

**THE DREAM HOUSE**  
**Sherry Kramer**

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## **CHARACTERS**

### ***THE WOMAN WHO BUYS THE DREAM HOUSE:***

**MANDY** 59 years old, permanently broken foot, madly in love with the natural world, believes it loves her back. She might be wrong. She might be right. Any race.

### ***THE POTENTIALLY ANIMAL SPIRIT GUIDES:***

The potentially animal spirit guides should be clowns, and can be played by comedic actors with an expansive understanding of their physical possibilities on stage. They can be any race, and Jerry and the Skunk can be any gender.

These characters can be imagined in the Commedia dell'arte tradition, or they can all be puppets, or the Skunk can be commedia influenced but the Snake seems more Alice in Wonderland. If Maurizio is a Roku puppet, manipulated by three puppeteers, then maybe the Snake is a wooden marionette controlled by someone from a catwalk and the Skunk seems to have walked out of a Jim Henson production. The Spirit Animals do not need to match each other in size, style, or conception.

**MAURIZIO** A giant green frog with a gift.

**JERRY** A three foot garter snake with attitude.

**THE SKUNK** A skunk with an inferiority complex.

### ***THE WOODSMAN WHO BELIEVES IN DANCING ONE WAY OR THE OTHER:***

**KEVIN** A good man. How is he good? Good with trees, for instance. He may wear flannel. He's a ruggedly handsome guy who also plays a King in Mandy's dream. Any race.

### ***THE BRAIN TUMOR WHO IS THE SECRET CENTER OF IT ALL:***

**TUMOR** A sad sack of a character, literally and figuratively. Young, troubled, ambitious. Any race or gender.

## **SETTING**

A Country Road. A Tree. Evening.

MANDY

(To the Audience)

One day, after years of longing and doing without, I buy a house in the woods that I have always dreamed of. It comes with three animal spirit guides.

First, there is a huge frog we call Maurizio. He is the biggest frog anyone had ever seen.

(Maurizio swaggers on stage.)

His arms and legs, at full extension, are almost two feet long.

(Maurizio extends his arms to show his impressive arm span.)

He has a prodigious gift—he is able to leap out of my swimming pool even though it's impossible for a 4 pound frog to do that. A 4 ounce frog? Sure. They can use the surface tension to escape. But a 4 pound one? I've talked to scientists. Can't be done.

(The snake appears.)

The second spirit guide who came with the house is a snake. I name him Jerry. He is brazen about sunbathing on the stone steps that lead to the pool, where his protective coloring makes him blend in so perfectly you almost kill yourself not stepping on him. He has no gifts that I know of.

(A huge white skunk appears.)

And my third spirit animal guide is a skunk. I don't name him, because you don't name skunks. You do not want them to come when you call.

I know these are my animal spirit guides, who have been sent to protect and watch over me.

MAURIZIO

(To the Audience)

Protect and watch over her? Give me a break. I come to swim in the pool. The water's cool, clean, and safe. Other than idiots chasing me with a net to save me from the chlorine, in that pool I have no natural predators.

JERRY

(To the Audience)

Guide, schmide. I've lived in these rock steps my whole life. People come, people go. I could care less. I live by the time honored snake motto: I don't tread on you if you don't tread on me.

## THE SKUNK

(To the Audience)

Look, I don't know what the hell she's talking about either. She bought a house dead center in my ranging territory. Naturally every night I range on by. Oh, and by the way, Maurizio isn't the only one with a gift. I have one too. When I get scared, I can spray this special attack smell. Let me tell you, the entire animal kingdom knows about that gift. And when I give it, it's a gift that keeps on giving. Oh, yeah. It keeps on giving for days.

## MANDY

One night, after getting one of those blinding headaches I've been having lately, I dream I am being dressed by three lovely handmaidens who look suspiciously like my animal spirit guides. They magically put me in a glorious red dress.

(The three animals cluster around her, hiding her from our view. When they move aside, just a beat later, Mandy is wearing a glorious red ball gown.)

And after I was dressed, I danced with a King.

