

HOG HOUSE

or

Three Men and a Sow Named Alice

by

Mark Steven Jensen

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#### CAST OF CHARACTERS

FRANK-- A swine producer turned wheat farmer. Mid 40's.

LEO-- His hired hand. Mid 20's.

MACK-- The owner and operator of the town elevator. Mid 40's.

#### TIME AND PLACE

It is the near future on a rural Midwest farm. The setting is the inside of an old hog barn that has now been converted into a wheat bin.

#### FIRST PERFORMANCES

HOG HOUSE was first produced as a lab production at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in May 1993. It was directed by Ernest James Hall, II.

HOG HOUSE was later produced at City Lights Theatre in San Jose, CA in August 1994. The piece inaugurated the Late Nights at City Lights theatre program -- a venue for south bay artists. The play was directed by Jim Marbury.

[The inside of an almost empty square grain bin. The bin used to be a barn, but all that remains of the barn trappings are crudely painted hog silhouettes with numbers. The hog silhouettes and numbers are painted in faded fluorescent colors. These mark where each farrowing pen used to be. The windows are covered with planks. One window is occupied by a rusted orange ventilation fan, now too deprecated for use. The walls are blackened from hog manure gas and hunks of spoiled wheat hang from the walls.]

[There is only one exit, and this is a small side door located about a foot and a half off the floor. This door is three and a half feet high and two and a half feet wide. The door is open, and sunlight streams in through the wheat dust. The door used to be a large double barn door, but now it has been altered and reinforced to hold in grain. Sticking in through the door is the rusted tube of a grain auger. Only about eight feet of the tube can be seen, the rest of the auger elevates over an unseen grain truck outside.]

[Once full of wheat, this bin now has a thin blanket of wheat covering the floor. A pile of wheat is mounded around the auger. Most of this pile funnels towards the open end of the auger, where the sharp spiral tines of the center shaft are seen.]

[FRANK strains his ears, listening -- holding a grain shovel. He wears patched up jeans, and a pair of black rubbers covering a pair of leather boots. His shirt is open, revealing a sweat soaked undershirt. He wears a soiled baseball cap. A dust particle mask is in his back pocket.]

[He gets bit by something.]  
[A grain shovel is tossed in. An overshod foot pokes in the door, followed by a dirty arm and head. LEO pulls the rest of his body through and stands. He is dressed similar to Frank, except he only wears a worn T-shirt. A wad of twine is in his back pocket. He also has a dust particle mask.]

LEO

Wheat fills up the whole truck box. Mack and I sure had a terrible time pulling the tarp over it all, wheat was going everywhere--

FRANK

Sh!

LEO

What?

FRANK

SH!

LEO

Frank?

FRANK

Enough now! Just listen!

LEO

For what?

FRANK

Just listen!

For what? LEO

Listen! FRANK

Okay! LEO

Quiet! FRANK

[Silence. LEO seems very uncomfortable. He looks like he wants to say something but doesn't. He doesn't dare move either, because he knows the wheat rubbing against his boots would make a lot of noise. Even though wheat is running into his overshoes and inside his boots and into his socks rubbing his planters' warts and mosquito bites... he still doesn't move.]

Hear them? FRANK

No. LEO

You sure? FRANK

Don't hear anything Frank. LEO Not one thing at all.

Neither can I. FRANK

What you listenin' for? LEO

Oh, thought I heard squealing. FRANK Hog squealing.

There hasn't been hogs on the LEO place since last spring.

FRANK

I know, I know, but I thought there was a bunch of them. We might of shook 'em up when we started unloading the grain.

LEO

Shook what? Pigs.

FRANK

Yeah. I heard pigs, but then I didn't hear pigs.

LEO

Well Frank, this is... wow. Want to load up the last of this wheat here? Or you wanna break? It's whatever you wanna do, just so's we finish, 'cause, well, I'm plannin' on going to the movies tonight.

FRANK

You're what? Going to the movies?

LEO

Uh-huh.

FRANK

You are!

LEO

Yeah!

FRANK

But you told me... oh gawd almighty, and here I thought you were stayin'!

LEO

I'm cleanin' the wheat up.

FRANK

You were gonna help me shut my place down!

LEO

I'm cleanin' up the wheat and I'm gone!

[LEO starts shoveling the wheat towards the center pile around the auger.]

[A shadow comes across the bin door. A cowboy booted foot enters, followed by a hand

with a large gold ring on it. The hole is barely big enough to allow MACK to squeeze through. He is much cleaner than the other two. In his other hand he holds a check book. He's got a tin of chewing tobacco in his breast pocket.]

MACK

Well boys, be seeing ya!

LEO

Ya done?

MACK

Yup. Got the tarp tied down-- some good looking wheat there, Frank.

[FRANK is quiet.]

LEO

It's the last of it.

MACK

Bumper harvest last year, I can tell.

[FRANK is still quiet.]

