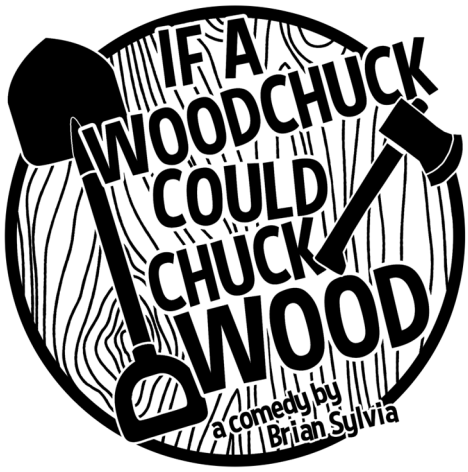

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Dedication

To my daughter Annaliese.

During the rehearsal process of the original performances, this incredibly talented young lady graduated from high school - while doing two roles in this show. Annaliese, I am so proud of the amazing artist you are - whether it is theatre, dance, music, or visual art. But I am so much more honored to see the strong-willed, intelligent, beautiful, and spiritually focused young woman you are today. You make this dad smile. Keep making Jesus famous!

STORY OF THE PLAY

When the colorful residents of an out-of-the-way trailer community meet an unknown lumber executive, questions and assumptions abound! Charles Stashgrove appears as a corporate executive who wants to buy the 200+ acres of woodlands the trailer community, Woodchuck Estates, sits on. Little do the residents know, Charles is actually escaped thief Rocco Riccardi. He seems to fool all the residents while another mysterious character, Lucinda, who gives off a sinister vibe, scares all the locals.

The residents are a colorful bunch: Dorothea, the assertive, man-hunting president of the association; Sylvia, a stereotypical pageant queen; Zeke, who fancies himself a pirate; the cowardly town mayor; the hippy activist; the widow who knows all about cabbage, and others including a bright teen. The results are both unpredictable and uproarious. This small-cast show feels like a big production as each actor has more than one part.

Several radio or TV broadcast segments can be presented live or pre-recorded. The show has one easy outdoor set.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 m, 2 w, 2 flexible, extras)

PLAYER 1: (Male)

"CHUCK" CHARLES STASHGROVE: Lumber executive who wants to buy Woodchuck Estates. He is actually escaped thief Rocco Riccardi. The actor switches between the two who have distinctly different voices.

"ZEKE" EZEKIEL JONES: Retired riverboat captain fancies himself a bit of a pirate - exhibits a definite break with reality.

PLAYER 2: (Female)

DOROTHEA CLAWSON: The assertive and self-confident man-hunting president of the Woodchuck Estates Trailer Court Homeowners Association.

SYLVIA O'BRIEN: Former (the first, actually) Miss Woodchuck. A stereotypical pageant queen.

PLAYER 3: (Male)

"DR. JUSTICE" EDGAR MCVEE: Hippie activist who enjoys a good social cause to sink his teeth into.

WILLIE MONTGOMERY: Retired comedy writer for a vaudeville revival act. Proud of his old-school sense of humor.

PLAYER 4: (Either)

PAYTON LIVINGSTON: Teenage aspiring journalist who seems to be constantly uncovering information.

MAYOR MICKEY MICKELSEN: Mayor of nearby Redwood Falls who also governs the area of Woodchuck Estates. A wimpy sellout who wants to avoid trouble at all costs.

PLAYER 5: (Female)

BRANDINE BURROWS: Retired widow of a cabbage farmer who also loves to flaunt her extensive knowledge of cabbage.

LUCINDA SHARPE: Mysterious out-of-towner with a sinister vibe who seems to scare the locals.

PLAYER 6: (Either)

COREY MCSTORY: (Either) Local radio / TV personality. Energetic and a bit ditzy. "*See ya later*."

EXTRAS:

MIDDLE SCHOOLERS: Dr. Justice's future activists.

