

PLAY-HOUSE OF THE RIDICULOUS

“We have passed beyond the absurd: our position is absolutely preposterous.”

- Ronald Tavel

presents

THE LIFE OF LADY GODIVA

an hysterical drama

by Ronald Tavel

directed by John Vaccaro

Cast in order of appearance:

- Nuns' Chorus . . . . . Regina Hirsch, Sister Flossie of the Cross  
Mario Montez, Heller Grace, Margit Winckler
- Mother Superviva . . . . . John Vaccaro
- Lady Godiva . . . . . Dorothy Opalach
- Tom . . . . . Charles Ludlam
- Kasha Veronicas . . . . . Elsene Sorrentino
- Thorold . . . . . Dashwood von Blocksburg
- Earl Leoffric . . . . . Tom Shibona

There will be one fifteen minute intermission

- Set Designs . . . . . L. L. Powers
- Set . . . . . L. L. Powers, J. D. Greenstein
- Lighting . . . . . Bill Walters
- Costume Designs . . . . . Jack Smith
- Costumes . . . . . Fran & Flo
- Horse . . . . . Joseph Peroni
- Graphic Design . . . . . L. L. Powers
- Imprimeur . . . . . Peter Birnbaum
- Music . . . . . Franz Liszt, John Vaccaro
- Stage Manager . . . . . Richard Kohn
- Assistants . . . . . Michael Manns, Larry Rutter
- Regisseur . . . . . Harvey Tavel

Grateful acknowledgment to Panna Grady

This is the first in a series of plays to be presented by the Play-House of the Ridiculous Repertory Club. Among them will be a revival of SHOWER and THE LIFE OF JUANITA CASTRO and new productions including BOY ON A STRAIGHT-BACK CHAIR, SCREENTEST, and INDIRA GANDHI'S DARING DEVICE.

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# The Life of Lady Godiva

By Ronald Tavel

*The Life of Lady Godiva* was first performed on April 21, 1966, at the 17th Street Studio, New York. A Play-House of the Ridiculous production, it was directed by John Vaccaro. The cast included:

NUNS' CHORUS . . . . . Sister Flossie of the Cross, Heller Grace,  
 Regina Hirsch, Mario Montez, Margit Winckler  
 MOTHER SUPERVIVA . . . . . John Vaccaro  
 LADY GODIVA . . . . . Dorothy Opalach  
 TOM . . . . . Charles Ludlam  
 KASHA VERONICAS . . . . . Elsene Sorrentino  
 THOROLD . . . . . Dashwood von Blocksburg  
 EARL LEOFRIC . . . . . Tom Shibona

Set: L.L. Powers

Costumes: Jack Smith

Lighting: Bill Walters

*Curtain, dark stage. Silence. Then a strong spotlight illuminates a very long chaise longue somewhat left of center. A small end table about 2½ feet high near the chaise, with a bottle of soda pop, a glass, an ashtray, a pack of long cigarettes on it, a Tiffany lamp suspended from above. Unless otherwise specified, the decor and costumes should be in Art Nouveau style. MOTHER SUPERVIVA is discovered sitting in the direct center of the chaise; she is sitting up very stiff and proper, severe. SUPERVIVA is played by a male actor. SUPERVIVA is dressed in an English fin de siecle type nun's habit, with brimming hood, white bib, and blue gown.*

SUPERVIVA: You will discover that from this point on, every line is better than the next.

*(A very long pause. SUPERVIVA extracts a cigarette from the pack on the table, lights it in a long cigarette holder, and stretches herself out full length on the chaise longue.)*

SUPERVIVA: Nudity is the quintessence of essence, though it is sickrilegious to say so. . . . *(Long pause.)* Nudity is the most natural prerogative of the innovational spirit.

*(The spotlight weakens on SUPERVIVA smoking luxuriantly and flicking ashes and at this point the overture starts. It should be Art Nouveau music; if original music is not available, the end of Liszt's "Les Preludes" should be used. A strong spot lights upstage center. A sheer curtain with*

*peacock feather and tendril designs is hanging there, and through it we can see a wooden white horse. The horse's body is very long, more than twice the length it should be. TOM is seated far up near the horse's neck, while LADY GODIVA is planted on the horse's rump. TOM is dressed with cap and jacket like a taxi driver. He has a coin changer strapped around his waist and dangling over his crotch. There is a steering wheel coming up from the base of the horse's neck, a rear-view mirror coming out from its head, and a brake coming up from its side; gas pedal also on the flank. TOM has both his hands on the steering wheel. GODIVA, a buxom beauty, is dressed in a Gibson Girl gown with lace-collar coming up to her chin; Gibson Girl hair-do. Both sit for a tableau vivant until the overture finishes. Then they both speak with an exaggerated British accent.)*

GODIVA: (*Laughing*) Did you say big? Why, my dear, it was one of the pillars of civilization!!

