

# **WILD TURKEY**

An American Cabinet Of Curiosities

By

Michael Sendrow

43-09 47<sup>th</sup> Ave., Apt. 2G  
Sunnyside, NY 11104  
m@michaelsendrow.com  
646.675.6222

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CAST OF CHARACTERS (in order of appearance):

DOROTHY DICKINSON	Proprietor of the City Tavern, Late 40s
WILLIAM DICKINSON	Her Husband, Late 40s
THOMAS GODFREY	Glassblower, Mid 50s
WILLIAM COLEMAN	Skipjack and Member of Junto, Mid 20s
SARAH HUNTER	Pharmacist and Amateur Anatomist, early 40s
CONROY SMITH	Metallurgist, Late 30s
ROBERT BELL	A Pioneer, early 30s
JOSIAH HOLDER +	Quaker and Member of Junto, Mid 20s
HUGH MEREDITH	Printer and Member of Junto, Mid 20s
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN	Future of American Colonies, early 20s
SAMUEL MICKLE *	Naysayer and Murderer, Early 70s
SIR HANS SLOANE +	Scientist, Physician, and Collector, Mid 60s
FREDERIK RUYSCH *	Anatomist and Scientific Pioneer, Late 70s

+Played by same actor

\*Played by same actor

SCENE:

The City Tavern, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

TIME:

ACT ONE – A Friday, 1727

ACT TWO – The Following Friday

*Wild Turkey* should be played with an intermission.

A NOTE ON USAGE:

A “/” denotes when the next line of dialogue should begin, creating an overlapping effect.

“Work as if you were to live a hundred years. Pray as if you were to die tomorrow.”  
—Ben Franklin

“You nasty, slimy freaks! Freaks! Freaks! Freaks!”  
—Cleopatra to the sideshow performers in Tod Browning’s *Freaks*

**ACT ONE, Scene Four: RESOLUTION**

(SAMUEL MICKLE throws open the door and remains in the doorway, snow blowing in and past him, with an EAR TRUMPET at his ear.)

ALL

(turning to the audience)

“Resolution: Resolve to perform what you ought. Perform without fail what you resolve.”

HOLDER

Um, yes, I... I think, I think the lending library is a wonderful idea.

MICKLE

(using the EAR TRUMPET as a bullhorn)

You waste your wonderful ideas on this city. On this, this... This *Philadelphia*.

(beat)

Yes, yes. I may have trouble in hearing, but you do not. And, therefore, you have heard me true. Philadelphia is, itself, a terrible idea. And a terrible idea cannot have wonderful ideas. Yes, yes. For she is dying, this Philadelphia.

(pointing at HOLDER with the TRUMPET)

You there. Wee meacock. What is this wonderful idea of yours?

HOLDER

We were addressing / the uniformity of—

MICKLE

Ah, a merry-andrew, indeed. Well, Mr. Jack Pudding, as it is I cannot and do not want to hear you.

(beat)

The problem, good saucebox, is simple. Philadelphia is not Mr. Franklin’s Boston. Nor is she Miss Hunter’s New York. She is neither London, nor Paris. She has all the standing water of a Venice, but without a gondolier to navigate she may as well lead from the dread Schuylkill to my buttocks.

(beat)

Yes, yes, you have heard me true. For what I say shall fall on ears deafer than mine. For Philadelphia is a city of death and desperation, where a baby born still is still better off than a Quaker in a land of Puritans.

(beat)

And for these reasons, I do not own a house in Philadelphia.

(pointing at WILLIAM with the TRUMPET)

You there...

(then pointing at DOROTHY with the TRUMPET)

Tell her I want of nothing.

(then pointing at HOLDER without looking at him)

What is your name, Mr. Pudding? Do not answer until I have inserted my cone.

HOLDER

Josiah Holder.

MICKLE

I have not inserted my cone.  
 (inserting the TRUMPET)  
 I have inserted my cone then.