SETTING

The exterior of the Woodchuck Estates Welcome Center. Set features a picnic table, several older lawn chairs around a fire pit and charcoal grill, a mailbox, and a sign/banner that says, "Woodchuck Estates Welcome Center." There is also a sign downstage left that says, "No Solicitors." Downstage right is a large cork board with various ads and notes hanging on it.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I
Scene 1 - early morning
Scene 2 - mid-morning
Scene 3 - late morning

ACT II
Scene 1 - late morning
Scene 2 - early afternoon
Scene 3 - mid-afternoon
Scene 4 - late afternoon (What a day!)

*See the end of the script for costume and character notes.

ORIGINAL PERFORMANCE

If a Woodchuck Could Chuck Wood was first performed June 16-17, 2023, by inCharacter Theatre in Port Charlotte (FL) Global Methodist Church.

WCHK's Corey McStory:	JP Marker
Chuck Stashgrove:	Brian Sylvia
Dorothea Clawson:	Merci Hotchkin
Edgar "Dr. Justice" McVee:	JP Marker
Payton Livingston:	Annaliese Sylvia
Brandine Burrows:	Nicole Miller
Willie Montgomery:	JP Marker
Captain Ezekiel "Zeke" Jones:	Shane Hotchkin
Sylvia O'Brien:	Merci Hotchkin
Mayor Mickey Mickelsen:	Annaliese Sylvia
Lucinda Sharpe:	Nicole Miller

Tech Director	Dan Weber
Stage Manager	Violet Collier
Set Design/House Manager	Rebecca Sylvia

Prologue

COREY: *(These segments can be presented as a radio broadcast with audio only or a video television broadcast - and it can be presented live or pre-recorded.)* Good morning, Tri-staters. This is Corey McStory with WCHK. What a beautiful day to begin our week. The sky is clear, the temperature is perfect, and the roads are uncluttered. *(Chuckles.)* As though there is ever any traffic on our roads.

Of particular importance in our area is the upcoming meeting for annexation. Yes, Woodchuck Estates and its 237 acres of wooded wonderfulness is potentially going to be annexed into the town of Redwood Falls. There have been heated debates on both sides of the issue. Granted, it's not nearly as heated as the iPhone vs. Android debate! That one is just too device-ive. *(Chuckles.)* Well, Tri-staters, have a splendifferic day. This is Corey McStory saying, *See ya later*.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: CHUCK is on his cell phone. He is wearing a business suit and a construction hard hat.)

CHUCK: *(As ROCCO. Voice sounds like that of a typical old-school "gangster.")* Yeah, so I'm here now, what's the plan? Nope, no sign of any of the residents. Well, honestly, this Woodchuck Estates ain't much to brag about. I'm not sure the trailer park owners will get in our way. What? No, I haven't seen a reporter *or* a law enforcement official. *(Laughs.)* Exactly. I'm right out front of the, uh, *(Reading the sign.)* Woodchuck Estates Welcome Center. Looks like a 1970's horror flick was shot here. The words *Welcome Center* are not real appropriate. Anyone with any sense would be glad to get outta this dump. So this should be a piece of pie. *(Pause.)* What? Oh sorry, piece of cake.

DOROTHEA: *(Offstage.)* How many times must I say the same thing to you? The answer is "no."
CHUCK: *(Still as ROCCO.)* Hey, somebody's coming. I gotta prepare for my "transformation." I'll check in later.

(HE hangs up, sits down, and "prepares" himself to have a conversation as Chuck. DOROTHEA enters with JUSTICE.)