TOM: And then what happened?

GODIVA: Then when?

TOM: When there was nothing else left to pull off?

GODIVA: Why, then we pulled off the curtains—and let the sunlight in!!

*(Both laugh. Long pause. GODIVA takes out her lipstick and begins to apply it. TOM adjusts the rear-view mirror so that he can watch her. GODIVA applies the lipstick vulgarly. TOM stares harder into the mirror. At this point TOM speaks with a heavy Mexican accent and GODIVA speaks English or Spanish with a very thick Brooklyn accent.)*

*(Suggestively.)* Yo may yamo Rosita . . . *(Sexy pause.)* Deesay!—Rosita!—deesay!

TOM: (*Clumsy*) Rosita.

GODIVA: Bu-ay-no! . . . Rosita Schwartzberger. Deesay!

TOM: Rosita Hamberger.

GODIVA: No! no! Schwartzberger! Schwartzberger! Rosita Schwartzberger. Deesay! Deesay!

TOM: Rosita Shortsbugger.

GODIVA: Correcto! Como say yamo?

TOM: Me Tom. Me Tom da cabbie.

GODIVA: Hi ya, Tom.

*(GODIVA continues to apply her lipstick. TOM stares madly into the mirror. GODIVA begins to lift the skirt of her gown slightly, exposing her ankle. TOM adjusts the mirror so that he can view her limb. He neglects his steering, seems nearly to crash head-on, swerves, they both get jolted. GODIVA recoups, resumes her suggestive lipstick application with one hand, continues to lift her hem with the other.)*

GODIVA: Soy professor day English . . .

TOM: (*Slowly, beginning to catch on*) Si?

GODIVA: Si. Key-air-ays kay tay day classes in English?

TOM: (*Slowly*) Si . . . como no?

GODIVA: Bu-ay-no. Yo resto a Hotel Hilton. Monyona por la monyana es bu-ay-no?

TOM: Si.

GODIVA: Moy bu-ay-no, Senor Tom Taxi-driver. (*GODIVA puts away her cosmetic, straightens her gown, and carefully gets off the horse's behind, carefully making the most, in doing so, of her own behind and other ample charms. Patting the horse's behind.*) That's what I call a real rump-seat honey. (*To TOM.*) Oh, Senor Taxi-driver, es ness-sess-serio a pagar?

TOM: A . . . a . . . no.

GODIVA: That's what I thought. Thanks, honey, see ya later. Sucker.

*(TOM remains seated on the horse and continues to steer. At this point the NUNS' CHORUS bursts into a choral background accompaniment.)*

CHORUS: (*Singing*) Guadalahooer! Guadalahooer!

*(The CHORUS keeps up this single word accompaniment to the tune of "Guadalajara." GODIVA comes through the center of the curtains and sings the following song. If original music is not available she should sing to the tune of "Darling, I Am Growing Old.")*

GODIVA: (*Singing*)

Darling, I am growing thin!

I have lost my double chin.

I'm not what I might have been  
Had I really learned to sin

Darling, I feel kind of ill,  
My physique is next to nil:  
I seem short of verve and will—  
Sex don't gimme no more thrill.

So rich knight and stately earl  
Keep your diamond broach and pearl,  
I'll no longer hump and swirl

—And that's why they call me the Gibson Girl!

(The CHORUS dies out as GODIVA moves forward  
downstage.)

GODIVA: Hello? Hello? Anybody here? You-who!! What  
a joint. Dead as the morgue.

(SISTER KASHA VERONICAS comes hobbling on from right,  
sweet old thing, a bit out of breath. She is in English fin de  
siecle nun's habit, with a cobbler's apron around her  
waist. She carries a candle.)

VERONICAS: Coming, I'm coming. Just a moment, please.

GODIVA: (Cheap) Hi!

VERONICAS: Good day, my dear, what can I do for you?

GODIVA: (Tough) I don't know yet.

VERONICAS: (Sweetly) Well, my child, can I help you?

GODIVA: I don't know. Can you?

VERONICAS: I don't know. Won't you let me try?

GODIVA: Why don't you try on someone else! I'm looking  
for the Luz convent.