HOLDER

Josiah Holder.

MICKLE

Josiah Meacock?

HOLDER

*Holder.*

MICKLE

Ah, a merry-andrew, indeed. And just who shall I hold, Mr. Meacock?

HOLDER

Holder is my last name.  
 (stretching out each syllable)  
*JOSIAH HOLDER.*

MICKLE

Josiah Holder?

HOLDER

Yes.

MICKLE

Holder?

HOLDER

Yes.

MICKLE

*Holder?*  
 (beat)  
 Where might I have heard that name before?

COLEMAN

I can't imagine you *heard* it anywhere.

MEREDITH

Perhaps / he read it.

MICKLE

(wheeling around, looking for the culprit)

Who said that? You? You?  
 (turning to HOLDER)  
 My eye is on you, Mr. Pudding.

HOLDER  
 Perhaps you have heard tell of my grandfather, Christopher.

MICKLE  
*Christopher? Christopher...?*

HOLDER  
*Holder. Christopher Holder.*

MICKLE  
 Christopher Holder... Christopher Holder.  
 (beat)  
 Christopher Holder. Indeed. Christopher Holder. One of those... Quakers.

HOLDER  
 Yes, t'is the man.

MICKLE  
 Well, then, by writ of birth, Mr. Josiah Holder, my dear merry-andrew, please consider yourself one more example of Philadelphia's terrible ideas.

SMITH  
 / Easy on the boy, old man.

MICKLE  
 You, no doubt—  
 (beat, to anyone)  
 Aye, t'is true!

WILLIAM  
 Quiet down, Mr. Mickle.

MICKLE  
 I am not yet finished with this Mr. Holder.  
 (beat, to HOLDER)  
 You, no doubt, fancy yourself a smart young man able to fix this wretched city. Yes, yes. Well, she cannot be fixed. You are too late. Late before your poor mother even birthed you. For she is a stillborn baby on display for the world's amusement, / Philadelphia is.

MEREDITH  
 That's / enough out of you.

COLEMAN  
 Leave us be.

**ACT ONE, Scene Five: FRUGALITY**

(A general COMMOTION as if the bar will break out into a fight. BELL bursts through the door, MUSKET in one hand and a TWO-HEADED RABBIT in the other.)

BELL

In hunting, I shot this!

ALL

(turning to the audience)  
 “Frugality: Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing.”

(Still excited from MICKLE’s oratory, and interest piqued from the rabbit, the tavern is alive with movement to inspect the RABBIT. Each actor – save for BELL and MICKLE – should choose and repeat one of the following lines: “T’is a two-headed rabbit!” or “That rabbit has two heads!”)

DOROTHY

(raising her voice)  
 Everyone please! Quiet down!  
 (beat)  
 A creature, miraculous as this, deserves silent reverence.  
 (silence)  
 She is beautiful.

BELL

Aye, she is.  
 (beat)  
 What she lacks in good meat, she makes up for in curiousness. As I couldn’t salvage even the pelt, I figured you’d find some device for her.

DOROTHY

Oh, thank you so much. Thank you, / Mr. Bell. Thank you a thousand times.

WILLIAM

Yes, / thank you. Ale for the house!

DOROTHY

(to BELL)  
 I take back all ill.

BELL

/ Apologies accepted.

WILLIAM

(to the HOUSE)  
Come now, everyone. What are we drinking?

BELL

Even had I held your ill to heart, I knew you'd want the rabbit so badly.

HOLDER

Want it? Why would anyone want something like this?

MICKLE

(muttering)  
/ Philadelphia is a two-headed rabbit.

GODFREY

(to HOLDER)  
Have you not seen their collection?

HOLDER

Collection?

FRANKLIN

It is quite stunning.

DOROTHY

(to WILLIAM)  
Retrieve the other jars.

