.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

The school doesn't have heat.  
I'm running out of chalk.

THE MOTHER

The fountain needs replaced.

THE MAYOR

The fountain is just fine.

THE MOTHER

You tell that to my kid.  
You say that to my kid's face.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Why aren't we investing in education?

THE CONSTABLE

The constabulary needs money too!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

The constabulary gets too much money.

THE CONSTABLE

We need better billy clubs.

THE MAYOR

You just got new billy clubs.

THE CONSTABLE

We need more billy clubs.

THE MOTHER

We shouldn't have to pick between schools and safety.

THE MAYOR

Show me the funding.  
Anybody. You show me the funding.

MRS. HADLEY

I have been trying all meeting to show you new ways to source revenue.

THE MAYOR

A fantastical river is not a way—



MRS. HADLEY  
It's not fantastical.

THE MAYOR  
—to pay for our very real deficits.

*(MRS. HADLEY pulls out newspaper clippings.)*

MRS. HADLEY  
I have spent all day in the town records.

THE MAYOR  
Unless we raise taxes.

MRS. HADLEY  
The founders of this village—

THE MOTHER  
We cannot afford to raise taxes.

MRS. HADLEY  
—were known for their haircuts.

THE MAYOR  
If you want a library program—

MRS. HADLEY  
Look at these pictures.

THE MAYOR  
—you have to raise taxes.

MRS. HADLEY  
Their haircuts.  
Those aren't natural.

THE MOTHER  
Or cut expenses.

MRS. HADLEY  
Look at that volume!

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
Like the constabulary budget.

THE CONSTABLE  
We need better billy clubs!

MRS. HADLEY  
Where did that haircut come from?

THE MAYOR  
Mrs. Hadley, you are off topic.

MRS. HADLEY  
We were talking about finding revenue streams—

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
If we can't fund the library—

MRS. HADLEY  
—and I identified a WHOLE RIVER.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
—my students will fall behind.

MRS. HADLEY  
No one gives a FLYING FLIP about the LIBRARY.

*(Gasps and disapproval.)*

THE MOTHER  
I move to censure Mrs. Hadley for the second time.

MRS. HADLEY  
No.

THE MOTHER  
The FF word.

MRS. HADLEY  
You've got to be kidding.

THE MOTHER  
You said the FF word.

MRS. HADLEY  
Flying flip?

Again! She said it again.	THE MOTHER
It was an accident.	MRS. HADLEY
I second.	THE SCHOOLMASTER
What? Why?	MRS. HADLEY
I give an FF about the library, for your information. I give an FF!	THE SCHOOLMASTER
This isn't legal.	MRS. HADLEY
All in favor.	THE MAYOR
Aye.	THE MAYOR, THE SCHOOLMASTER, THE MOTHER
Conspiracy! This is a conspiracy!	MRS. HADLEY
Throw her out!	THE MOTHER
<i>(To MRS. HADLEY:)</i> Let's go.	THE CONSTABLE
<i>(To THE CONSTABLE:)</i> Your hat.	MRS. HADLEY
<i>(To MRS. HADLEY:)</i> Get up.	THE CONSTABLE

THE MOTHER

Rough her up!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

We did not vote to condone violence.

THE MAYOR

She is bringing this on herself.

MRS. HADLEY

*(To THE CONSTABLE:)*

You're wearing a hat.

THE CONSTABLE

*(To MRS. HADLEY:)*

If you do not leave immediately—

THE MOTHER

It's not violence—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Mayor.

THE MOTHER

— if it's her own fault.

THE MAYOR

Just get her out.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Where's the leadership?

MRS. HADLEY

*(To THE CONSTABLE:)*

Why are you wearing a hat?

THE CONSTABLE

*(To MRS. HADLEY:)*

I will use my billy club.

THE MOTHER

Use the billy club!

I protest! I protest!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

HAT! HAT!

MRS. HADLEY

Do not touch my head.

THE CONSTABLE

HAT! HAT!

MRS. HADLEY

Someone is going to get hurt!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

He's wearing a HAT!

MRS. HADLEY

This is assaulting an officer.

THE CONSTABLE

A HAT!

MRS. HADLEY

Knock her down!

THE MOTHER

I will leave! Under protest!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

UNDER HIS HAT!  
LOOK UNDER HIS HAT!

MRS. HADLEY

(To MRS. HADLEY:)  
DECORUM!  
DECORUM!  
Get your hands off my—

THE CONSTABLE

*(THE CONSTABLE's hat comes off.  
Gasps.  
His hair is **amazing**.  
It has a notable cut.*

*Like a Prince Valiant. The Farrah Fawcett. Or the Rachel from Friends.  
Stunned silence.)*

THE MOTHER

Your haircut.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I never knew you had such . . .

THE MAYOR

*(Near tears:)* Beautiful . . .

THE MOTHER

Where did you get that haircut?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

How?

THE CONSTABLE

The river.  
It just knows.

MRS. HADLEY

I told you.  
I told all of you.

THE CONSTABLE

I wouldn't have believed it myself.  
Until.  
These teenagers.  
Giggling  
Suspicious.  
Up to no good.  
I followed them into the woods last night.

THE MOTHER

Where were their parents?

THE CONSTABLE

Through a copse and cavern into a maze of tunnels.  
By torchlight I found them by this subterranean river.  
Laughing. Chewing gum.  
And dipping their heads in the water.

THE MOTHER

We'll have to notify the parents.

THE CONSTABLE

Then coming out with bobs and curls.  
Braids and up-do's.  
Highlights and streaks.  
Things I could never imagine would work on anyone.

THE MOTHER

It had better not have been one of my kids.

THE CONSTABLE

I made a sound and they scattered like well-coiffed mice.  
And then I alone  
(like some silly teenager)  
tried putting my poor, old head  
in those dark, mysterious waters.  
To my wonder and disbelief,  
this miracle formed atop my crown.

THE MAYOR

Extraordinary.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

The dawn of an epoch.

THE MOTHER

What a time to be alive.

MRS. HADLEY

And no one believed me.

THE CONSTABLE

I've never felt good looking.  
Ever.  
But now.  
This haircut.

THE MOTHER

Did it hurt?

THE CONSTABLE

No.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
How long did it take?

THE CONSTABLE  
Only an instant.

THE MAYOR  
Why didn't you say anything?

THE CONSTABLE  
Well.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
He should have said something.

THE CONSTABLE  
Uh.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
The village council should have been told.

THE CONSTABLE  
You didn't give me a chance.

MRS. HADLEY  
This is a breach of public trust.

THE MOTHER  
We should cut his hair!

THE CONSTABLE  
Hey.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
I move to strip the constable of his position.

THE CONSTABLE  
No.

MRS. HADLEY  
I second that motion.

THE CONSTABLE  
Please.



And cut his hair!

THE MOTHER

I beg of you!

THE CONSTABLE

Call the vote!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

But someone has to keep the rule of order.

THE CONSTABLE

All those in favor of stripping the Constable of his position.

THE MAYOR

When the River of Haircuts gets out, you'll have pandemonium.

THE CONSTABLE

No.

MRS. HADLEY

Gruff men.  
Loose women.

THE CONSTABLE

Come on.

MRS. HADLEY

Thieves.  
And violators!

THE CONSTABLE

It won't be like that.

MRS. HADLEY

They'll storm the banks.

THE CONSTABLE

It'll be tourists.

MRS. HADLEY

Trample the village.

THE CONSTABLE

Families with children.	MRS. HADLEY
And seize our river!	THE CONSTABLE
We have to protect the village.	THE MAYOR
The constables have the billy clubs.	THE MOTHER
We'll billy club the invaders!	THE CONSTABLE
We can't inflict violence on tourists.	MRS. HADLEY
If they try to confiscate our river.	THE MAYOR
There won't be violence if they follow our rules.	THE MOTHER
There's always violence.	THE SCHOOLMASTER
Violence doesn't happen to peaceful people.	THE CONSTABLE
Violence can happen to anyone.	MRS. HADLEY
Not if they follow the rules.	THE MOTHER
Your kids. My kids.	MRS. HADLEY
It won't be my kids.	THE MOTHER

They could be the victims.

MRS. HADLEY

My kids follow the rules.

THE MOTHER

The river needs order.

THE MAYOR

Order creates violence.

MRS. HADLEY

Violence just happens.

THE CONSTABLE

Nothing just happens.

MRS. HADLEY

The River of Haircuts just happened!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

*(A long pause.  
Long enough for everyone to understand the unrelenting terror of their new situation.  
Each character looks to each other for  
answers,  
sympathy,  
and comfort . . .  
until they just can't look at each other.  
They fight back tears,  
try to put on a brave face,  
and, finally,  
plot their next move.  
Then:)*

I motion that we take a five-minute break.

