

MR. SMOTTLE ACQUIRES A SMALLER HAT

by D.P. O'Sullivan

Three chairs; two close, one apart. On one of the paired chairs sits Smottle's hat

SCENE 1 SMOTTLE'S PRIVATE WORLD - TIME NOT SPECIFIC

SFX PRERECORDED: SFX TRACK 1: THREE BELLS 15 SECONDS.

LIGHTS UP [BLUE] on ANGEL with flute

ANGEL

This must be the place. (to heaven) Anyone there? Hello? Which one is it... oh him? Slow? Fast? Okay.

ANGEL plays Yankee Doodle for about 30 seconds.  
SMOTTLE appears

SMOTTLE

Is that the transporter music?

ANGEL

Depends where you're going, pal. You're on your own now. One of us will be back before we close for the day. (EXITS)

LIGHTS BLUE AND RED MIX

SMOTTLE

Place hasn't changed much. (addresses the audience) Are you all from Immigration? (relieved) Coming to the US from overseas is-- (looking to heaven, apologetic) Not long. If I don't finish this business, I can't make Grade B. Peter's office said it was okay. Didn't you get the e-mail...? Hello. (to audience) Where was I? Coming to this country from overseas is bad but try coming from...

up there. Business or pleasure? Now why would I come down here for pleasure? Strictly business. Unfinished business. You may be aware of the problem. But, just in case... I was crossing at Grand and Dale when I first noticed that my head was shrinking. (pause) It did not begin to shrink until a few hours after I died. Me? My name is Smottle, Mr. Smottle. Variously referred to as Smittle, Smuttle, Smattle, Smullet, Mullet, Mallet, and Sir. Where was I? I was headed to Messrs. Cramp and Grunion, jewelers, on Grand and Dale to pick up the package. A life and death mission. Life and death; that's ironic.

LIGHTS FULL WHITE [EXTERNAL DAYLIGHT]

SMOTTLE crosses the street and opens the door of the imaginary Messrs. Cramp and Grunion, steps inside, and closes the door

SCENE 2 GRAMP AND GRUNION JEWELERS - MORNING

SMOTTLE (CONT'D)

Hello! Hello! Perhaps I should come back later.

SMOTTLE is exiting the store when he is interrupted by an unseen MR. CRAMP and MR. GRUNION

SMOTTLE (CONT'D)

Oh. Mr. Cramp. Sorry to interrupt. Good morning, Mr. Grunion. Oh. You're Grunion... and he's Cramp. I'm here for the... Mr. Smottle is my name. The package. Is it ready? Good. It's our anniversary you see. (to CRAMP) Anniversary. ANNIVERSARY. MARCASITE EARRINGS. Yes, gift wrapped, please. (pause) Oh, good. (Takes the package) Thank you. My account? Yes. Smottle, yes. Thank you. Excuse me. Good day.

He closes the door, steps from sidewalk, and crosses.

SFX PRERECORDED: SFX TRACK 2: LARGE TRUCK  
WHOOSHING DOWN ON HIM, HORN BLARING. 9 SECONDS

SMOTTLE (CONTD)

(Holds up hat, truck stops. To driver) You're too early. I have to get home. Catch a bus.

SMOTTLE makes it to the other side and checks the bus timetable in a shelter

SMOTTLE (CONTD)

63K in... (play with timetable) About now.

SFX PRERECORDED: SFX TRACK 3: BUS PULLS UP AND LEAVE IMMEDIATELY. TAXI SAME AND HONKING.  
MARTHA ENTERS, listening (not looking at SMOTTLE) and sits in the paired chair without the hat

SMOTTLE (CONT'D)

(to himself)

The buses are running late, dear. Taxi!

SCENE 3      MARTHA'S HOME - A LITTLE LATER

LIGHTS SOFT WHITE [INTERNAL DAYLIGHT]  
SMOTTLE ENTERS, hat in hand, and sits in the easy chair. MARTHA imagines him in his favorite chair but she does not see or hear him. She is talking to a memory. He communicates with her normally

SMOTTLE (CONT'D)

I walked all the way.

MARTHA

I miss you sitting in that old chair, Smottle.

SMOTTLE

I miss you too, Martha. There is something--

MARTHA

Mary dropped in. Said she was thinking of visiting her oldest daughter in Stillwater. Millie. The one who is married to that nice foreign gentleman. Cyrus... something.

SMOTTLE

You're avoiding... Someone died. Who died?

MARTHA

Tea? What am I doing?

SMOTTLE

Tea's against the rules, anyway. Mead and honey yes. And every Saturday night a Guinness. But only for the Irish. I been practicing this fake accent. Sure you wouldn't understand me even if you could hear me. I have something to tell you. This morning as I was... The short of it is I believe my head is shrinking.

MARTHA

Retiring early was not a good idea.

SMOTTLE

Strangest thing.

MARTHA

Mister Botfly set up an interview for you and you went wandering off down town.

SMOTTLE

There was nothing to do. It was so quiet, like a morgue... sorry.

MARTHA

And visiting that doctor for... well she worked there.