(The King emerges. Perhaps he's the King of a South American country? He's tall and dark and Latiny lover looking.)

Traditionally, in dreams, women dance with a dashing young Prince, but I'm 59 years old, so a dashing middle-aged King is more age appropriate. Also, I have a broken foot that will never heal because I've started falling a lot--

(She lifts the red gown to reveal that she is wearing a huge Aircast boot. We didn't notice it before. Maybe because she's wearing socks and a sandal on the other foot, so they sort of look the same?)

But, in the dream, even though my foot was still broken, and I was wearing this same boot, it did not interfere with the dancing at all.

(She clumps over awkwardly to him. But when the King takes her in his arms and they dance to music which the three animal spirit guides provide from instruments that suddenly appear in their hands, she is grace and elegance itself. The dancing is wonderful and joyful. Mandy dances the way Anna in the King and I did when she was gliding across the mirrored floor with the King of Siam.)

See? If I hadn't told you my foot was broken, you would never have known. Watch this.

(She does a fabulous twirl with the help of the King.)

I'll do it again.

(She does. Then continues dancing.)

For most people, the best part of a dream is saving someone you love from drowning or coming home after being lost for so long or seeing your mother again who is dead and you miss her so terribly. But when you have a broken foot—

(She executes a lovely, graceful, flowing movement.)

It's hard to beat this.

(She dances for another beat.)

Naturally, just when your dream is perfect the perfect part ends.

(The spirit guides stop playing abruptly, the King stops dancing, kisses her hand gently, and disappears.)

And you find yourself in a room with three strangers.

(The spirit guides hold masks in front of their faces to become the strangers.)

And for some reason, you feel it's a matter of life or death to tell them about the headaches you get, because you're getting one right now.

(To the Strangers.)

My head hurts.

MAURIZIO as STRANGER

So?

MANDY

So I have a headache and I need an aspirin. Does anybody have an aspirin?

SKUNK as STRANGER

Nope.

MAURIZIO as STRANGER

Nope.

JERRY as STRANGER

Nope.

MANDY

(To Audience)

You'd think the least a spirit guide could do is have the occasional aspirin when you need it.

MAURIZIO as STRANGER

We're not your spirit guides. This is a dream. And in this part of it, we're strangers.

MANDY

Okay, "strangers", do you have any aspirin?

(The Strangers glower at her.)

SKUNK as STRANGER

Why would a stranger give you an aspirin?

MANDY

Because I have a headache?

MAURIZIO as STRANGER

You're giving *me* a headache with this headache stuff. Look. I'll be honest. You look fine. These headaches you say you get—nobody can see them.

MANDY

That's normal! Nobody can see a headache! That doesn't mean you don't have one!

JERRY as STRANGER

Nobody here is sure you have these headaches.

MANDY

But you know I do! They're a symptom of the tumor—the headaches, and the falling down all the time.

MAURIZIO as STRANGER

Nobody here is sure you have a tumor either.

JERRY as STRANGER

You say you do.

SKUNK as STRANGER

But we're not so sure.

MANDY

Why would I lie?

MAURIZIO as STRANGER

I don't know. Why would you?

MANDY

(To the Audience)

I wasn't lying. I had an MRI and afterward the doctor showed me the tumor on the screen. It was like a globe the size of a ping pong ball, glowing like it was filled with electric milk.

(She holds a small globe that glows, in the palm of her hand.)

If you go outside in the forest when the full moon is rising, and you hold your hand under the moon so it looks like its sitting in your hand, that's exactly what it looked like. Except it wasn't in the sky, it was in the center of my brain. The doctors said it was probably benign, but one day it would get too big and press too hard on my optic nerve and first I would lose my peripheral vision and stop seeing things to the side, and then I would stop seeing things altogether. So that's when I decided that I should start doing things while I could still see them. That's why I bought this house in the enchanted forest I had always dreamed of. A house in an enchanted forest is not a practical purchase in so many ways, but I wanted it and so I bought it. I was being brave. I was going for it. And if that wasn't courageous enough, I'm getting married to a man I met at a dance. This was before I started falling down all the time from the tumor and broke my foot, of course, but all the same--who gets married to a man they met at a dance? Romeo and Juliet? It's like--how brave is that? You think they'd give me a medal. But oh, no, instead, if I complain even a little bit about the headaches that a globe of electric milk in your head is liable to cause, everyone around me gets cranky.