THE MOTHER

No. NO! Sit. Everyone sit.

THE MAYOR

I have to go to the bathroom.

THE MOTHER

THE MAYOR

We need to finish this discussion before we go on break.

THE MOTHER

I have to go to the bathroom.

THE MAYOR

You can wait.

THE MOTHER

I'm pregnant.

MRS. HADLEY

Let her go to the bathroom.

THE MAYOR

The rules say we can't go on break while discussing an agenda item.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

The River of Haircuts isn't on the agenda.

THE MOTHER

And I have to go to the bathroom.

MRS. HADLEY

This is a human rights issue.

THE MAYOR

Using the bathroom—

MRS. HADLEY

Her human rights—

THE MAYOR

—during a meeting—

MRS. HADLEY

—are being VIOLATED.

THE MAYOR

—is not human rights.

THE MOTHER

I'm going to the bathroom.

If you leave this room—

THE MAYOR

Tyranny! This is tyranny!

MRS. HADLEY

—we do not have to let you back in.

THE MAYOR

But I'm pregnant.

THE MOTHER

And discrimination!

MRS. HADLEY

And you went to the bathroom four times in the last meeting.

THE MOTHER

I have kidney stones.

THE MAYOR

That meeting ran long—

THE MOTHER

I have kidney stones.

THE MAYOR

—so I had to pay my childcare overtime.

THE MOTHER

Your kids babysit your other kids.

THE MAYOR

AND NOW I HAVE TO PAY THEM.

THE MOTHER

I move that we adjourn for five minutes for a bathroom break.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I second.

THE MOTHER

I third. MRS. HADLEY

I am not calling the vote. THE MAYOR

IT'S BEEN THIRDED! YOU HAVE TO CALL A VOTE! THE MOTHER

THE MAYOR CONTROLS THE AGENDA. THE MAYOR

Not on procedural votes. THE SCHOOLMASTER

But— THE MAYOR

Not on procedural votes. THE SCHOOLMASTER

It's a right of the position. THE MAYOR

NOT ON PROCEDURAL VOTES. THE SCHOOLMASTER

We can take a bathroom break. THE MAYOR  
But only if the Constable will accompany anyone leaving the room.

No. THE MOTHER

He'll stand in the hallway. THE MAYOR

The mayor is not allowed to dictate— MRS. HADLEY

I'm not dictating. THE MAYOR

— when, where, and how—  
MRS. HADLEY

Friendly suggestion.  
THE MAYOR

—someone visits the facilities.  
MRS. HADLEY

Bathroom break monitoring is not in the rules.  
THE SCHOOLMASTER

She might be trying to warn someone in the town.  
THE MAYOR

It's not in the rules.  
THE SCHOOLMASTER

I will not let someone watch me—  
THE MOTHER

No one is going to—  
THE MAYOR

—while I go to the bathroom.  
THE MOTHER

—WATCH YOU.  
THE MAYOR

It's unsanitary.  
THE MOTHER

We are on break.  
You have five minutes.  
THE SCHOOLMASTER

*(To the CONSTABLE:)*  
Do not follow me.  
THE MOTHER

He won't follow you.  
MRS. HADLEY

THE CONSTABLE

I'll follow who I want.

THE MOTHER

*(To the CONSTABLE:)*

DO NOT.

*(THE MOTHER exits.*

*THE CONSTABLE leaves the door slightly ajar and watches.*

*THE SCHOOLMASTER reads a book.*

*MRS. HADLEY shuffles papers.*

*THE MAYOR looks around.*

*A long pause.)*

THE MAYOR

Who made the lemon bars?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Those are for after the meeting.

MRS. HADLEY

There's no rule for when we eat bars.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

It's tradition.

MRS. HADLEY

Traditions aren't a rule.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

When you move to a new place—

MRS. HADLEY

I have been here—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

—you have to understand—

MRS. HADLEY

—over a decade.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

—and follow their traditions—



MRS. HADLEY

Two decades.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

—as a matter of respect.

MRS. HADLEY

I'm not new here.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Then you should be able demonstrate more respect for our traditions.

THE MAYOR

Who made the lemon bars?

MRS. HADLEY

Some people have issues with their blood sugar.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

We don't get bars until after the meeting.

MRS. HADLEY

Some people may need to eat—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

We don't get bars until after the meeting.

MRS. HADLEY

—for their blood sugar.

THE MAYOR

Who made the lemon bars?

MRS. HADLEY

Diabetes.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

We don't get bars until after the meeting.

MRS. HADLEY

It's not an inclusive tradition.

THE MAYOR

I JUST WANT TO KNOW WHO MADE THE LEMON BARS.

*(Pause.)*

THE CONSTABLE

I did.

*(Pause.)*

THE MAYOR

Oh. Uh. Good work, Constable.  
I can't wait to try them.  
After the meeting.  
As per tradition.  
Of course.

*(Pause.)*

THE CONSTABLE

Should I check on her?  
She's been gone a long time.

THE MAYOR

It's only been a minute.

MRS. HADLEY

It's been longer than a minute.

THE MAYOR

No, no. Not that much time.

*(Pause.)*

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Someone should check on her.

MRS. HADLEY

Let her have privacy.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

What if she fell down?

MRS. HADLEY

We would have heard something.

THE CONSTABLE

Not necessarily.

MRS. HADLEY

I don't think we should start policing the bathroom.

THE MAYOR

He's not policing.

MRS. HADLEY

A constable in the bathroom is policing.

THE MAYOR

It's a wellness check.  
To make sure she's okay.

THE CONSTABLE

And staying out of trouble.

MRS. HADLEY

There! There!

THE MAYOR

That was a joke.

MRS. HADLEY

It wasn't a joke.

THE MAYOR

He's joking.

MRS. HADLEY

This is how a police state starts.

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I know police states.

MRS. HADLEY

People checking on others in the bathrooms.

I'm reading about a police state.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Looking into our privacy.

MRS. HADLEY

And checking on someone—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Peeking. Spying.

MRS. HADLEY

—to see if they're okay—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Surveilling.

MRS. HADLEY

—in the bathroom—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Seeing what we're doing when we're alone.

MRS. HADLEY

—is not the beginning of a police state.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Never letting people be alone.

MRS. HADLEY

Overreaction.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.

MRS. HADLEY

That leads to police states.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.

MRS. HADLEY

When people overreact.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

MRS. HADLEY

No.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Screaming “police state!” all the time.

MRS. HADLEY

Someone has to sound the alarm.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Police state! Police state!

MRS. HADLEY

Someone—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Police state! Police state!

MRS. HADLEY

—has point out—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Police state! Police state!

MRS. HADLEY

—the slippery slope!

THE CONSTABLE

She could be in labor.

THE MAYOR

That would be liability.  
She could sue the government.  
Negligence.

MRS. HADLEY

Giving people space to piss is not negligent.

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

She could be bleeding out right now.

THE MAYOR

We can't afford a lawsuit.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Your incivility could kill her.

MRS. HADLEY

I would rather she die than her rights be violated.

THE MAYOR

A lawsuit would bankrupt us!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

You don't have rights when you're dead.

MRS. HADLEY

You do have rights—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.

MRS. HADLEY

—when you're dead—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

You don't.

MRS. HADLEY

—otherwise, it's okay to defile a dead body.

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley.

MRS. HADLEY

Does this village let people defile bodies?

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley.

MRS. HADLEY

Is that another tradition? Going to the cemetery? Defiling bodies?

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley.

MRS. HADLEY

Is that what I can expect to happen with my body when I die:

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley.

MRS. HADLEY

Being defiled?

THE MAYOR

MRS. HADLEY.

THE CONSTABLE

I'm going to check on her.

MRS. HADLEY

I'm coming too.

THE CONSTABLE

Why?

MRS. HADLEY

To make sure there's a witness.

THE CONSTABLE

For what?

MRS. HADLEY

You tell me.

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley.

MRS. HADLEY

You tell me.

THE MAYOR

Just go check on her.

*(THE CONSTABLE exits with MRS. HADLEY following.)*

THE MAYOR

Did you want to check?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.

THE MAYOR

You can go check.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.

THE MAYOR

Are you sure?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

My book is good.  
My seat is warm.  
Two people went.  
That seems sufficient.

THE MAYOR

Are you guarding the lemon bars?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.

THE MAYOR

Do you think that if you leave I'm going to eat a lemon bar?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.

THE MAYOR

Shovel them in my mouth.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.

THE MAYOR

Just GOBBLE GOBBLE.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.



THE MAYOR

Like a DIRTY BRIDGE TROLL.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I DON'T WANT ANYONE GETTING SICK.