WILLIAM

(ducking under the bar)  
Miss Hunter and I just changed the alkahest on the lot.  
(beat)  
And we thank you, Sarah.

HUNTER

My pleasure.

(One-by-one, WILLIAM lifts jars of various CURIOSITIES onto the bar top. There are a variety of animals preserved in liquid in different sized jars.)

DOROTHY

The rabbit is perfect, isn't she. I dare say she compliments our collection quite well.

HOLDER

This is... I dare say it's, it's... Repulsive.

FRANKLIN

Repulsion is in the stomach of the beholder, good man.

COLEMAN

And now I may chide *you* for your green hue.

HOLDER

What is this? All of this?

DOROTHY

T'is quite plain, no?

(moving to each jar)

Three-legged calf. Fetal possum. Dissected toad. Shrunken head, courtesy of John Smith himself. Conjoined pigs.

GODFREY

Conjoiner!

SMITH

Aye, conjoiner!

DOROTHY

Two-headed snake. Just see how it has a head on both ends.

MEREDITH

I shan't want to encounter that snake in the woods.

COLEMAN

It never could have lived.

MEREDITH

If it had, though...

DOROTHY

And now, we can add this rabbit.

WILLIAM

Two-headed rabbit.

DOROTHY

/ Two-headed rabbit.

MICKLE

Philadelphia is a two-headed rabbit.

HOLDER

I guess it does beg another glimpse, this collection.

T'is more than that. DOROTHY

Aye? HOLDER

It stands for more than just some haphazard assortment, as it were. DOROTHY

How so? HOLDER

T'is progress. On display. DOROTHY

But it's not on display. HOLDER

Not yet. For't's incomplete, is why. WILLIAM

No thanks t o Mr. Godfrey. DOROTHY

I'll take no blame. Glass-blowing is not pouring a pint, / I dare say. It takes time. GODFREY

Incomplete for its own sake. WILLIAM

Imperfect is a better term. Only a series of gewgaws and jiggumbobs. Broken bits of memory. Some bones and crucifixes. DOROTHY  
(beat)

We pray to Penn for Noah's ark, aye?

Perfection. WILLIAM

I recommend the work of Ruysch. HUNTER

(looking to WILLIAM)  
Ruysch? DOROTHY

HUNTER

His technique is quite thorough and practical.

DOROTHY

I don't know the man. Ruysch?

HUNTER

Aye, Ruysch.

DOROTHY

Where's his tavern?

FRANKLIN

Herr Frederick Ruysch. He's Dutch.

DOROTHY

Pennsylvanian Dutch?

FRANKLIN

*Dutch* Dutch. An anatomist.

HUNTER

Aye, and a great one at that. Like I said, his technique speaks for the trade.

DOROTHY

Technique is without morals. The work of Noah recommends itself.

FRANKLIN

If we all agree on of whom we speak, Herr Ruysch satisfies both arguments.

HUNTER

Verily.

FRANKLIN

Anatomical investigation can be a moral project. I have of late received representations in etching of the doctor's *Opera Omnia*. One in particular is incredibly engaging, that of a barren landscape of death realized only with scattered infant skeletal remains. Flanking this scene is two skeletons seemingly weeping into membrane cloth. Preserved skin? I am not sure.

DOROTHY

That is tampering with perfection.

FRANKLIN

No, it's frugality.

DOROTHY

No, it's moral excess. A curiosity has meaning in it of its own perfection. I don't need to see the inside of the two-headed rabbit to know His work.

FRANKLIN

Then you will miss what makes it a rabbit at all. Herr Ruysch is notable not only for his anatomical observations but also for the anatomical process, which for him, we should note, was the structure of sin. A two-headed rabbit is curiously interesting, indeed. Ruysch, however, used his trade for academic and moral instruction. In your view, that he pioneered new means of preservation would suffice.

(beat)

And if one finds the subject lacking interest, / Herr Ruysch—

BELL

Aye. More than a school lesson. And I will speak for Smith to say if he were quicker to the follow, he too would find himself droolburnt.