MAURIZIO as STRANGER

Enough with the tumor!

JERRY as STRANGER

Buck up! Show some backbone!

SKUNK as STRANGER

I've had it up to here with the tumor.

MANDY

(To the Audience)

You know how so often in life when things aren't going your way you can't do anything about it? Well, you can in a dream. You can wake up. So that's what I did. After all it was my wedding day. So I woke up.

(The spirit guides remove their masks.)

JERRY

You're awake. That means that this is the part that isn't a dream. You do know that, don't you?

MANDY

Yes. I'm a little scared, that's all.

JERRY

Do you think you're making a mistake?

MANDY

No. But it's still frightening.

THE SKUNK

You're being brave.

JERRY

You're going for it.

MAURIZIO

(All the spirit guides start dressing her in a lovely dress.)  
Just remember: he's not a King. He may be a King in your dreams, but he isn't out here.

THE SKUNK

I hope you like the dress we picked out for you.

MANDY

Oh, I do, I do. Is it spun by woodland creatures out of native plants woven in the moonlight?

JERRY

No. Jesus, of course not. It's made in China out of 50% linen, 50% whatever else was handy, in a factory that crushes the body and souls of the workers while destroying their environment and our economy.

MAURIZIO and THE SKUNK

Jerry!

JERRY

Well, she asked!

THE SKUNK

Don't pay attention to him, he's a crank! Oh, you look lovely. The hem's a little long. Just don't trip over it with your boot.

MANDY

(They finish dressing her. She emerges, resplendent.)  
Thanks, guys. I'm so grateful that you're my animal spirit guides.

MAURIZIO

I'm not your spirit guide. I am a large green frog with a gift—I have a frog kick so HUGE I can leap out of a swimming pool unaided. That's right. I'm living my actual dream. And in a few seasons, I'll be dead, a victim of Judy Barrow's Pomeranian. I'll be a pile of skin under a pile of leaves. Chasing me around your pool to save me from the chlorine when I didn't need saving did not make me a magical part of your life.



JERRY

I'm not your guide either. In a month I'll be hibernating, but all this summer, when I was basking in the sun, eating insects and sleeping? The hundred times you almost stepped on me were not evidence of a spiritual connection to me. They were annoying.

THE SKUNK

You never even named me and you don't care about me. Why should I guide you? And where?

JERRY AND MAURIZIO

Yeah!

ALL THREE TOGETHER

We were just living our lives!

THE SKUNK

And you were living yours, and you wanted it to be significant that we were living them side by side—

MAURIZIO

You wanted my prodigious leaping-out-of-the-swimming-pool-gift to mean something about *you*—

JERRY

Every time you almost stepped on me, you felt that we had a relationship.

MANDY

But—didn't you feel it too? A little bit?

JERRY

I'm not saying I'm completely indifferent to you—I'm just saying that almost stepping on me—

MAURIZIO

Chasing me with a net—

THE SKUNK

Ignoring me constantly--

JERRY

Does not mean we matter to each other.

MANDY

Then why do I think it does?

ALL THREE TOGETHER

We think it might be your brain tumor.

(Mandy holds the tumor up. It's bigger. Maybe twice its former size. It fills her hand.)

MAURIZIO

Ordinarily, you wouldn't believe in your dreams.

THE SKUNK

Ordinarily, you wouldn't believe that you were connected to everything that crossed your path.

JERRY

Ordinarily, you wouldn't believe in any of this.

MANDY

(To the Audience)

This was not turning out the way I thought it would at all. I thought that if you ignored everybody's advice and bought your dream house even though it didn't have a foundation or was properly insulated and you thought you were on town water but you were on an old line from 1923 that was so old it was like a colander so they cut you off and you had to dig a well, and the previous owner lied to you about the age of the roof and said it was 10 years old when it was really 25 and the roofer you called first charged you 169 dollars to nail in one nail...one...nail...and wouldn't even call you back about the new roof and—

MAURIZIO

OKAY! STOP!!! YOU'RE KILLING ME WITH THE COMPLAINTS! ENOUGH!!!