*(Pause.)*

THE MAYOR

Why would someone get sick?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I don't know.

THE MAYOR

Why would someone get sick from eating lemon bars?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I don't know.

THE MAYOR

Do you think the lemon bars are poisoned?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I don't know.

THE MAYOR

Why would anyone poison our food?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I don't know.

THE MAYOR

How can you accuse anyone without any evidence?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I'm not accusing anyone.

THE MAYOR

Conjecture and suspicion!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I never said poison.

THE MAYOR  
That will kill us.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
You said poison. I said sick.

THE MAYOR  
You're killing us.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
Sick!

THE MAYOR  
I'm going to have you censured.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
For what?

THE MAYOR  
Rumormongering.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
That rule is for false public statements.

THE MAYOR  
I am the public.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
You are one person—

THE MAYOR  
The Mayor is the public by proxy and —

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
—and we are in private.

THE MAYOR  
—I am never in private.  
As Mayor.  
I am the public.  
And you cannot make false statements—

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
It's not a false statement.

THE MAYOR

—in my presence.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

It's deductive reasoning.

THE MAYOR

Errant speculation.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

When has the Constable ever made lemon bars?

Never. He's never made them.

Why would he suddenly feel like making bars?

What's different? What's different?

What makes a person suddenly want to make treats for other people?

You hear stories.

Donuts in the breakroom.

Whole families felled by a single pot chili.

It happens. It happens.

A Trojan horse.

The gift you don't expect.

Until it's too late.

THE MAYOR

The constable wouldn't give us poisoned bars.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Coups. There could be a coup.

THE MAYOR

We're just a little village.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Assassinations.

THE MAYOR

Friends. We're all friends!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

He's known about the river all day.

What did he do?

Stayed at home. Combed his hair. Made lemon bars.

He must have made a plan.

What was his plan?  
To stay a lowly constable?  
Or did he look at that hair and finally see a king?  
Seizing power.  
Leading armies.  
A groveling mass.  
The shallow graves.  
And those that could stop him:  
Long dead.  
All of us.  
Why aren't you worried?

THE MAYOR

I'm worried.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Why don't you care?

THE MAYOR

I care.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Those lemon bars could be the beginning  
of the bloodiest slaughter the world has ever known  
and all you can think about is feeding your dumb face.

THE MAYOR

My hair has always been a problem.  
Cowlicks. Dandruff. Bald spots.  
My mother was a hairdresser.  
She tried. She did. To do something  
So I could look good.  
Be successful.  
Make something of myself.  
Combing. Gel. Spray. Cuts. Colors. Relaxing. Curling. Extensions.  
But it was always wrong.  
Junk.  
Going this way and that.  
Sticking up when it should go down.  
Laying dead when it should be flying high.  
For all my mother's talents and skills with hair,  
I always looked stupid.  
Provincial.  
A dumbhead.

But if my mother was alive now.  
And she could see me experience the River of Haircuts.  
Perhaps I'd have it straight and severe.  
Or a little curly-cues.  
Loops and swirls.  
A noble head.  
Heroic.  
I could finally go out into the world.  
Really achieve something.  
County clerk.  
Regional director.  
State senator.  
And maybe my mother,  
that poor, unfortunate hairdresser who unleashed this demonical rat's nest onto the world,  
would finally love me.  
Feel pride.  
Tell her friends what I've done.  
Party official.  
Department manager.  
Lieutenant governor.  
There's no telling how far I could go.  
Believe me.  
There's no telling!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Hairdressers.  
We haven't thought of the hairdressers.

THE MAYOR

What about the hairdressers?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

If we have a river to give us haircuts,  
what do we do with the hairdressers?

THE MAYOR

Some people may prefer a non-river haircut.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

They won't.

THE MAYOR

They might.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

They won't, Mayor, they won't.  
And there are people in our town who have invested years of their life.  
Training, at schools, getting skills, buying salons.  
And now suddenly it will be taken away by a river.  
My sister is a hairdresser.  
How can I do that to my sister?

THE MAYOR

We'll protect the hairdressers.  
I promise you, Schoolmaster.  
Whatever it takes, we'll protect the hairdressers.  
If you vote how I vote.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Mayor.

THE MAYOR

Vote how I vote.  
Or the others will thief the River.  
You don't know the machinations Mrs. Hadley is capable of.  
She's talked about running for Mayor.  
She's talked about replacing me.  
Vote how I vote or you'll have to deal with Mrs. Hadley.  
She doesn't love this town like I do.  
And she doesn't love the hairdressers like I do.  
I think she cuts her own hair.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Mayor.

THE MAYOR

And that simpleton with the children.  
She'll try to take the river too.  
Yell about kids or safety.  
Knock down the fountain. Burn books.  
She's dangerous. A zealot. The idiot.  
But you and I. Together.  
They could never expect you and I.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Mayor.

THE MAYOR

Just vote how I vote.  
Because you don't know what terrors I'm capable of.  
You don't know what I could do.  
Bury the library.  
Raze the school.  
Round up all the hairdressers.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Mayor.

THE MAYOR

Vote how I vote.  
Please.  
Vote how I vote.  
I beg you.  
Vote how I vote.  
For the hairdressers.  
Vote how I vote.

*(THE CONSTABLE enters with THE MOTHER followed by MRS. HADLEY.)*

THE MOTHER

Get your hands off me.

THE CONSTABLE

She was stuck in the window.

THE MOTHER

I was not stuck.

THE CONSTABLE

You were stuck.

MRS. HADLEY

He was rough with her.

THE CONSTABLE

I wasn't rough.

MRS. HADLEY

You were. He was.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
What were you doing in the window?

THE MAYOR  
She was trying to sneak out.

THE MOTHER  
I wasn't trying to sneak out.

THE CONSTABLE  
You were sneaking out.

THE MOTHER  
Why would I sneak out?

THE CONSTABLE  
To tell everyone about the River of Haircuts.

THE MOTHER  
We're on the third floor.

THE CONSTABLE  
You can still sneak out.

THE MOTHER  
From the third floor?

THE CONSTABLE  
Leap to the ground.

THE MOTHER  
I'm PREGNANT.

THE CONSTABLE  
Shimmy down the spout.

THE MOTHER  
A vessel for life.

THE CONSTABLE  
Tie some sheets together.

THE MOTHER  
I would lose my child.



THE CONSTABLE  
Have your fat gut break your fall.

THE MAYOR  
Constable.

THE MOTHER  
What kind of monster do you think I am?

MRS. HADLEY  
No one called you a monster.

THE MOTHER  
I LOVE MY CHILDREN.

MRS. HADLEY  
No one's accusing you.

THE CONSTABLE  
I am.

THE MAYOR  
Constable.

THE CONSTABLE  
Why else was she hanging out the window?

THE MOTHER  
I was hot.  
The radiator is on full blast in the bathroom.  
You can barely breath in that heat.  
And I need to breath:  
I'm pregnant.  
So I opened the window.  
And when I went to close it again,  
I reached outside for the shutter  
and became lodged in the opening.  
I could have died.

THE MAYOR  
Liability.

THE MOTHER

My child could have died.

THE MAYOR

Lawsuits.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I thought we voted to have the radiator fixed in the last meeting.

THE MAYOR

We voted to get bids.

MRS. HADLEY

How long does it take to get bids?

THE MAYOR

The rules say we need three.

We have one bid.

I need two more bids.

We only have one heating person in town.

So I have to go out of town to get bids

and no one wants to come all the way out here to give a bid  
that they're not going to win anyway

because we always end up going with the local company.

THE MOTHER

Why don't we go with the best price?

THE MAYOR

Why are we talking about radiators and bidding processes when one of our members  
just tried to undercut council business by attempting to escape out the window?

That's the scandal.

Not local business.

Her.

THE MOTHER

Doesn't the mayor own the local heating company?

THE MAYOR

Deflecting! She's deflecting!

THE MOTHER

Pointing out facts—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

You own the heating company, too?

THE MOTHER

—is not deflecting.

THE MAYOR

I have many investments.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

How many things do you own?

THE MAYOR

I can't keep track of all my investments.

MRS. HADLEY

You can't funnel town money into your pocket.

THE MAYOR

We gave a great bid.

MRS. HADLEY

Self-dealing. He's self-dealing!

THE MAYOR

The meeting is back in session.

MRS. HADLEY

I move that we talk about the heating contracts.

THE MOTHER

I second.

THE MAYOR

All those in favor? Motion fails.

MRS. HADLEY

Hey!

THE MAYOR

The Mayor controls the pace of the meeting.

MRS. HADLEY

Not to logjam legitimate concerns—

THE MAYOR

Your concern was a personal attack.