FRANKLIN

Very well. But let me just say this: Herr Ruysch *practices* upon criminals.

BELL

(acquiescing)

/ Not bad...

HOLDER

Practices on criminals?

FRANKLIN

Remember, he seeks the origins of sin. Now I must admit, I know this only from what I have read and seen, again only through the aforementioned etchings. I can't speak from experience for what occurs. But of some interest to all – or some of us – Herr Ruysch performs these autopsies in an amphitheater to music, refreshments, and great crowds of spectators.

(beat)

Now whether these origins are embedded in our bones, I don't know.

DOROTHY

Mr. Franklin, your ideas are more baffling than your bones.

FRANKLIN

I am my bones.

DOROTHY

You're a booby, / and that's that.

WILLIAM

That's enough, Dorothy.

FRANKLIN

You pray for moral perfection, but preach booby.

DOROTHY

Aye, and if you don't like it, take your business to that Ruysch!

FRANKLIN

/ Aye, aye. Ruysch, indeed.

DOROTHY

I'm sure there's a stool at his tavern left ass-warm for you.

FRANKLIN

Aye, ass-warm, / indeed!

DOROTHY

Aye, ass-warm. By one of your partners in crime, I'm sure.

FRANKLIN

Better ass-warmed than ass-stained!

DOROTHY

Ass-stained?

FRANKLIN

Aye, ass-stained. Like that gruel!

DOROTHY

That's it, Franklin. / Get out!

HUNTER

Quiet! The both of you.

(beat)

The rigor mortis sets in on the poor rabbit.

**ACT ONE, Scene Six: INDUSTRY**

ALL

"Industry: Lose no time. Be always employed in something useful. Cut off all unnecessary actions."

HUNTER

We must take steps to preserve it. Now.

FRANKLIN

Agreed.

HUNTER

Dorothy?

DOROTHY

Agreed...

GODFREY

I believe I may, might have some old jars or cases at home.

HUNTER

Very well, then. Retrieve the jar post haste.

BELL

I'll join you, Mr. Godfrey.

GODFREY

No, you may exit with me only.

BELL

(as they exit)  
Aye, that's what I meant.

GODFREY

What are you talking about?

BELL

She was my only kill this evening.

GODFREY

Two heads. A wonder.

(BELL exits ahead of GODFREY, who shoots the tavern a look.)

WILLIAM

We have supplies in the cellar.

HUNTER

In adequacy?

WILLIAM

Enough even for a man.

HUNTER

All I need is wine, water, and an open flame.

DOROTHY

(to WILLIAM)  
We retire to the cellar, then?

FRANKLIN

May I, may I, uh... May I join you?

DOROTHY

Join us? But where? To our ass-stained basement?

FRANKLIN  
 Look, I... I apologize.

DOROTHY  
*Apologize?*

FRANKLIN  
 Yes. I just, you know, I just get *worked* up about the sciences.

HUNTER  
 (to DOROTHY)  
 Oh, let on, Dickinson. The boy apologized. Hurry up.

DOROTHY  
 Fine. But keep your comments to yourself.

FRANKLIN  
 I will, I promise.  
 (to the JUNTO)  
 Boys, I'll be right back.

COLEMAN  
 But we're not finished here, Ben.

FRANKLIN  
*And* we never shall be...

WILLIAM  
 (lifting a glass)  
 To the preservation of this rabbit.

ALL  
 (except HOLDER, COLEMAN, MEREDITH and MICKLE)  
 To the preservation of this rabbit!

(DOROTHY, WILLIAM, FRANKLIN,  
 HUNTER, and SMITH exit to the basement.)