LEO

Sure was. We squeezed one more load outta this bin. Don't usually do that, right Frank? Don't usually. But we really had to pile it high last year, so, well um, Frank here was afraid the bins would bust, weren't ya, Frank?

[FRANK says nothing.]

LEO (CONT.)

Yeah. We run outta room for it all. Nice to have a good year once.

MACK

Well last year was it!

LEO

Sure was.

FRANK

Didn't help much though.

MACK

Well. Better unload this at the elevator. Train's comin'. Here Frank, here's the check. Quite a slug of money.

[MACK tries to put the check in FRANK's hand.]

I'm in a little bit of a hurry, so, you... boys... work... hard.

FRANK

Can't take that.

MACK

Huh? Here now, it's yours!

FRANK

Mack, it's terrible, really awful. But we gotta unload that truck.

LEO

Huh?

MACK

What's this?

FRANK

Here, let's see. Leo and I'll take the auger outta here and switch it around so we can dump the wheat back in. Once we're done switching it, you just back up your truck.

MACK

Wait wait wait wait wait!

FRANK

You can't take that wheat into town.

MACK

I can't?

FRANK

No, the longer you let them stay in your truck, they might even dig holes in your truck box and nest.

MACK

You sayin' the wheat's infected?

LEO

No, it ain't.

FRANK

It sure is. Leo, bring the tractor around.



MACK

Oh criminy, I'll have to quarantine my truck. That's gonna shoot a couple days! How come you let this be sold then?

LEO

It isn't--

MACK

I mean Frank, you're infecting the whole elevator with bad grain full of bugs!

LEO

He's bein' kinda off--

MACK

Conscious couldn't keep you still, then? Well, I woulda found out anyhow. I grain test everything I have in. With them bugs in there I bet that moisture count is sky high.

FRANK

It's not bugs.

MACK

Not bugs?

[Pause.]

LEO

Yeah it's bugs. Lotsa 'em. We figured--

FRANK

Ain't bugs.

LEO

--you should find out. We just verified it when the grain was--

FRANK

It's pigs.

LEO

--going up. I noticed something....

MACK

What? Did you say.... Sounds to me like some sort of weevil.

FRANK

No, they're pigs.

MACK  
Pigs?

FRANK  
Yeah.

MACK  
Come again? Pigs, as in hogs?

FRANK  
Yeah. Right. Little...um... little miniature pigs. Real small.

LEO  
Oh shit.

MACK  
What?

FRANK  
Yeah.

MACK  
Would ya take your damn check!

FRANK  
I swear to it, Mack. Really do. There's a new breed of 'em. And, and when Leo there shut off the tractor, y'know we finished the load and everything... I could hear 'em. Millions left here, munchin' 'n feedin' off of my wheat. They're so small one pig could live on a kernel of wheat for a day. I mean, they're small. But I think they reproduce like flies. They have lotsa little maggots and they--

MACK  
Here Frank.

FRANK  
[FRANK swats the check away.]  
I thought to tell Leo, but, y'know, it sounds crazy but... well you know a little 'bout critters. It's possible to make a pig small, microscopic like, ain't it?

LEO  
Frank.

FRANK  
Well, I... I seen them before they shrunk.

[MACK grabs FRANK's hand and slaps the check into it.]

MACK

I bet the moisture's great.

[MACK heads towards the bin door. FRANK drops the check.]

FRANK

No!

MACK

You better take the day, alright?

FRANK

We can contain them in here. We'll lock up this bin and eventually they'll chew up all the wheat and die. Then we'll stop this new species dead, real dead and they won't infect anyone's crop.

MACK

You're losin' that head fast. Simmer down.

FRANK

My head's fine. I saw strange things pilin' outta one of my sow carcasses. Strange boils come popping up all over her hide growing, pussin' up--

MACK

Those were maggots.

FRANK

Yeah. Little pig maggots.

MACK

Frank, c'mon here!

FRANK

Sh! I think I hear 'em now. I think so. They're takin' big bites outta the kernels in the corner. I'm sure!

[FRANK moves around the bin, listening for vibrations in the wooden walls.]

MACK

Oh you're gettin' foolish!

LEO

Sh, Mack, you better be quiet.

You spoutin' this cockbull too? MACK

He'll get real pissed! LEO

Let him then! MACK

He will! He did before! LEO

Tough shit! MACK

SHUT UP YOU GUYS AND LISTEN! FRANK

[Silence. MACK shifts his weight to his other leg as his legs are a little stiff from driving truck all day. When he shifts the grain makes a crunching sound.]

Sh! FRANK

Well! MACK

[LEO's insect bites are really starting to bother him, and he carefully kneels, trying to stick a forefinger inbetween his sock and his ankle to itch them. LEO spies the check and picks it up.]

Leo, can't you be still for a second? FRANK

I got bug bites! LEO

They itch! [LEO hides the check.]

How are we supposed to hear them hatch when you're trompin' around! FRANK