MRS. HADLEY

—about public financing.

THE MAYOR

PERSONAL ATTACK.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

If the Constable knows about the River of Haircuts and some guy at the grocery store—

MRS. HADLEY

Meat guy.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

—has been there—

MRS. HADLEY

It was the meat guy.

THE CONSTABLE

Teenagers too.

I saw a group of teenagers.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

—how many other people are finding out about the River of Haircuts while we squabble about heating contracts and bathroom breaks.

THE MOTHER

I saw the meat guy.

From the window of the bathroom in the distance.

He was running to the woods.

His hair was flowing behind him in a wave.

Like a wheat field on a summer's day.

*(She begins to cry:)*

I've never seen.

Anything.

So beautiful.

There were others with him.

He was goading them on.

Twirling his hair.

Tossing his head.

Whistling into the wind.  
People are going. They're visiting the river.  
I think there were children.  
Little children.  
I think children are going to the river.  
And I don't like that we are just sitting here fighting.

THE MAYOR

I motion to move the administration of the River of Haircuts to the Constabulary.

MRS. HADLEY

What?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.

THE MAYOR

We have to protect the river.

THE CONSTABLE

I second.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

You don't get to second.

THE CONSTABLE

I was voicing my approval.

MRS. HADLEY

The Constabulary is under the Mayor.

THE CONSTABLE

We serve the people.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Under the direction of the Mayor.

MRS. HADLEY

This is a power grab.

THE MAYOR

This is not a power grab.

MRS. HADLEY  
Tyrant! Tyrant!

THE MAYOR  
It's a logical progression of the org chart.

MRS. HADLEY  
No.

THE MAYOR  
Protection. Safety. Constabulary.

MRS. HADLEY  
No.

THE MAYOR  
Why would we set up a new structure when we already have a perfectly fine one in place?

MRS. HADLEY  
Tourism. The River of Haircuts should be part of Tourism.

THE MAYOR  
Guess who runs Tourism?

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
The River does not belong in Tourism.

THE MAYOR  
Guess who put themselves in charge of Tourism?

MRS. HADLEY  
I introduced the River of Haircuts to the council—

THE MAYOR  
Convenient! Just convenient!

MRS. HADLEY  
—so it should be in my portfolio.

THE MOTHER  
It's Family Services.

THE MAYOR  
I would rather be dead than have you manage the River of Haircuts.

THE MOTHER

The river should be part of Family Services.

MRS. HADLEY

It's a tourism opportunity.

THE MAYOR

I would rather die.

THE MOTHER

Do you know how much haircuts affect families?

MRS. HADLEY

Who is going to use the River of Haircuts?  
Tourists. Friendly tourists.

THE MAYOR

What happens when those friendly tourists are replaced by armies?  
Foreign entities.  
Mercenary groups.  
Criminal syndicates.  
Then endless battles  
until the river is flooded  
with blood and appendage,  
bile and organ,  
the guilty and the innocent.  
What happens then?  
What happens?

MRS. HADLEY

The River of Haircuts won't lead to armed conflict.

THE MAYOR

It could.

THE CONSTABLE

It will.

THE MAYOR

Constable.

MRS. HADLEY

We're civilized. The world is civilized.

THE MAYOR

What is the worth of all the haircuts over the course of human history?  
Who wouldn't want a hand in that honey pot?  
Who wouldn't want that pot all to themselves?

THE MOTHER

We have enough problems with criminals now.  
Last week I had a pie cooling at my window.  
And when I turned around, it was stolen by criminals.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

It was probably your kids.

THE MOTHER

It wasn't my kids—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Kids steal pies.

THE MOTHER

—it was criminals.

MRS. HADLEY

If society were more generous, we wouldn't have criminals.

THE MAYOR

No.

MRS. HADLEY

People wouldn't need to steal.

THE MAYOR

No.

THE CONSTABLE

We don't have criminals when the police get to do their job.

THE MOTHER

I don't want more criminals.

THE MAYOR

That's why we should empower the Constables to protect the River.  
Second the motion.



MRS. HADLEY

The River should be managed by the people.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Like the school system.

MRS. HADLEY

Citizen advocates.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Like the school system!

MRS. HADLEY

Like the school system.  
But managed better.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

There's nothing wrong with the school system.

THE CONSTABLE

It's falling apart.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

That's because we never get any funding.

THE CONSTABLE

And our kids are dumb as rocks.

THE MOTHER

My kids aren't dumb.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Maybe if our children had cultural opportunities.

THE MOTHER

My kids are smart.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Field trips.

THE MOTHER

Polite.

A library program. THE SCHOOLMASTER

Because they're homeschooled. THE MOTHER

Her kids can't read. THE SCHOOLMASTER

They read. THE MOTHER

Maybe if they had a qualified teacher— THE SCHOOLMASTER

They read. THE MOTHER

—they could read today. THE SCHOOLMASTER

THEY READ. THE MOTHER

DON'T. DRINK. THE SCHOOLMASTER

AT LEAST MY KIDS HAVE GOOD MANNERS. THE MOTHER

THE FOUNTAIN CLEARLY SAYS DON'T DRINK. THE SCHOOLMASTER

AND YOU CAN'T LEARN GOOD MANNERS IN OUR FAILING PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THE MOTHER

Our kids won't need a library program if they're spending all their time at the River of Haircuts. THE CONSTABLE

How are they going to learn anything? THE SCHOOLMASTER

They won't need to learn, they'll have jobs at the River. THE CONSTABLE

THE MAYOR

Jobs are good for the economy.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Children do not need jobs.  
They need education.

THE MOTHER

And manners.

THE CONSTABLE

Children should be working.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.

THE CONSTABLE

Contributing.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.

THE CONSTABLE

Not skipping the light fantastic with their teenage friends at the River of Haircuts.

THE MOTHER

I don't want children using the River of Haircuts without parental approval.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

If we treat the River like we treat our school system,  
it'll be the River's fault every time a kid does something stupid.

THE MAYOR

Schoolmaster.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

"My kid came home with a buzzcut." Blame the river!

THE MAYOR

Schoolmaster

THE SCHOOLMASTER

"My kid drowned." Blame the river!

THE MAYOR

Schoolmaster.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Because all I hear now is:  
Blame the school! Blame the school!

MRS. HADLEY

Maybe more people would trust the school system if it was more open to feedback.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Your kid can't read either.

MRS. HADLEY

My kid has other talents—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Eating waffles is not a talent.

MRS. HADLEY

—and I—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Sitting on your duff is not a talent.

MRS. HADLEY

—celebrate that.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Mouthing off is not a talent.

THE MAYOR

Why can't any of our kids read?

*(Pause.  
Accusations fly around the room.  
As do claims of innocence.  
But no one speaks.)*

MRS. HADLEY

If we give the constabulary our river, we'll live in a military state.

THE CONSTABULARY

And we'll be safe.

MRS. HADLEY

No one is safe in a military state.

THE MAYOR

After the river is secured by the Constabulary, the business community can develop it.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

The business community?

THE MAYOR

The business community can put in—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

We don't need greedy people—

THE MAYOR

—an infrastructure—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

—ruining a natural resource—

THE MAYOR

—so we can monetize—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

—with marketing!

THE MAYOR

—the river.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

And theme restaurants!

THE MAYOR

Schoolmaster.

THE MOTHER

There's nothing wrong with theme restaurants.

MRS. HADLEY

The business community's predatory instincts—

THE MAYOR

Predatory instincts!

MRS. HADLEY

—can be tempered if the river is managed by a community board.

THE MAYOR

More government.

MRS. HADLEY

A cross-section of the village.

THE MAYOR

Regulation.

MRS. HADLEY

Volunteers.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Nothing gets done with volunteers.

MRS. HADLEY

That's not true.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No one showed up to help at the school carnival.

It was me. Just me.

And a pumpkin.

MRS. HADLEY

The community board will be just like the town council.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

A stupid pumpkin.

MRS. HADLEY

You could be on it. Or you.

THE CONSTABLE

Not me. You don't let me be on anything.

The only thing you let me be is the guy who stands at the door.

THE MAYOR

We don't need something like the town council, when we already have a town council.

MRS. HADLEY

This will be different.

THE MAYOR

How?

MRS. HADLEY

I'll be running it, so things will get done.

THE MAYOR

There. There. She's trying to replace me.

MRS. HADLEY

I'm not replacing you.

THE MAYOR

Shadow mayor.

MRS. HADLEY

Facilitation.

THE MAYOR

She's trying to be the shadow mayor.

MRS. HADLEY

It's just facilitation.

THE MOTHER

And the River of Haircuts will be free for everyone.

MRS. HADLEY

Well.

THE MAYOR

No.