COLEMAN  
 I truly despise his ellipses.  
 (beat)  
 The meeting, which I remind you, he called to order, aye, organized, is left  
 dangling.  
 (beat)  
 I fear interruption will be the ruin of these meetings, if we even finish this one to  
 move on the others.  
 (beat)

And then a two-headed rabbit may as well be a guest at dinner or a guest speaker, aye, a new – uninstalled – member of the group, for he showers it with affection as though he were a mystagogue ready to receive the bones of Christ Himself. This two-headed rabbit will be an occupation of a full day's work, while a simple meeting lasting only sixty minutes shall be an affliction. He talks of industry all the while engaging himself in the fruitless investigation of a natural anomaly – one that may never shed light even on itself.

(beat)

In truth, I love a jest. A jest for its sake that passes the time between thought is healthy. These curiosities are a passion. Nature's jest, in which we are snookered.

(beat)

Snookered.

HOLDER

So it seems.

MEREDITH

So it seems.

COLEMAN

Very well. The language of the colonists, I remind you.

(beat)

We presumed it was the Queen's English, and Franklin apparently believes this no longer is clear. I am inclined to agree. Perhaps we all bawl as infants.

HOLDER

Would you also agree that we are all of the same class? As infants?

COLEMAN

Equal at birth?

HOLDER

Aye.

COLEMAN

Of course not.

HOLDER

Why?

COLEMAN

Are you asking that question with the answer on your tongue?

MEREDITH

/ Indentured servitude.

COLEMAN

I despise such questions.

HOLDER

Of course I have an answer. Not yours, however.

MEREDITH

Indentured servitude is a form of, of / what you are—

COLEMAN

Cheap labor.

MEREDITH

No. Of, of being an infant.

COLEMAN

That is a fashionable view, my friend.

MEREDITH

(to HOLDER)

Finish your thought. About infants.

HOLDER

I am only suggesting that we must learn language somewhere. We are not born with it.

COLEMAN

And I am suggesting we are born into it.

HOLDER

Into what are we born?

COLEMAN

Royalty. Poverty. Anomaly. Anything.

HOLDER

Into what are the colonists born?

COLEMAN

Delusion. Arrogance. Anomaly. Anything.

HOLDER

In the colonies, however, we are geographically separated from our royalty. Furthermore, we are in contact with diverse peoples. Indians alone...

MEREDITH

And that is why indentured servitude is like childhood. You are taken into a new situation and given new life.

COLEMAN

Perhaps we should reserve that rather sizable topic for another day.

(beat)

But as to what I assume is Ben's opinion on uniformity in spelling, I simply see little value in it. Though I can understand his interest in spelling, as it is a part of his trade.

MEREDITH

T'is.

(to MICKLE)

Old man, a game?

(MEREDITH moves to sit next to MICKLE.)

COLEMAN

Spelling is for / printers of pamphlets, not readers of them.

MICKLE

What?

MEREDITH

A game of cards.

HOLDER

(to COLEMAN)

/ That view seems overly simplified.

MICKLE

Games are low.

MEREDITH

Then a low / game t'is.

(MEREDITH begins dealing out the cards.)

COLEMAN

I am not disputing its value.

(to MEREDITH)

We're in the middle of a meeting.

MEREDITH

He can't hear, and I can't follow.

COLEMAN

Can't follow?

MEREDITH

Shall not follow.

(as he plays the game)

Spelling, I am fond of reading. Spelling, I am not fond of doing.

(indicating COLEMAN)

And you speak of industry. Franklin spends hour upon hour, late and early, fretting over such things. Spelling. Typography. Games. Ale. Spelling and typography, that they are done correctly. Games and ale, that they are not done at all. What he forgets though is, spelling's for the print shop and ale's for the alehouse. One is a trade, and the other's an amusement.

(beat)

See, I know ale is for the alehouse. Spelling and typography may be his passion. But typography's just a trade I've struggled to grasp but into which I wasn't born.

(to HOLDER)

And to your question of one's infancy? All I know is, spelling's my work.