MANDY

But that's just like half of it. I haven't even gotten to the broken ceiling joist or the ice dams in the winter or the rubber roof you have to shovel when it snows or the French faucet that you have to send to France to get a repairman for or the—

THE SKUNK

JESUS CHRIST I THOUGHT YOU WERE BEING BRAVE!! I thought—and don't laugh—I thought of you as a role model! And now this?

JERRY

You're kidding me, right? That's a joke?

THE SKUNK

NO! I thought she was being brave and I needed a role model.

JERRY

Well, what about me? What about Maurizio?

THE SKUNK

You? People are terrified of you on a primal level, they run from you, you don't have to be brave. The frog? Can leap out of any danger with his bionic legs. But me? I just smell. I smell and I can't control it and it humiliates me and chases away all my friends and makes everything in my life harder. I needed her to be brave so I could see how it was done. And now—this.

MANDY

Don't brave people get to complain?

MAURIZIO

No.

JERRY

Nope.

THE SKUNK

Never. That is 95% of what being brave is. No complaining.

MANDY

Great. I'm being given constructive criticism by a snake, a skunk, and a frog. Oh my god, is my brain tumor making me delusional? Wait—that's not the real issue. The real issue is, is my brain tumor making me get married!?

THE SKUNK

Why are you asking us?

JERRY

Do we look like neurosurgeons?

MAURIZIO

If I were you, I'd ask the tumor.

(They all look at the tumor. Mandy puts it in the crook of a branch of the tree. They all circle it, warily.)

After all, it grew inside you.

THE SKUNK

Unlike us.

JERRY

Who may have grown to like you a little but when push comes to slither couldn't care less.

(As everyone looks at him.)

Hey, what do you want from me! I'm an amphibian! That's practically a formal declaration of undying love, for a snake.

MANDY

But can tumors talk?

MAURIZIO

Well, you won't know till you ask it, right?

MANDY

But it's a brain tumor. It can distort or create anything I think it's saying! What if all of this—you, Jerry, the Skunk—what if everything I think is happening is just a tumor induced delusion.

MAURIZIO

Sure, and who knows if the color blue I see is the color blue you see. Enough with the meta-physics! All this is real! Deal with it.

JERRY

The way I see it, you need to marry this guy and you normally never would, so love called the tumor to you because it needed help making you forget how scary marriage is.

THE SKUNK

But the way I see it, the tumor was there first, and it needed love to help make you forget how scary brain tumors are.

MANDY

Great. I don't know which one's worse.

(To Maurizio)

How do you see it?

MAURIZIO

I don't. The tumor did make you fall down and break your foot but the rest—hearsay. Circumstantial. Not credible.

JERRY

If you want to know for sure, go ahead and ask it.

THE SKUNK

Come on--what do you have to lose?

MAURIZIO

You can always ignore it, if you don't like what it says.

THE SKUNK

That's good advice! That's what I'd do.

MANDY

Okay. I'll ask it.

(To the tumor.)

Hello? Mr. Tumor? Ms. Tumor?

(She looks to the animals. They shrug.)

Could you tell me if I'm getting married because love is real, or because love is a brain tumor induced fantasy? And while you're at it, I wondered if you could tell me about my animal spirit guides. They're—

(She tries to speak confidentially to the Tumor.)

--they're not really acting the way I'd anticipated. Are they really spirit guides or are they just a brain tumor induced fantasy too?

(The tumor says nothing. To the animals:)

Great. I don't know if it's saying something and I just can't hear it, or it's saying something and I am too deluded to understand it, or maybe I'm still asleep and this is all just a dream.

ALL THREE

No. This is the part that's not a dream.

MAURIZIO

The dream part was good, but you're awake now. That's the thing about finding out you have a brain tumor. Or any major disease, actually. It wakes you up.

JERRY

So this is the part where you're wide awake.