VERONICAS: This is a loose convent. Won't you come in? (They  
step into SUPERVIVA's spotlight. VERONICAS brings the can-  
dle close to GODIVA's face.) Oh, my goodness, what are  
those bags under your eyes?

GODIVA: They're my Saratoga trunks. I'm traveling light.

VERONICAS: Oh, I see. Now: how can I help you?

GODIVA: Well, for one thing, I need new soles on these  
oxfords. (Taking off her shoes and handing them to  
VERONICAS.)

VERONICAS: (Looking down at GODIVA's bare feet) Oh, I

see you're going to want one-day service. Won't you please  
have a seat while you're waiting?

(VERONICAS roughly shoves SUPERVIVA aside and she and  
GODIVA sits on the chaise to the right of SUPER-  
VIVA. VERONICAS takes hammer and nails and new  
soles from her cobbler's apron and begins working on the  
shoes. GODIVA squats cheaply, like an uncomfortable  
whore. Both do not acknowledge the presence of SUPER-  
VIVA.)

SUPERVIVA: (A little annoyed) Mayor Wagner does it.

VERONICAS: (Without looking up from her work) How do  
you know?

SUPERVIVA: Because he had to get married again.

GODIVA: Boy, am I fagged!

VERONICAS: Been burning your bottom—I mean—your  
candle at both ends again, my child?

GODIVA: Well, I don't want to bore you with another way-  
side tale, but on my way here I stopped off for a minute  
and went into the bushes for an occasion, and it turned in-  
to an event.

SUPERVIVA: Some wayside tale: sounds more like a waylaid  
tail.

VERONICAS: Well, now, that wasn't so smart of you, was it,  
to go into the bushes all alone like that?

GODIVA: I know I ain't so smart. But brains aren't  
everything. A good pair of walking shoes can get you just  
as far in life.

VERONICAS: Of course, dear, and I'll have these oxfords  
soled for you in just two shakes of a bunny's tail.

GODIVA: I don't think I caught your name, honey.

VERONICAS: (Cute) Oh-ho: that's because it's not contagious.

SUPERVIVA: (Sour) Which is about all of her that's not.

VERONICAS: I am Sister Kasha Veronicas.

SUPERVIVA: The department of health, education, and  
welfare wishes to acquaint you both with Lym-  
phogranuloma Venereum. A venerable disease, to be sure.

GODIVA: Who's the old lady?

VERONICAS: Oh, that's Mother Superviva. She is the

mother of all us sisters here at the convent.

GODIVA: I'm glad to meet a mother, anytime. My own died when she was struck by lightning, you know.

VERONICAS: (*Sweetly*) Well, if you have to go, it's nice to go quickly like that, isn't it?

SUPERVIVA: All persons with genital lesions should have a darkfield examination to rule out the possibility of mixed infections. Nothing is so necessary in blue-blood society as a pure contamination.

GODIVA: Bushes or no bushes, I'll skip the darkfield examination, if you don't mind.

SUPERVIVA: But it is best to be sure. If you can't be sure, at least you can be uncertain. It is best to be uncertain. Yes, I am certain.

VERONICAS: (*Very busy at the shoes*) Its main manifestation in tropical areas is yaws. What's yaws is mine.

SUPERVIVA: Sister Kasha Veronicas, don't you have the dishes to do? Remember—keep America clean!

VERONICAS: (*Flustered*) I have dishing to do, strictly clean, but Mother Superviva, I haven't completed cobbling these oxfords.

SUPERVIVA: How dare you talk back to me! I'd watch my step if I were you! I would remember the Maine, I would remember the Alamo and 44-69 or fight, if I were you!! Now, get off this set!

VERONICAS: (*Cowed*) Oh, forgive me, Mother, I am not wholly responsible for the sounds that issue from me.

SUPERVIVA: Issue those sounds in your private quarters!

GODIVA: Or from your private quarters.

SUPERVIVA: Sister Kasha Veronicas, begone!

(*VERONICAS hobbles upstage, muttering in bitterness for being scolded at, and goes through the sheer curtain. She seats herself under the horse's belly and continues to hammer away at the shoe repairing. During the following scene, something seems to go wrong with the mechanism of the horse and TOM has trouble with the brake and pedal. He dismounts and examines for the trouble in the horse's mouth, in its rear end, and notably its pendant sex which he cranks like a jack. VERONICAS works away unnoticed*

*during all this, but when TOM is down beside her cranking, they take notice of each other, begin to get familiar.*

*As soon as VERONICAS leaves the chaise, a change comes over GODIVA: she throws herself at the feet of SUPERVIVA and pleads desperately. She will speak in her natural voice from this point on.)*

GODIVA: Please, please, Mother Superviva, I beg of you, let me take my final vows now!!