(more and more distracted by the card game)

Now, games and ale. Clearly, I'm fond of those amusements. They are, however, not my trade. Games and ale, late, not early. Hour upon hour? Perhaps. But late, not early. I work... Very hard. But work is to be done, done before, before it, it gets finished tomorrow.

(beat)

I won, Mickle.

MICKLE

I can't hear you.

#### ACT ONE, Scene Seven: SINCERITY

ALL

"Sincerity: Use no harmful deceit. Think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly."

MEREDITH

I won.

MICKLE

What are we playing?

MEREDITH

Lansquenet.

MICKLE

Whist?

MEREDITH

*Lansquenet.*

MICKLE

I play whist.

MEREDITH

Whist is for clergymen. We're playing lansquenet, and I won.

I play whist, and I'm winning.

MICKLE

(standing to leave)  
Old man, we play only one game here.  
(beat)  
And as I won, / I can leave.

MEREDITH

I still can't hear you.

MICKLE

(grabbing MEREDITH's arm)  
It's not important.

HOLDER

To you.

MEREDITH

Yes. And to you.

HOLDER

/ What's he saying?

MICKLE

Just let him go.

COLEMAN

I was enjoying our conversation and wish that we could continue it uninterrupted.

HOLDER

Oh, did / I interrupt something?

MICKLE

Do you sincerely declare, that you love mankind in general; of what profession or religion 'soever? *Answer:* I do not.

MEREDITH

It was very interesting / what you were saying.

HOLDER

What? What?

MICKLE

Nothing I said was intended to be pertinent to the topic at hand.

MEREDITH

COLEMAN

The topic at hand was you playing cards and mocking our meeting.

MICKLE

What's he saying?

MEREDITH

Though the *uniformity of spelling in these colonies* may seem interesting to you, it's less useful to me than Mr. Mickle's money.

HOLDER

You steal Mr. Mickle's money.

MICKLE

/ Steal my money?

MEREDITH

I didn't steal his money.

MICKLE

(to HOLDER)

Try it, Jack / Pudding!

COLEMAN

Forget it. We'll / meet next Friday.

HOLDER

(to MICKLE)

Relax, old man.

MEREDITH

/ You must admit that as long as—

MICKLE

Is that right, Mr. Holder? I shall be happy to give you the whipping / after I finish this game. Now leave us be.

MEREDITH

You must admit that as long as Ben is away from the table, the topic is just chatter. We can't very well continue some discourse without him.

HOLDER

Just because he's engaged in something else? We mustn't / just quit the meeting—

COLEMAN

(to HOLDER)

Forget it.

MICKLE

Quit, aye? Never. / You will wait your turn for your whipping, Quaker.

MEREDITH

I'm only suggesting we halt the meeting.

HOLDER

Halt the meeting?

MICKLE

(to MEREDITH)

T'is your turn.

MEREDITH

Yea, halt the meeting. / Until Ben returns.

HOLDER

And what are we to do in the meantime?

MICKLE

(to HOLDER)

We are to finish our game. Now, please leave us be.

HOLDER

(finally, to MICKLE)

If this discussion bothers you so much, remove that trumpet of yours!

MICKLE

My trumpet, aye?

HOLDER

(to COLEMAN)

/ Shall we continue our meeting, just the two of us?

MICKLE

I remove my *trumpet* as occasion permits.

MEREDITH

(to MICKLE)

If you would like to play another hand, I will. / But I have won this game, and I am so tired from it that I shall like to take a nap at home.

MICKLE

The occasion has not shown itself.

HOLDER

(to COLEMAN)

/ Spelling, reading, and speech are inseparable.

MEREDITH

(to MICKLE)  
Then / what shall we play, old man?

MICKLE  
(removing the TRUMPET and raising it at HOLDER)  
Unless you should give me the occasion to play this *trumpet*.

HOLDER  
(to COLEMAN)  
They are subjects one can learn despite one's birth. Through instruction.