THE SKUNK

You're almost dressed.

MAURIZIO

And it's your wedding day.

(Different musical instruments appear in the animals' hands. They start playing the wedding march.)

MANDY

(Mandy takes a step away from them.)

No! Wait! What if all the love I feel for Kevin and the love I feel he feels for me is a delusion. What if Kevin isn't real?

MAURIZIO

Oh, this guy's real. He grabbed me and threw me out of the pool one time to--

(Air quotes)

--"save me", remember? Almost ripped off my leg.

THE SKUNK

He's so real he has a name--unlike some of us.

MANDY

I don't mean real like that. I know Kevin exists. He walks the earth, he wears a flannel shirt, he's a Lakers fan. I mean what if I believe that he feels some special connection to me the way I believe that *you* feel some special connection to me. What if I'm deluded about him loving me the same way I'm deluded about you guys being my spirit guides?

THE SKUNK

Oh no. Oh my. Oh my God. This is terrible.

(The Skunk starts stamping its feet, hyperventilating.)

JERRY

No it's not, it's just cold feet, every bride gets them.

MAURIZIO

Cold feet—we amphibians know all about that.

THE SKUNK

(Continuing to stamp its feet.)

I need some air. Somebody get me a cool compress. Somebody sing Edelweiss to me and hold my hand.

MANDY

What's wrong?

THE SKUNK

SOMEBODY!!! HELP ME!! I'm UPSET! I'm FRIGHTENED! I'M NOT BRAVE and I'm LOSING CONTROL!

MAURIZIO

You're kidding me, right?

THE SKUNK

It's not my fault!

JERRY

Is he going to do what I think he's going to do?

MAURIZIO

You got it.

MANDY

What's going on?

THE SKUNK

IT'S NOT MY FAULT!!!

JERRY

Oh, please! Take some responsibility for your actions!

THE SKUNK

I can't! It's beyond my control. My defense mechanisms are coming on line, engaging my autonomous nervous system. Fear chemicals are racing through my body. They are preparing me to give my gift!

MANDY

What? You mean—

ALL THREE

YES!

(Mandy and Jerry and Maurizio take a step back from The Skunk.)

MANDY

But why? There's nothing frightening here!

THE SKUNK

You said—what if your love for Kevin and his love for you isn't real! That's the scariest thing I ever heard. In fact, it's so scary that— whoops, I think I just passed the point of no return--everyone, get back, back!—when I'm terrified my instincts take over, I can't help it, I'm going to spray--

(Mandy and Maurizio run off stage. Jerry slithers off stage as fast as he can.)

JERRY

What a crock! I know if you really tried you could control yourself!

THE SKUNK

I can't! It's my nature! If true love isn't true—who wouldn't spray!

(Just the tumor and the Skunk are alone on stage.  
The Skunk quivers and shakes and cries out to the  
heavens.)

Why is there no one to guide *me*? No one I can cry out to for help!  
Why don't I have an animal spirit guide to call on in moments like these!  
Why? Why? Why?

(The skunk slowly stops stamping its feet, sobs,  
sobs, sobs, and falls to the ground, weeping.)

TUMOR

Okay. So have you got it under control or what?

THE SKUNK

What? Who said that?

TUMOR

Me. Over here.

THE SKUNK

You can talk!

TUMOR

Of course I can talk. All tumors are is talk. What's talk but  
information, you know? Well, that's all tumors are.

THE SKUNK

But if you can talk, why didn't you answer Mandy's question?

TUMOR

Well, I'm working out my role in her life. I don't want to be branded a  
good tumor or a bad tumor yet—that's not the aspirational brand I'm  
interested in.

MANDY (o.s.)

Hey. You okay? Are you going to spray or can we come back?

THE SKUNK

Just give me a minute!

(To the tumor.)

Should I be frightened of you?

TUMOR

No. I'm not your tumor, am I?

THE SKUNK



Well, sort of. Depending on your interpretation of the relationship of the animal spirit guide to the guidee. I think what happens to your—guidee—also happens to you. Of course, I'm not absolutely sure I am her spirit guide in the first place. But I might be.