DOROTHEA: I'm telling you, Edgar, the tournament is off for this year.
JUSTICE: Hey man, as I have stated numerous times before, please stop calling me Edgar. I prefer the name *(With extended hand/arm gestures.)* Dr. Justice. And why exactly would you cancel the pickleball tournament?
DOROTHEA: Well, *(Mockingly.)* Dr. Justice, because we don't have a pickleball court for one. And because no one even signed up, probably due mostly to the fact that we *(Emphatically.)* don't have a pickleball court.
JUSTICE: Details!
DOROTHEA: And as president of the Woodchuck Estates Trailer Court Homeowners Association, it is my job to make those delicate social decisions.
JUSTICE: *(Sees CHUCK sitting in lawn chair.)* Uh, don't look now, but we got company.
DOROTHEA: Oh, well, hello there. Are you here about my cable TV? I am the third unit on the right down the lane; the lovely lavender trailer. *(Points.)* And, whatever you do, make sure I get the Tearjerker Television Network. I especially love their Christmas movies.
CHUCK: *(Over-enunciated; clearly "acting.")* Ma'am, I'm afraid you are mistaken. I am not with the cable company.
DOROTHEA: Not with the cable company? Are you with the gas company then? I believe Loretta is the one with the propane issue.
CHUCK: Um, I am not with any gas company either.
JUSTICE: Hey, brother, are you here to sign up for the pickleball tournament?
CHUCK: Uh, no sir, I am here with the lumber company.

JUSTICE: *(Excitedly.)* About a corporate sponsorship for the pickleball tournament?

DOROTHEA: Edgar, I mean, *(Patronizingly.)* Dr. Justice, for the final time, there is *no* pickleball tournament.

JUSTICE: I'm the only visionary in this trailer court! Sometimes people around here make me *stink*! *(Throws hands up in frustration and walks away until his next line.)*

CHUCK: Don't you mean—?

DOROTHEA: *(To CHUCK.)* A lumber company you say?

CHUCK: Oh! Uh, yes, ma'am, and you are…?

DOROTHEA: Oh, pardon me. My name is Dorothea Clawson. I am the president of the Woodchuck Estates Trailer Court Homeowners Association. And if you are here to sell us some lumber, I'm afraid we have enough of our own. Just look around. Woodchuck Estates is home to 237 acres of prime lumber real estate and some glorious, wooded groves *(CHUCK reacts to the word "groves" as though "selecting" his surname.)* as well. We Woodchuckers are quite proud of our little slice of heaven.

CHUCK: Well, Mrs. Clawson, I am not trying to *sell* lumber. I am actually talking about *buying*. Yeah, that's it… buying. We are looking to *buy* this land.

DOROTHEA: First of all, it's *Miss* Clawson. *(Smiles.)* Second of all, I don't believe I caught your name. *(Grabs CHUCK by the arm.)*

CHUCK: I am sorry, how rude of me, *Miss* Clawson. My name is Charles Stashgrove. My friends call me Chuck.

DOROTHEA: Well, what a simply delightful moniker.

JUSTICE: What in the world is a moniker? And why are you flirting with the lumberjack?

DOROTHEA: Flirting? *(As if shocked by the accusation.)* Really!

CHUCK: And I am not exactly a lumberjack. I am the company president. *(Making it up.)* Stashgrove Central Lumber.

JUSTICE: Never heard of it.

DOROTHEA: Executive, you say?

JUSTICE: *(To DOROTHEA.)* Get back in your cage, cougar lady. *(To CHUCK.)* Now you know why her last name is *Claw*-son.

DOROTHEA: Don't you have somewhere to be?

JUSTICE: Yeah, right here telling this lumber president guy that we need to stop mowing down this country's forests. We should be protecting our natural *recourses. (Begins chanting.)* Save our trees! Save our trees!

CHUCK: *(Interrupts.)* Well, Mr… um…

JUSTICE: I prefer doctor. Dr. Justice. Seeking justice for those who are too dumb to do it themselves. That's my motto. I even got that on a bumper sticker on my '72 Buick wagon.

DOROTHEA: Commendable. Dr. Justice is our community's version of a social activist group.

JUSTICE: Yup, all by myself. I do get a bit of support from Captain Zeke.

CHUCK: *(Afraid it may be law enforcement official.)* Captain Zeke?

DOROTHEA: Ezekiel Jones. He's a retired riverboat captain who fancies himself a pirate. *(Whispers to CHUCK.)* He's had a bit of a break with reality.

JUSTICE: Captain Zeke is just fine, Clawson. Just 'cuz he likes living the piratey life is nothing to worry about. Zeke is outta sight, pirate or not. *He* would save the trees!