MICKLE  
(to HOLDER)  
And what tune shall I play?

HOLDER  
Authors are only writers with ideas, / practical or artistic. Writing is pragmatic.  
Letters.

(COLEMAN stands and grabs MEREDITH's  
arm to encourage him to leave.)

COLEMAN  
Yes, yes, Josiah. Well and good. Save it for next week.  
(to MEREDITH)  
Shall we?

HOLDER  
Are you leaving, too?

COLEMAN  
If it's good enough for Franklin...

MICKLE  
(to HOLDER)  
Do / you ignore me?

MEREDITH  
And it appears Mr. Mickle is too fixated on that trumpet to play.

COLEMAN  
Do you love truth for truth's sake, and will you endeavor impartially to find and  
receive it yourself, and communicate it to others? *Answer.* Yes. If they would  
only listen.

(COLEMAN throws open the door. Snow  
blows in. He leaves and slams the door shut.)

Where are you going?  
 HOLDER

(seeing that MEREDITH intends to leave)  
 MICKLE  
 Oh, and he leaves now? Just as I was about to win, too.

(to HOLDER)  
 MEREDITH  
 Tell Franklin I said goodbye.

(As MEREDITH moves to the door, HOLDER follows him.)

But we're not finished here.  
 HOLDER

(to HOLDER)  
 MICKLE  
 You and I most certainly are not finished.

(to MICKLE)  
 MEREDITH  
 Good game, old man.

Yes, the game. I should have won / had this clodpate left us be.  
 MICKLE

But Franklin is to return shortly.  
 HOLDER

We can finish this conversation next Friday.  
 MEREDITH

(to HOLDER)  
 MICKLE  
 Turn to me.

Friday.  
 MEREDITH

(MEREDITH opens the door and gets hit with snow, lets out an audible "BRRRRR," and shuts the door behind him. MICKLE taps HOLDER on the shoulder with his TRUMPET.)

Mr. Holder? Mr. Josiah Jack Holder.  
 MICKLE

HOLDER

Yes, what do you want?

MICKLE

Your impertinence is a joy to behold.

HOLDER

As you caused the interruption of my meeting, I certainly will not indulge you in conversation. Especially an argument as ridiculous as this one.

MICKLE

Aye, t'is a pleasure to see such cowardice and delusion.

(beat)

Hope for Philadelphia, indeed.

HOLDER

Mr. Mickle, I cannot even understand what you are saying.

MICKLE

You don't listen to me, yet I am the one hard of hearing. That I am unable does not preclude me from understanding what it's like to hear. And what I have come to understand is no one listens to what they think they see. I can see the impertinence. I can *see* it. You walk from me, and when you walk from me I see it. Stubborn and cowardly delusion.

HOLDER

I'm sorry, Mr. Mickle, but this conversation is over.

(HOLDER grabs his coat to leave, and MICKLE swats at his hand with the cone.)

MICKLE

You will go nowhere.

HOLDER

(shielding himself)

Get away from me!

MICKLE

You will turn around.

HOLDER

Leave me be.

MICKLE

You will turn and face me when I address you.

(HOLDER turns to face MICKLE who stands with his TRUMPET raised, ready to hit HOLDER.)

HOLDER

I'm sorry, I am, I, I'm, I'm sorry. / But this is all a misunderstanding.

MICKLE

If I could leave, I would. Aye. I would leave this sinking place. Yes, yes. Inflated value. New buildings. Bankrupt.

(beat)

This *Philadelphia*. With its colonists with chests inflated, new to build their worth, souls bankrupt. And you, Mr. Holder, are their representative at the Great Court of His Judgment.

(On "judgment," MICKLE hits HOLDER on the shoulder with the trumpet, sending HOLDER to his knees.)

HOLDER

(crying)

No, please. / Please leave me alone.

MICKLE

You sink to your knees, for this Philadelphia is a sinking place.