THE MOTHER

Free haircuts will help families.

MRS. HADLEY

We'll need money to cover costs of the community board.

THE MOTHER

You said it was volunteers.

MRS. HADLEY

There will be expenses.

There's always expenses.

THE MAYOR

How's the town supposed to make money if haircuts are free?

THE MOTHER

Maybe the town doesn't need to make money from haircuts.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

If we give haircuts away for free,  
what will happen to people who charge for haircuts.

THE MAYOR

Like the hairdressers.

THE CONSTABLE

It's not our fault the hairdressers didn't make good life choices in school.

THE MAYOR

Constable.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

It's not the school's fault.

THE CONSTABLE

And the hairdressers can all become constables.

MRS. HADLEY

We don't need more constables.

THE CONSTABLE

Yes we will.

MRS. HADLEY

Martial law! Martial law!



THE MAYOR

Let the constabulary protect the River so we can unleash the power and ingenuity of the business community to utilize it. And, in turn, protect the hairdressers from obsolescence.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

So the business community gets richer and richer—

THE MAYOR

When the business community does well—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

—while the rest of us fight over scraps.

THE MAYOR

—we all do well.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

You do well. You. Not me. You.

THE MAYOR

Schoolmaster.

MRS. HADLEY

And we should not be ceding power to the constabulary.

THE MAYOR

There's nothing wrong with the constabulary.

MRS. HADLEY

They have an unchecked number of billy clubs.

THE CONSTABLE

I am a public servant.

MRS. HADLEY

They can't be trusted.

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley.

THE CONSTABLE

I was born here.

Constable. THE MAYOR

You can't be trusted. THE CONSTABLE

Constable. THE MAYOR

She wasn't born here. I was. THE CONSTABLE

My husband was born here. MRS. HADLEY

Why do we even let her on the council? THE CONSTABLE

My kid was born here. MRS. HADLEY

Why do we let her accuse me of underhanded things when she's the outsider! THE CONSTABLE

I've been here for 20 years. MRS. HADLEY

That doesn't mean you belong. THE CONSTABLE

Two decades. MRS. HADLEY

It doesn't mean you're one of us. THE CONSTABLE

THE MOTHER  
THERE COULD BE CHILDREN AT THE RIVER OF HAIRCUTS RIGHT NOW.

THE CONSTABLE

Or outsiders.  
With money.  
Corporate interests.  
Rich people with top hats.

Diamond rings.  
Small dogs.  
They could be staking claims.  
Buying deeds.  
Making rules to deny us our God-given right to haircuts.

THE MAYOR

Can someone second the motion?

MRS. HADLEY

The Constable knew about the River of Haircuts but didn't tell us.

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley.

MRS. HADLEY

If they can't trust us, why should we trust them?

THE MAYOR

Mrs. Hadley

THE CONSTABLE

I was going to say something.

MRS. HADLEY

When?

THE CONSTABLE

At this meeting.

MRS. HADLEY

Why didn't you?

THE CONSTABLE

You never let me talk until the meetings are over!

You say, "Shut up!"

And "You're not on the council!"

Look down on me.

Like I'm a nuisance. Flea. Tick. Scum.

A dummy.

That's why I made lemon bars.

To start a conversation.

Build a bridge.

Be nice!

Or to poison us.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

What? Poison? Where?

THE CONSTABLE

Those lemon bars.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.

THE CONSTABLE

They're poisoned?

MRS. HADLEY

No.

THE CONSTABLE

Hearsay! It's just hearsay.

THE MAYOR

Why would I poison anyone?

THE CONSTABLE

Because we are the only thing standing—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I'm happy.

THE CONSTABLE

—between you and the river.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I'm smiling.

THE CONSTABLE

See! See! We're friends.

THE MAYOR

I'm a good person.

THE CONSTABLE

Eat one. MRS. HADLEY

What? THE CONSTABLE

If the lemon bars aren't poisoned, eat one yourself. MRS. HADLEY

Okay. Sure. Fine. THE CONSTABLE

*(THE CONSTABLE picks up a lemon bar and takes a bite.)*

See. See? THE CONSTABLE  
Perfectly fine.  
I thought you'd all like bars.  
I should have brought donuts.  
Maybe chili.  
But I thought you'd like bars.  
I did my best. I did.  
You should all try one.

Not that one. THE MOTHER  
Try this one.  
You should eat this one.  
You should try one you didn't pick yourself.

*(THE MOTHER picks up a different lemon bar.)*

*(Pause.)*

No. THE CONSTABLE

What? THE MAYOR

I can't. THE CONSTABLE

Oh. THE MAYOR

They're poisoned! THE SCHOOLMASTER

Constable. THE MAYOR

Assassinations! THE SCHOOLMASTER

Traitor! MRS. HADLEY

(Pointing to THE MOTHER:)  
She touched it! She touched it!  
I'm not going to eat a lemon bar she touched. THE CONSTABLE

There's nothing wrong with my hands. THE MOTHER

You didn't wash them after going to the bathroom. THE CONSTABLE

I did too. THE MOTHER

She didn't. MRS. HADLEY

A witness! THE CONSTABLE

I wasn't given a chance. THE MOTHER

You had a chance. THE CONSTABLE

I was manhandled out of bathroom. THE MOTHER



Mrs. Hadley. THE MAYOR

You are a self-dealing fascist— MRS. HADLEY

Democratically elected representative. THE MAYOR

—who is trying to line your pockets— MRS. HADLEY

I am not rich. THE MAYOR

—and control a public resource— MRS. HADLEY

I work for the people. THE MAYOR

—with a paramilitary force. MRS. HADLEY

I am not a paramilitary force. THE CONSTABLE

Billy clubs! Billy clubs! MRS. HADLEY

Someone has to look out for the people. THE MAYOR

I protect people. THE CONSTABLE

Heating contracts. The radiator. MRS. HADLEY

Ensure safety. THE CONSTABLE

Did you make money off the fountain? THE MOTHER



No. No. THE MAYOR

Keep the peace. THE CONSTABLE

Did my kids get sick so you could make a penny? THE MOTHER

I have lots of investments. THE MAYOR

People like me. THE CONSTABLE

Why don't we know about them?  
Why don't you show us your investments? THE SCHOOLMASTER

Where's the transparency? MRS. HADLEY

Respect my work. THE CONSTABLE

I should send you my laundry bill. THE MOTHER

You show your investments. THE MAYOR

Diarrhea. THE MOTHER

They cry on my shoulder. THE CONSTABLE

Here are all my investments.  
Nothing. Nothing.  
Because all our money goes to the Mayor's businesses. THE SCHOOLMASTER

Schoolmaster. THE MAYOR

MRS. HADLEY  
You need to be deposed.

THE MAYOR  
You can't depose me.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
I second.

THE MAYOR  
Schoolmaster.

THE CONSTABLE  
Children shake my hand.

THE MAYOR  
Mrs. Hadley is the usurper.

MRS. HADLEY  
All those in favor.

THE SCHOOLMASTER, MRS. HADLEY  
Aye.

THE CONSTABLE  
I am a pillar of the community.

THE MAYOR  
Why aren't we talking about the hairdressers?  
Do we think we are so much better than them that we can take away their livelihood?  
We need to act now to protect them.  
We need to do something now!

MRS. HADLEY  
You have been deposed.

THE MOTHER  
I didn't vote for deposing!

THE MAYOR  
You need a consensus before deposing.

THE MOTHER

I am not going to participate in a power grab by a schoolmaster and foul-mouth.

MRS. HADLEY

Foul-mouth?

THE MOTHER

Twice you cursed. Twice!

MRS. HADLEY

I never cursed.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Fudge and flying flip.

THE MOTHER

And you were censured!

MRS. HADLEY

It was an accident.

THE MOTHER

I would wash your mouth out.

THE MAYOR

Someone could be moving on the River of Haircuts right now while we namby-pamby around.

MRS. HADLEY

Stopping a tyrant—

THE MAYOR

I have the floor.

MRS. HADLEY

—from stealing—

THE MAYOR

I have the floor.

MRS. HADLEY

—our future—

THE MAYOR

Shame on you.

—our kids' future—

MRS. HADLEY

Shame on you.

THE MAYOR

—is my duty on this council.

MRS. HADLEY

How can you try to replace a devoted public official  
—who the people, our people, voted for—  
during an emergency  
so you can force some shady government board onto our lives.

THE MAYOR

Community board. Community.

MRS. HADLEY

Shame on you, Mrs. Hadley, shame on you.

THE MAYOR

It's shame on you.

MRS. HADLEY

Maybe that flies in the city where you come from.

THE MAYOR

I live here.