CHUCK: Interesting. *(Ignoring JUSTICE.)* So, *Miss* Clawson, *(Smiles.)* who would I talk to about our interest in Woodchuck Estates?

JUSTICE: We Woodchuckers stick together, Chuck. Right, Clawson? You ain't gonna just march in here…

DOROTHEA: Well, Mr. Stashgrove, that is a discussion worth having over a cup of freshly brewed coffee at, let's say, my mobile home.

CHUCK: That might be nice.

JUSTICE: Yes, it is. And actually, I think I *do* need to be somewhere. I believe Willie Montgomery would be interested in this conversation you're about to have. After all, Clawson, he nearly beat you out for president of the homeowners association last year.

JUSTICE: *(Cont'd.)* I still believe there was voter fraud. Shoulda been a recall! Willie Montgomery shoulda been president. You can't be deciding this stuff on your own, Clawson. And be careful, Mr. Lumberjack. Clawson here may lure you into her den and slip into some silky *negligence.*

CHUCK: Negligence?

JUSTICE: Beware! And I *will* be back. *(Stomps offstage while chanting.)* Save our trees! Save our trees! *(Exits.)*

DOROTHEA: My apologies for Edgar, I mean, Dr. Justice. He's one of the many colorful personalities in our delightful little mobile home development.

(PAYTON enters.)

DOROTHEA: *(Cont'd.)* Woodchuck Estates is quite the uncommon community. *(Notices PAYTON.)* Well, hello there, Payton. And why are you wandering into our courtyard during an *(Fast-paced.)* obvious personal moment and interrupting potential life-altering social connections?

PAYTON: Oh, hey, Miss Clawson. I'm just working on a school newspaper project. We're about to do a time capsule and I volunteered Woodchuck Estates as the location where we can place it. *(Searching.)* I'm looking for the perfect spot.

DOROTHEA: Mr. Stashgrove, Payton is an aspiring journalist and therefore is the editor of the local high school's newspaper.

PAYTON: We don't actually print it anymore. We're, like, totally digital now.

CHUCK: Aspiring journalist, are you?

PAYTON: Yeah, kinda hard to do with the "Redwood Falls High School Bugle," but I do what I can. I'm hoping for a journalism scholarship to the state university.

CHUCK: That's interesting. *(To himself - as ROCCO.) Very* interesting.

DOROTHEA: Well, Mr. Stashgrove, shall we venture over to my comfortable little lavender trailer to discuss your interest in our dear Woodchuck Estates. And is there a Mrs. Stashgrove?

(THEY exit.)

PAYTON: *(Sarcastically.)* What Miss Clawson needs is to be a little more forward. Now, where can we put that time capsule? I was thinking maybe just behind the welcome center here. *(Sits in a lawn chair, reflecting and recording her thoughts on her phone.)* Woodchuck Estates has to be the most interesting trailer community in the country. Where else can you find people like Edgar McVee, oh I mean, far out Dr. Justice, and Miss *(Says "Clawson" with the same emphasis as JUSTICE.)* Clawson, and they're just the beginning. *(Chuckles.)* I love this place.

(CHUCK reenters.)

CHUCK: Oh, hey there, um… *(Searching to remember the name.)*
PAYTON: Payton.
CHUCK: Yeah, Payton. I was hoping you would still be here.
PAYTON: Okay… *(Suspiciously.)* why is that?
CHUCK: You are an aspiring journalist, are you?
PAYTON: Yes, sir.
CHUCK: I was wondering if you were selecting your high school's time capsule location based on any particular criteria.
PAYTON: Criteria?
CHUCK: You know, like easy to remember, or accessibility, or some urban legend that says something else may be buried in the vicinity. You know, stuff like that.
PAYTON: *(Slowly and suspiciously.)* Uh, not really. Just kinda picking a spot.
CHUCK: Well, as an aspiring journalist, I was wondering if you had any particular historical significance to your selection.

End of Freeview

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