HOLDER

Please, sir. I beg of you...

MICKLE

Sinking place, indeed.

(beat)

You are pathetic. Just as your grandfather was, I know, and your father before you, I am sure.

(beat)

Look at you, on your knees crying. T'is where you Quakers meet your makers. Playing the martyr, but being a hector!

(On "hector," MICKLE hits HOLDER across the shoulder again. SCREAMING, HOLDER crumples to the floor.)

HOLDER

(crying)

Please, mercy. Please. / I beg of you mercy.

MICKLE

Aye, bootlicker, too...

(beat)

You cry, "Hit me again! Oh, do hit me again! Send me to my heaven! To the arms of my god!" Well, what you *believe* to be martyrdom, I *know* to be impertinence. I have pity for you, Jack Pudding. Oh, I do. Pity. For the act you play, the religious martyr you strive to be, is nothing more than the bootlicking of a churl.

(beat)

And it pains me, poor pudding. It pains me, this pity. For this sinking place is in the hands of bootlicking, blunderheaded Quakers.

(On "blunderheaded," MICKLE hits HOLDER on the head. Very hard. Throughout the duration of the scene, HOLDER repeatedly begs for mercy.)

HOLDER

God, please. Please have mercy.

MICKLE

And if you don't use that blunderhead of yours, why should you have it at all?

(beat)

Aye, conversation *is* over. The argument is over. In my Court, my case is proved. I end this conversation for I tire of this trumpet in my ear all day, your impertinence pleading the case. For the case is over. T'is a sinking place. And you, good Holder, are the anchor dragging it down.

HOLDER

God, please. Please have mercy on me. Please.

MICKLE

Aye, no trumpet. I cannot hear your sermon, but rest assured, Mr. Holder, t'is fruitless. Your mission has ended. And if martyrdom is what you want, martyrdom is what you shall have.

(On "have," MICKLE again hits HOLDER on the head.)

MICKLE (cont.)

Aye, aye, anchor. You will meet your maker. Why should we wait, t'is a sinking place, aye? It's a sinking place, you are an anchor, and you drag us to hell. I shall finish the job! I shall end it all. I shall sink this place. This *Philadelphia*. This sinking place!

(On "sinking," MICKLE hits HOLDER again and continues to do so with each repetition of "sinking place." HOLDER SCREAMS.)

MICKLE (cont.)

Sinking place! Sinking place! Sinking place!

(On this final blow, HOLDER falls limp. SILENCE, save for MICKLE who quietly and repeatedly mutters "sinking place." DOROTHY, FRANKLIN, WILLIAM, HUNTER, and SMITH all rush in.)

DOROTHY  
 What is / that racket?!

WILLIAM  
 God, no!

SMITH  
 / What happened?

FRANKLIN  
 Stop him!

MICKLE (cont.)  
 Sinking place!  
 (as SMITH and WILLIAM struggle to restrain him)  
 Sinking place. Sinking place...

DOROTHY  
 He beats this Friend as does a Puritan.

HUNTER  
 (indicating HOLDER)  
 We have to get him to my office.  
 (to FRANKLIN)  
 Help me.

(HUNTER and FRANKLIN struggle to lift HOLDER.)

FRANKLIN  
 The barrow. Dorothy, wheel it over.  
 (beat)  
 Smith, help us.

(They lift HOLDER's deadweight into the barrow. WILLIAM secures the muttering, sobbing MICKLE to a chair. Finally, GODFREY bursts through the tavern door, holding a large glass jar.)

GODFREY  
 (triumphant)  
 The rabbit shall have a home!

(LIGHTS OUT, save for that which streams in through the open doorway. HOLDER in the wheel barrow remains illuminated by this light, as SNOW blows in and begins to blanket him. Finally, BLACK OUT.)

*End ACT ONE.*

(END OF SAMPLE. PLEASE CONTACT AUTHOR FOR FULL SCRIPT.)