MRS. HADLEY

But here, in this village, we do things a little differently.  
We're a little more decent. Kindly.  
To our neighbors.  
Unless you don't see us as your neighbors?

THE MAYOR

What are you accusing me of?

MRS. HADLEY

I'm just asking questions.  
Things I've been thinking about.  
That we've all been thinking about.

THE MAYOR

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Do not presume—

THE MAYOR

After all these years, are we still strangers?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

—that you know what I'm thinking.

THE MAYOR

Where are your loyalties, Mrs. Hadley?

MRS. HADLEY

How dare you.

THE MAYOR

Who says you aren't excited to control our River of Haircuts with some handpicked group of anarchists.

MRS. HADLEY

Volunteers.

THE MAYOR

That gives contracts to outsiders.

MRS. HADLEY

The community board won't give contracts to outsiders.

THE MAYOR

Her friends.

Her family.

Diamond rings.

Small dogs.

They'll come from the city with their lawyers

and all the local businesses will get outbid.

Outpriced.

They'll take our river.

MRS. HADLEY

My friends are here.

THE MAYOR

Exploit it.

Make millions.  
Not pay taxes to us.  
Not give money to our people.  
Not give billy clubs to our constables.

MRS. HADLEY

My family is here.

THE MAYOR

Community board.  
Whose community?  
Our community, not yours.  
Where are her loyalties?  
Does anyone really know Mrs. Hadley?  
What is she even doing here?

MRS. HADLEY

My husband is your doctor.  
And your doctor.  
And yours. And yours.

THE CONSTABLE

Not mine.

MRS. HADLEY

Where would this town be if my husband wasn't here?

THE CONSTABLE

I can't afford to get sick.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

You should see how much I make.

MRS. HADLEY

How many would be sick?  
How many would be dead?  
Do you know how much money we gave up to live here?  
Do you know how much a doctor could make in a city?

THE MOTHER

Are we charity to you?

MRS. HADLEY

No.

THE MOTHER  
Is that how you see us?

MRS. HADLEY  
No.

THE MOTHER  
That we should just do what you say because you've sacrificed so much to live among us.

MRS. HADLEY  
I never said sacrifice.

THE MOTHER  
We grew up here.  
We suffered through our schools.  
We endured the people who live here.  
We should get to decide what happens here.  
Not you.

THE MAYOR  
And not some government board.

MRS. HADLEY  
We don't have to live here.  
That's the point.  
My family could live anywhere in the world.  
But we choose to live here.

THE MOTHER  
We're SO lucky.

THE MAYOR  
But we didn't get to choose you.

THE MOTHER  
Thank you, Mrs. Hadley, thank you.

MRS. HADLEY  
That is not what I meant.

THE MAYOR  
Lucky you, getting a choice.  
Unlucky us, getting you forced on us.

MRS. HADLEY

We pay more taxes.

THE MOTHER

Maybe the doctor shouldn't charge so much.

THE MAYOR

You come to our town.

Fleece our sick.

And say you're doing us favor.

Thank you for fleecing us!

Thank you for trying to steal our resources!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I had an operation on my toe.

I'm still paying it off.

THE CONSTABLE

Do you know how many operations I can afford?

Zero! That's how many! Zero!

I get zero operations!

MRS. HADLEY

I'm not the doctor!

I can't control the charges!

THE MOTHER

But you're more than happy to walk around with your nice clothes.

MRS. HADLEY

My clothes aren't that nice.

THE MAYOR

Maybe not compared to what you're used to in that fancy city you come from.

THE MOTHER

They're nice to me.

THE CONSTABLE

Better than what I get to wear.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I'll be paying for my toe until I'm dead.



How's that for public service?  
All my education. Everything I know.  
And I'll die a pauper.  
For a toe! Why?  
Because of greedy doctors.  
Like your husband.

MRS. HADLEY

Maybe the council should make a policy to help people in the town when they get sick.

THE MAYOR

Taxes. Taxes.

THE MOTHER

I can't afford to pay more taxes.

THE CONSTABLE

I can't afford the taxes I have now.

MRS. HADLEY

Then come up with a better solution.

THE MAYOR

Here's one: Maybe you should have to be born in the village to be on the council—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No. No.

THE MAYOR

—because then we'd know you have its best interest in mind.

MRS. HADLEY

I have this village's best interest in mind.

THE MAYOR

How do we know?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

We don't change rules—

THE MAYOR

How do we know? Mrs. Hadley.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

—to exclude someone—

THE MAYOR

How do we know?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

—when they don't agree with us.

THE MOTHER

If you had the best interest of the town,  
Then you wouldn't mind if people  
who were born here got first dibs on the river.

THE CONSTABLE

Yes, dibs!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

There are no dibs in a democracy.

THE MAYOR

Better dibs than some shadowy, secretive government board.

MRS. HADLEY

Community board. Volunteers.

THE CONSTABLE

People born here should get first dibs to use the river.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

That is discrimination.

THE MOTHER

People whose parents were both born in the village.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Eugenics.

THE MAYOR

And grandparents.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Our town charter says nothing about different classes of citizens based on their birthplace.

THE MOTHER

Maybe it should.

MRS. HADLEY

We can draw straws.

THE CONSTABLE

Another chance to get the short straw.  
Even though I'm from here.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

You've already been to the River of Haircuts.

THE CONSTABLE

I might want to go again!

THE MAYOR

I think we can all agree that we can't trust Mrs. Hadley —

MRS. HADLEY

You recruited me to be on the council.

THE MAYOR

—anywhere near the River of Haircuts.

MRS. HADLEY

You recruited me.

THE MAYOR

That's before I knew you were disloyal.  
To our village.

THE CONSTABLE

The Constabulary are the only people capable of securing the River of Haircuts.

MRS. HADLEY

You're not allowed to participate in this debate.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

You're just the Constable.

THE CONSTABLE

If I'm not allowed to voice my opinion—

You are not on the village council.	MRS. HADLEY
—then I will run outside—	THE CONSTABLE
Constable.	THE MAYOR
—right now—	THE CONSTABLE
Constable.	THE MAYOR
—and tell everyone.	THE CONSTABLE
Constable.	THE MAYOR
Like a town crier!	THE CONSTABLE
Constable.	THE MAYOR
WE HAVE A RIVER OF HAIRCUTS!	THE CONSTABLE
You are being disruptive.	THE SCHOOLMASTER
WE HAVE A RIVER OF HAIRCUTS!	THE CONSTABLE
We will take your billy club.	MRS. HADLEY
WE HAVE A RIVER OF HAIRCUTS!	THE CONSTABLE
Block the door.	THE MAYOR

I'm pregnant.

THE MOTHER

WE HAVE A RIVER OF HAIRCUTS!

THE CONSTABLE

Block the door!

THE MAYOR

*(THE CONSTABLE exits.)*

*(Off-stage:)*  
WE HAVE A RIVER OF HAIRCUTS!

THE CONSTABLE

Let's go, let's go.

THE MAYOR

Don't rush me. I'm pregnant.

THE MOTHER

We have to stop him. Come on!

THE MAYOR

I can't stop thinking that my children might not have a good haircut because of how we act today.

THE MOTHER

*(THE MAYOR and THE MOTHER exit.  
THE SCHOOLMASTER takes out their book again.  
MRS. HADLEY is about to leave, but stops.)*

*(A long pause.)*

Do you have a pencil?

MRS. HADLEY

No.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Are you sure?  
I keep the books for my husband.

MRS. HADLEY

And I wanted to do some accounting when I get home.  
I usually look at the balances due.  
If I have a good pencil, sometimes I just mark paid on certain accounts.  
And the doctor is too busy to notice.  
So do you have a pencil?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.

MRS. HADLEY

I didn't know that your toe operation was causing so much stress.  
I would hate for that to hinder your good work at the school.  
You have a pencil.  
Can I borrow it?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

This is corruption.

MRS. HADLEY

It's not corruption.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

It's corruption.

MRS. HADLEY

It's a pencil.  
I haven't asked you for anything.  
Just a pencil.  
And I won't. I won't ask.  
For anything in return.  
You can even have your pencil back when I'm done.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.

MRS. HADLEY

I am a good person. I care about people.  
I listen. I collaborate.  
I'm the only person on this council you can trust.  
The Constable?  
The Mayor.  
That idiot with the children?  
But we can do something truly good.  
For everyone.

It's just a pencil, Schoolmaster.  
No one has to know.  
It's just a pencil.

*(THE SCHOOLMASTER hands the pencil to MRS. HADLEY.  
MRS. HADLEY grabs the pencil.  
THE SCHOOLMASTER doesn't let go, quite yet.)*

THE SCHOOLMASTER

But this is my sister's pencil.