SUPERVIVA: (*Bending over, quickly*) First tell us who drugged Sister Kasha Veronicas!

GODIVA: (*Puzzled*) Who drugged Kasha Veronicas? Is she drugged?

SUPERVIVA: Hooer, you!

GODIVA: Who am I? I am Godiva. Lady Godiva.

SUPERVIVA: Lady, huh? Never knew the hooer who didn't claim she was a lady.

GODIVA: But I *am* a lady. I am Lady Godiva. Don't you believe me?

SUPERVIVA: Certainly not! I never believed that horse maneuver about Lady Godiva. So far as I'm concerned, it's all just a symbolic tale. Godiva divested herself symbolically: i.e., she stripped herself of her superfluous jewels in order to pay the levied tax.

GODIVA: You'll find my tail (*swishing her rump*) is not all that symbolic! Just wait and see.

SUPERVIVA: (*In a deep masculine voice, suddenly very lecherously masculine*) As a matter of fact, I am actually quite interested in pursuing my studies on the historical subject. (*Appraising her physically.*) I *do* have an open mind: I should be more than willing to draw new conclusions at the presentation of convincing facts.

GODIVA: You'll be able to draw and conclude in good time: only, please, I implore you, let me take my final vows now.

SUPERVIVA: What unambiguous temerity! How sickrilegious of a person of your profession to insist upon the vows! Where's your religious background, my child?

GODIVA: In the background, that's for sure. (*Singing.*) "And that's why they call me the Gibson Girl . . ."

VERONICAS: Kochel listing 2-4-69.

SUPERVIVA: Spare us the vocal specialties, canary, and just let me know what you've been doing to merit the veil.

GODIVA: (*Sadly*) These days I really can't say I've been doing anyone—I mean anything—except despairing.

SUPERVIVA: How nineteen fiftyish of you!

GODIVA: (*Wickedly, Brooklyn accent again*) Yeah, but you shoulda seen what I was doing in the nineteen fifties!

SUPERVIVA: Well, Madam Godiva, before I commit myself any further, you'll have to undergo a federal investigation. (*She blows out the candle on the table.*) Sister Kasha Veronicas!

(VERONICAS is startled out of her intimacies with TOM. She breaks with frustration and adjusts her gown.)

VERONICAS: Coming, Mother!

TOM: Coming down.

SUPERVIVA: Kindly desist from coming! Go and fetch me Thorold the Sheriff.

VERONICAS: For your—I mean—at your service, Mother. (*To TOM.*) You really don't have very many lines, do you, sweetie?

TOM: I guess I don't. You see, I'm still being groomed for stardom.

VERONICAS: Well, hang on, sweetie, I'm sure you'll make it.

TOM: Bye bye, bouncy.

(VERONICAS goes out left. TOM sits twiddling his thumbs for a while and then resumes twiddling with the horse.)

SUPERVIVA: Care for a drink, Lady, while we're waiting for the Sheriff?

GODIVA: Well, I hardly ever implode.

SUPERVIVA: But are often imploded, I'll wager.

(GODIVA and SUPERVIVA sit suggestively together on the chaise longue, and SUPERVIVA pours a drink from the soda pop bottle into a glass. She lights a cigarette and hands the glass to GODIVA.)

Here's shit in your face, honey.

GODIVA: Thanks, Mother. (*She takes a small sip; an ambiguous expression awakens on her face.*) Er—what is it?

SUPERVIVA: It's celery tonic. Don't you like it?

GODIVA: Well, the taste is very Art Nouveau. (*She holds her nose and drains off the glass.*)

SUPERVIVA: You certainly drank that quickly enough.

GODIVA: With some things, the sooner they're over, the better.

(SUPERVIVA edges a little closer to GODIVA. She is dragging deliciously on her cigarette. GODIVA squirms somewhat uneasily, confused by the deep voice and masculine aggressiveness of SUPERVIVA.)

There's a quarter in it for you if you can douse that cigarette without burning me.

SUPERVIVA: What are you implying?

GODIVA: I'm implying nothing. Burn a hole in my new Gibson Girl dress and I'll slap you with a fifty dollar bill.