TUMOR

I see. Well. No. Don't be frightened of me. It's true, I'm getting bigger. But that's my nature. And don't be frightened about love or not love, either. What would be the point? If love could keep you from getting, say, hit by a bus one day on your way to work, or in Maurizio's case, getting eaten by a Pomeranian, then yes, love or not love would be something to be frightened about. But love can't do either of those things. It's just love.

Okay?

THE SKUNK

Okay.

TUMOR

And Kevin's a good guy. Really. Better now?

THE SKUNK

Yes, thank you. I am.

TUMOR

Good. So. Do me a favor? A little one?

THE SKUNK

Sure, if I can.

TUMOR

Higher? Hang me up, a little higher? So I can see everything that's happening on earth?

THE SKUNK

I don't think there's any way to get that high.

TUMOR

I know, I know, but it's this dream I have.

THE SKUNK

I didn't know tumors had dreams. Sure. I'll try.

(The Skunk puts the tumor a little higher on the tree trunk.)

TUMOR

Tell me, as long as we're talking, do you like being a spirit guide?

THE SKUNK

I'm not sure I am one.

TUMOR

Yeah, I got that. But you might be. So—what's it like?

THE SKUNK

I myself don't like it. Would you? Being part of someone else's dream, when they're not part of yours?

TUMOR

Huh. I hadn't thought of it like that. But don't you get a warm glow from being a spirit guide, a sense of purpose, a sense of connection? All my life, I've had this feeling. I wasn't like other tumors. Everyone said, you'll grow up, you'll figure it out, but the feeling just keeps growing. Of course, that's my nature. But still. I want to be a spirit guide. No, not want to be. Feel that I am.

THE SKUNK

(The skunk crashes to the ground. It gives up.)  
Sorry. That's as high as I can reach.

TUMOR

Could you get some help, maybe?

THE SKUNK

Uhh. Sure, why not. Maurizio! Jerry! Can you come back?

MANDY (o.s.)

What about me?

THE SKUNK

Not yet.

(They come out.)  
Guys, the tumor wants to be higher.

TUMOR

Yes, if you wouldn't mind.

MAURIZIO

Oh, so you can talk after all!

TUMOR

Of course I can talk.

MAURIZIO

Then why didn't you talk before?

TUMOR

Look, Mandy's waiting, if you're not going to help me—

JERRY

You want to get higher, right?

TUMOR

Yes. It's a dream I've had. Please?

MAURIZIO

What the hell, let's get at it.

(They climb on top of each other to get higher in the tree  
and juggle the tumor as they try to get it higher.)

So, we were all wondering, did you call love to her, or is it love that does  
the calling?

SKUNK

Yeah, are you making her marry Kevin?

TUMOR

A small pressure here. A touch there. That's all it takes.

JERRY

I knew it! I knew it all along!

TUMOR

I didn't say I did it, I'm just saying that's all it would take.

MAURIZIO

Hey, if you did it, take the credit! Don't be shy!

MANDY (o.s.)

Guys! Has the skunk calmed down or not?

ALL

JUST A MINUTE.

TUMOR

In the old days, before modern magnetic imagery brought the brain to  
light, nobody knew tumors like me even existed. Back then, there were

only choices and luck. Now we know all kinds of things about why people do what they do.

(They almost drop the Tumor.)

Be careful! Please! Anyway. Now we know that the Impressionists painted the way they did because they needed glasses and cataract surgery, and George Bush senior invaded Iraq because of a glandular imbalance. But what does it mean to know these things? So Desert Storm was the result of an over active thyroid gland—knowing that doesn't make the people who died in it less dead. And it doesn't make a Monet less lovely, knowing it was caused by nearsightedness.

JERRY

Wow. I understood almost nothing that you just said, but it sounded really intelligent.

TUMOR

(Fake modesty)

Well. I am a *brain* tumor.

THE SKUNK

It sounds to me like you've given this spirit guide business a lot of thought.

TUMOR

Thank you. I have done the research. It's not something you want to jump into lightly.