MRS. HADLEY

Okay.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

So you'll need to make sure that we don't break her pencil.

MRS. HADLEY

Okay.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Because I don't know if my sister will be able to afford another pencil if we break it.

MRS. HADLEY

Okay.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

She's a hairdresser.

*(Pause.)*

MRS. HADLEY

I understand.

*(THE SCHOOLMASTER releases the pencil.)*

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Good.

*(THE MAYOR, THE MOTHER, and THE CONSTABLE return.)*

THE MAYOR

I move to make the Constable a member of the village council.

What? MRS. HADLEY

That's not in the town charter. THE SCHOOLMASTER

You're diluting my vote! MRS. HADLEY

I second. THE MOTHER

You can't pack the council. THE SCHOOLMASTER

All those in favor. THE MAYOR

Aye. THE MAYOR, THE MOTHER

This is unprecedented. THE SCHOOLMASTER

All those opposed. THE MAYOR

Aye. MRS. HADLEY, THE SCHOOLMASTER

And tie-breaks are decided by the Mayor. THE MAYOR  
So motion passes.

This is illegal. MRS. HADLEY

Tie-breaks are not decided by the Mayor. THE SCHOOLMASTER

THE MAYOR  
The rules say, "The Mayor may exercise a tie-breaking vote on procedural matters when the health of a council member is compromised."



THE MOTHER

I'm pregnant.  
And I don't feel very well.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

That rule is for when someone dies or is in a coma.

MRS. HADLEY

Her health is fine.

THE MOTHER

My health is not fine.

MRS. HADLEY

She is not compromised.

THE MOTHER

Do not tell me how I should feel when I'M PREGNANT.

THE MAYOR

Her health is compromised as evidenced by our bathroom break.

THE MOTHER

Which you both voted on.

THE MAYOR

And the composition of the council is a procedural matter.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

That is a loose reading.

THE MAYOR

It's in the rules.

MRS. HADLEY

You are trampling on my rights.

THE MAYOR

So the Constable is hereby on the council.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

You're killing democracy!

MRS. HADLEY

Tyrant! Tyrant!

THE CONSTABLE

I second the motion to move the administration of the River of Haircuts to the constabulary.

THE MAYOR

All those in favor.

THE CONSTABLE, THE MAYOR

Aye.

THE MOTHER

I won't vote for anything until we can guarantee haircuts for future generations of the village.

THE MAYOR

Come on.

THE MOTHER

We must preserve the River of Haircuts for our children.  
Full children of our village

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Children are children.  
There is no full or half.

MRS. HADLEY

The motion to move the administration to the constabulary fails.

THE MAYOR

I table the vote until after a debate.

MRS. HADLEY

It's dead.

THE MAYOR

Not until I say it is.

MRS. HADLEY

This is an abuse of power.

THE MAYOR

Calling a debate is not an abuse of power.

MRS. HADLEY

Everything you do is an abuse of power!

THE MAYOR

Deranged. She's deranged!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

We don't even know if the River of Haircuts is safe.

What if someone falls in?

Are they lacerated?

Cut to pieces?

What if a child falls in?

Someone's elderly mother?

Is a good haircut worth the risk?

THE MAYOR

You're only saying that because your sister cuts hair.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I would say it anyway.

THE MAYOR

The council wasn't meant to protect—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I have safety concerns.

THE MAYOR

—your sister's business.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Someone needs to study the river.

THE CONSTABLE

We know what the river does.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Someone with an academic background.

THE CONSTABLE

People are already using it.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

There needs to be guidelines for using the river.  
Backed by research.  
For the sake of safety.

THE CONSTABLE

We know it's safe.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Maybe if we'd studied the fountain before we put it to use,  
people wouldn't have gotten sick.

THE MOTHER

That would have saved me trouble.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

And linens.

THE MOTHER

And linens!

THE MAYOR

The study will take years.

THE MOTHER

It won't take years.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

It could.

THE MAYOR

See! See!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

We can't put a time limit on scientific inquiry.

THE CONSTABLE

And all the while your sister makes a killing with haircuts.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.

THE CONSTABLE

Jacking up prices.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

No.

THE CONSTABLE

Lining your pockets.

MRS. HADLEY

We'll freeze the price of haircuts during the study.

THE MAYOR

That's government.

MRS. HADLEY

Administered by the community board for the river.

THE MAYOR

Regulation.

THE MOTHER

What about discounts for families with young children?

THE MAYOR

I move the Schoolmaster be removed from the council for the duration of this discussion.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

You can't remove me.

THE MAYOR

You have a conflict of interest.

THE CONSTABLE

I second.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

My sister's business is not a conflict of interest.

MRS. HADLEY

Another power grab!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Your mother was a hairdresser.

THE MAYOR

How dare you—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

His mother was a hairdresser.

THE MAYOR

—bring my mother—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

What would your mother think?

THE MAYOR

—into politics—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Turning your back on the hairdressers!

THE MAYOR

—when she is no longer with us.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Think of your mother.  
Just think of your mother.

THE MAYOR

*(With great feeling:)*

I think of my mother every day, Schoolmaster.

In my prayers.

With everything I do.

And my dear sweet hairdresser mother,  
were I lucky enough to have her alive with me today,  
would urge us to vote for progress.  
And for your removal from the council.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Mayor!

MRS. HADLEY

I protest!

THE MAYOR

I motion to remove the Schoolmaster from all votes regarding the River of Haircuts.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

This is unprecedented.

MRS. HADLEY

I will not stand for this.

THE CONSTABLE

I second.

THE MAYOR

All those in favor.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

We should all care about the hairdressers!

THE CONSTABLE, THE MAYOR

Aye.

THE MOTHER

I am not voting until we decide to keep the River of Haircuts to ourselves.

THE MAYOR

Stop being disagreeable

THE CONSTABLE

It's undemocratic.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Being disagreeable is the root of democracy.

THE CONSTABLE

That's why no one likes a democracy.

THE MAYOR

Constable.

THE CONSTABLE

Nothing gets done.

THE MAYOR

Constable.

MRS. HADLEY

Things get done when people work together for the good of the entire community—

THE MOTHER

Children are part of the community.

MRS. HADLEY

—and if this council isn't willing to do that—.

THE MOTHER

Someone has to think of the children and their future access to haircuts.

MRS. HADLEY

—maybe we need a new election—

THE MAYOR

We don't have time for an election.

MRS. HADLEY

—so we can vote you out.

THE CONSTABLE

This would have all be decided if we had a king.

THE MAYOR, THE SCHOOLMASTER, THE MOTHER, MRS. HADLEY  
WE DON'T NEED A KING.

THE CONSTABLE

A king would have already secured the River of Haircuts.

MRS. HADLEY

A king would keep the river to themselves.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

And their descendants.

MRS. HADLEY

Which is what the Mayor is trying to do.

THE MAYOR

That's what you're trying to do!

THE CONSTABLE

The river will be found out.  
These things always get out.



THE MAYOR  
The world will storm our river.

MRS. HADLEY  
Tourists. On pilgrimages.

THE MOTHER  
People from the city.

THE CONSTABLE  
Our town is for us. Not for outsiders.

THE MAYOR  
But we can make money from the outsiders.

MRS. HADLEY  
With a community board.

THE MAYOR  
Taxes. Taxes. Regulation.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
Who can make money? The business community?

THE MAYOR  
Everyone.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
Is it just the mayor? Or will other people make money too?

THE MAYOR  
Everyone will make money.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
How will I make money? How will my sister?

THE MAYOR  
We all do better when there are taxes coming in.  
And think what we can get with all this new money.  
Parks. Libraries. A university.  
Higher salaries for city workers  
Support for homeschooled children.  
A better fountain. One that works.  
We can really fix up this town.

Make it a destination.  
Marble streets.  
Brick buildings.  
Our own ice cream parlor.  
Strawberries in winter.  
Skiing in summer.  
Statues of our heroes.  
One for each of us.  
To honor those who brought the world the River of Haircuts.  
There will be a festival.  
With a parade. Floats. A marching band.  
And a play written about us.  
About what we said today.  
How we acted.  
The noble way we came together for the good of the village.  
Maybe there will be songs.  
Or not.  
But it will be a good play.  
And we'll be the heroes.  
People will clap and cheer and hope for us.  
To do the right thing.  
Then.  
At the very end.  
When everything looks lost for the River of Haircuts.  
The curtain will rise.  
The smoke will clear  
And a spotlight will appear.  
Through the fog and the lights.  
The people playing us will suddenly have these.  
Glorious.  
Haircuts.  
Then all you can hear is the sound of an auditorium full of hearts breaking.  
For all the good things that have come from what we've done today.

*(Pause.)*

THE SCHOOLMASTER

And then everyone will move to the village.  
When they hear how good we have it.  
They will move to our village.

MRS. HADLEY

They won't move.

Housing prices will skyrocket.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Just tourists.

MRS. HADLEY

We'll be priced out.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I don't want to leave my home.

THE MOTHER

Pushed away.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

This river will change our village.

MRS. HADLEY

My children grew up in that home.

THE MOTHER

Forced to leave.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

But we have to change with it.

MRS. HADLEY

I worked hard on my garden.

THE MOTHER

The invaders will vote us out.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Do you think you will be here in 5 years?

When everyone comes.

Will you be here?

Will you?

The rich,

with their smiling and their tricks,

will topple the gates,

and we'll be left with nothing.

Looked down upon.

Stupid townies.

The idiots.

With our drooling mouths.

Who sold it all for dust and pennies.

*(Pause.)*

THE MOTHER

I move to restrict the River of Haircuts  
to current citizens  
and their descendants who are born here  
under the administration of the Constabulary  
with the school in charge of studying the river before it is put to use.

THE MAYOR

This does not solve our budget issues.

THE CONSTABLE

I second.

THE MAYOR

And we cannot afford all the constables we'll need to protect the river.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I third.

MRS. HADLEY

You can't horde a natural resource.

THE CONSTABLE

Call the vote.

MRS. HADLEY

*(To THE SCHOOLMASTER:)*

You gave me your pencil. I have your pencil.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Mrs. Hadley tried to bribe me to vote on her measure.

MRS. HADLEY

I did nothing—

THE SCHOOLMASTER

With a pencil. With that pencil!

MRS. HADLEY

—of the sort.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
But this town is not for sale.  
My vote is not for sale.

THE CONSTABLE  
Call the vote.

THE MAYOR  
I am not calling this vote.

THE MOTHER  
It's in the rules.

THE MAYOR  
It is not fiduciarily responsible.

THE CONSTABLE  
CALL THE VOTE.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
You have to follow the rules.

MRS. HADLEY  
FUDGE ON THE FLYING FLIP RULES.

THE MOTHER  
Constable, please remove Mrs. Hadley.

THE MAYOR  
Do not remove Mrs. Hadley.

THE MOTHER  
She has been censured twice.

THE MAYOR  
And we allowed her to stay.

THE CONSTABLE  
Get up.

MRS. HADLEY  
The village council is not a forum for martial law.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
It's not martial law if we already voted to remove you.

MRS. HADLEY  
It's martial law.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
It's following the rules.

THE CONSTABLE  
Get up.

THE MAYOR  
Mrs. Hadley, don't move.

THE CONSTABLE  
Mrs. Hadley.

THE MAYOR  
If you leave, they can remove me from office—

THE MOTHER  
We're following rules.

THE MAYOR  
—and vote on their measure.

THE CONSTABLE  
Mrs. Hadley, it's time to go.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
I'm not watching.

THE MAYOR  
Don't move.

MRS. HADLEY  
You are an unelected—

THE CONSTABLE  
Mrs. Hadley.

MRS. HADLEY  
—GOON.

I will use force.	THE CONSTABLE
Do it!	THE MOTHER
I'm not watching.	THE SCHOOLMASTER
Mrs. Hadley.	THE MAYOR
GOON.	MRS. HADLEY
You are giving me—	THE CONSTABLE
GOON.	MRS. HADLEY
—NO CHOICE.	THE CONSTABLE
GOON.	MRS. HADLEY
HIT HER!	THE MOTHER
I'm not watching!	THE SCHOOLMASTER
MRS. HADLEY!	THE CONSTABLE
Stand down.	THE MAYOR
GOON.	MRS. HADLEY

*(THE CONSTABLE raises his billy club.)*

*THE MEAT GUY enters.  
Everyone stops.)*

We are in a meeting. THE MAYOR

Who's that? THE MOTHER

The meat guy. MRS. HADLEY

From the grocery store? THE MAYOR

What's he doing here? THE SCHOOLMASTER

His hair. THE CONSTABLE

It's gone. THE MOTHER

*(It's true.  
THE MEAT GUY is completely bald.  
And he's bleeding.  
His clothes are ripped and covered in dirt.)*

Sir, we are in a meeting. THE MAYOR

Let him speak. MRS. HADLEY

We have to know what happened to his hair. THE CONSTABLE

Tell us! THE MOTHER

Find your words. THE SCHOOLMASTER



MRS. HADLEY

And don't spare us the detail.

THE MEATGUY

I was at the river  
in the cavern by the woods  
helping my little brother.  
Zeke.  
His hair has always been flat here.  
Sad there.  
I really thought he could make something of himself  
if he just had something that worked for him.  
Everyone there was showing off.  
Doing cannonballs into the water and coming out with  
Fades and French Braids.  
Bouffants and Pompadours.  
And when Zeke finally had the courage to dip his own hair in the water:  
tremendous ruby red ringlets appeared  
followed by such joy as there has ever been in my little brother.  
But such beauty was never meant to last on this poor earth.  
For just then:  
explosions ripped across the river and tore through the cavern.

THE CONSTABLE

Oh terror!

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Our river!

THE MOTHER

Heavens!

THE MEATGUY

Through smoke and fire,  
over broken bodies  
and their perfect hair,  
I crawled myself to safety.  
Only looking back once  
to see my beautiful brother,  
Zeke,  
bashed in the skull by a flying stone.  
And his kingly ringlets sinking beneath the water  
while the River of Haircuts  
was erased in the hellish bomb fire!

Terrible tale!

MRS. HADLEY

Poor man!

THE MAYOR

Tragedy.

THE CONSTABLE

THE MEATGUY  
Hold your lamentations for the final blow.  
When I had finally crawled out of the wreckage  
and met the sun with my flowing tears,  
I found myself encircled by the terrible villains who had done the deed.

*(GASPS!)*

THE MEATGUY  
They were dancing and celebrating,  
crowing about the deathblow done to the  
River of Haircuts.  
And though my body was broken,  
my brother taken,  
and my heart ripped in twain,  
still these devils could not leave well enough alone!  
For they spied my lush ankle-length locks  
and descended upon me.  
Held my hands.  
Lashed my feet.  
Pinned my chest.  
And clipped me like a lamb in autumn.  
My hair shorn to the sad skin you see now.

But who? Who did this?

THE MAYOR

I can't . . .

THE MEATGUY

Jealous neighbors?

THE MOTHER

No . . .

THE MEATGUY

Foreign spies?  
THE SCHOOLMASTER

Please . . .  
THE MEATGUY

Anarchists?  
THE CONSTABLE

Hairdressers.  
It was the hairdressers!  
THE MEATGUY

THE SCHOOLMASTER, THE MOTHER, THE MAYOR, THE CONSTABLE, MRS. HADLEY  
Oh.

THE MEATGUY  
Never doubt the terrible rage  
that wakes  
when someone finds  
they've been replaced.

*(A long silence.  
THE MEATGUY makes a long, slow walk out the door.  
The greatest sadness ever experienced descends upon the town council.)*

MRS. HADLEY  
How can the River of Haircuts be ruined?

THE MAYOR  
I never got to use it.

THE SCHOOLMASTER  
Now my hair will always look like this.

THE MOTHER  
How am I going to face my kids?

THE MAYOR  
Why didn't I get to use it?

THE CONSTABLE  
It doesn't matter.

THE MAYOR

I wasted my life scheming and parliamenting.

MRS. HADLEY

Why were we always arguing?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I should have just gone.

THE CONSTABLE

A good haircut should be a happy accident.

MRS. HADLEY

We could have stopped this from happening.

THE MOTHER

What will my descendants' haircuts look like?

MRS. HADLEY

Why didn't we stop this!

THE CONSTABLE

If we all had good haircuts, they wouldn't be special anymore.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

That's easy for you to say.

MRS. HADLEY

You got your haircut.

THE CONSTABLE

But if I show it, they'll shear it off!

THE MAYOR

Why didn't I get my haircut?

THE CONSTABLE

I'm going to have to wear a hat for the rest of my life!

THE MAYOR

We are not men,  
we are barbarians!  
Beasts in clothes.

Animals.  
Greedy pigs who can't share their truffles.

MRS. HADLEY

And our hair will never get better.

*(A long silence.  
The CONSTABLE walks slowly over to the lemon bars and picks them up.  
Then he slowly walks the lemon bars to the trash and throws them away.  
He returns to his post.)*

THE SCHOOLMASTER

I move that we talk about the library program.

THE MOTHER

I second.

THE MAYOR

All those in favor . . .

*(But no one's heart is in it.  
Looks of regret.  
Sadness.  
Desire.)*

END OF PLAY