MAURIZIO

All I wanted to jump into was a pool, and look where that got me. Attached like a green Sancho Panza to a lame Donna Quixote. Look, is this high enough? Because it's about as high as a frog, and a skunk, and a snake can get.

TUMOR

Oh. Well, it's not as high as in my dreams, but it's much better. Thank you.

MANDY (o.s.)

GUYS! CAN I COME BACK OR NOT!!!

TUMOR

Oh, we'd better let her come back. And let's keep this little chat just between us, okay?

THE SKUNK

(He calls off.)

Come back. I'm not frightened anymore. It's okay.  
(Mandy comes back as everyone gets down off the tree.)

MANDY

Look. I have to face facts. I'm 59 years old. I have three spirit animal guides who hold me in contempt, a house in an enchanted forest with serious foundation issues, and a tumor in my brain that might be impairing my judgment.

JERRY

We don't hold you in contempt.

MANDY

Oh, good.

MAURIZIO

We don't hold you at all.  
(They step back from her.)

THE SKUNK

In fact, the exact nature of your life and its choices is unknown to you, as it is to most of us.

MANDY

Excuse me? You suddenly became a philosopher?

MAURIZIO

Look. You've got to stop wanting so much from us. Maybe we're your spirit guides, maybe we aren't. So what? You can't make a life with amphibians.

JERRY

Even other amphibians can't.

MAURIZIO

One frog to a lily pad. We're loners.

THE SKUNK

And skunks? When we're frightened? It's gift time as far as the eye can see. We're impossible to live with. So we live alone too.

MAURIZIO

But *you* shouldn't.

JERRY

You should mate.

THE SKUNK

Go on. Do it.

JERRY

We don't have to be your spirit guides to know--it's time.

ALL THREE

It's time.

MANDY

(Looking at her watch.)

Am I late?

THE SKUNK

No, we mean, metaphorically. It's time.

MANDY

(The man who played the King appears, in a flannel shirt in a spotlight in the distance. He no longer looks so very Latiny Kingy.)

There he is.

(She looks at him.)

There he is. That's Kevin. We're getting married today.

(She takes a step toward him, but he stays in the spotlight and doesn't move. She holds up her hand, in greeting, he holds up his, and freezes. She turns away from him.)

To the Audience.)

It's happening so suddenly. I mean, there's nothing wrong with that, right? Sometimes it seems that all good things do. But I also seem to remember that bad things tend to happen suddenly too. How can you tell them apart?

(She moves away from the tree and the Tumor.)

I'm trying to be brave, but isn't bravery a learning disorder? Like brave people are just people who didn't learn to run away?

THE SKUNK

Huh. I never thought about bravery that way. I always thought bravery was one of the very few uncomplicatedly good things there were.

MANDY

(Still to the Audience)

I mean, I know that bravery is good for the species. You need people who aren't smart enough to run away when trouble comes, to give the

smart people a chance to get away in time. So bravery is good for the many, but requires the sacrifice of the individual. What if my animal spirit guides—the many—want me to get married because they think I'll be less work that way? What if they're sacrificing the individual—me—for their own comfort?

TUMOR

(To Audience)

I didn't even know that selfish animal spirit guides were possible.

MANDY

(To Audience)

You think your animal spirit guides will guide you. You just assume they will guide you out of the dark parts of the forest and into the light place, and not the other way around.

TUMOR

(To the animal spirit guides.)

Guys! Level with me. Is this marriage a good choice for her or is it a little too convenient?

JERRY

It's a little late now to worry about that, Mr. Small Pressure Here, A Touch There.

TUMOR

Okay, okay, I DID IT! I CONFESS! I did do a little touch here and a little chemical release there! But I don't know why.

MAURIZIO

You're making her get married and you don't know why?

TUMOR

My ways are mysterious to the entire medical profession, that's 22.3 million people. Why should they be clear to me?

JERRY

Marriage is a serious affair.

TUMOR

I know that! And I'm not MAKING her marry Kevin. Just making her...do it faster. But that doesn't mean I can't make her marry him slower. I can do a little touch somewhere else—

TUMOR/MANDY