SUPERVIVA: If you have one! (*Pulling away, now very defensive.*) Just so there's no confusion, my dear, let me repeat: I am the woman of the dunes. (*She clasps both hands on her falsies. Then she brings them forward and places her bosom on the table top.*) And I rest my case!

(A flourish. VERONICAS re-enters downstage left with THOROLD THE SHERIFF. He is dressed in medieval sheriff garb.)

VERONICAS: Announcing Thorold, oldest sheriff in Warwickshire; His Majesty's vice-squad viceroy to Coventry!

THOROLD: Chuck the fanfare, baby, I'm here on Fed business.

SUPERVIVA: (*Rushing up to THOROLD and kissing him*) Good Thorold, cast thy nighted business color off and let thine eye look like a friend on Coventry. Do not for ever with thy veiled lids seek for thy noble—

THOROLD: Chuck the fanfare, Mother, I'm representing the law now, and the law can have no friends, much less filial feelings. (*Feeling SUPERVIVA familiarly, of course.*)

SUPERVIVA: (*Enthralled*) My son, the Sheriff! So official!

THOROLD: (*To GODIVA*) Stand up, young lady!  
 GODIVA: (*Jumping up*) Young Lady Godiva, sir!  
 THOROLD: No back-talk. How do you expect me to investigate you with that Gibson gown on?  
 GODIVA: (*Humbly*) I bought it big, sir, so it would be good for next year.  
 THOROLD: A chestful of frugality. Fill me in on your particulars.  
 GODIVA: They're hard to fill in, sir. I wanted to be a Playboy bunny. I wanted to be a bunny boys play with. A hundred times I filled out applications. (*Indicating her breasts.*) But the personnel department said there was nothing left for the imagination to fill out, and failed to hire me.  
 THOROLD: (*Coming on to her*) You have nothing to lose being a bunny . . . except tail.  
 GODIVA: (*Whorish again, Brooklyn accent*) I'm a two-time loser. So what's your pitch, copper?  
 SUPERVIVA: With two balls and no fouls you've got a strike. But tell her yourself son.  
 VERONICAS: Yeah, Thor, tell the dearie.  
 TOM: Tell her, tell her good, Thorold!  
 VERONICAS: He must have improvised that line.  
 GODIVA: Well, Mr. Sheriff, I'm all ears.  
 THOROLD: I see you have a sense of English understatement.  
 SUPERVIVA: Thorold, I'd like to see you in my closet.  
 THOROLD: You've got the wrong play, Madam.  
 GODIVA: I said I'm waiting, Mr. Sheriff. What's the pitch?  
 THOROLD: (*Taking GODIVA around the shoulder*) O.K., baby, here's the pitch: and listen carefully cause I'm only gonna tell you once. Also, this is the exposition, so if you don't get it now, you're screwed, dig?  
 GODIVA: Shoot.  
 THOROLD: It seems this guy, Leofric (*pronounced Leff-ric*) Goodrich, has recently levied such a heavy tax on the local inhabitants that nobody can afford to patronize this establishment. You hip? Now, it's your job to charm this Leofric into remitting the tax so this business can get back on its back—I mean, on its feet.

GODIVA: What's in it for me?  
 THOROLD: You pull this off and you can take the veil.  
 GODIVA: I don't believe you.  
 THOROLD: Have you ever known me to lie, Lady Godiva?  
 GODIVA: No, never.  
 THOROLD: Well, there's always a first time.  
 SUPERVIVA: (*In heavy exotic accent*) Listen to him: he tells you the truth. He is not just standing around here waiting for a bus.  
 GODIVA: But how can you ask *me* to engage in such an enterprise? I am an artist. How can an artist forget about her art?  
 VERONICAS: Easy. Just put an "F" in front of it.  
 SUPERVIVA: (*Her conscience getting to her*) Pity we have to resort to these deceptions. Still, at any rate, it's a good thing whoers can't think and don't have feelings.  
  
*(Suddenly a strong spotlight falls on upstage right. A grand flourish. We see LEOFRIC GOODRICH standing there, snarling. LEOFRIC is a bearded, tall, dark, and handsome leading man, dressed in sado-masochist leather outfit from head to toe. He carries a long whip which he brandishes and cracks impressively. Everyone turns toward him.)*  
 VERONICAS: Announcing Leofric Goodrich, Earl of Mercia, Lord of Castle Coventry in Warwickshire, despoiler of the poor, divester of the tithes, and do-badder for Edward the Confessor, or so the latter hath confessed!  
 THOROLD: The very stud in question—go to it, Godiva!  
 VERONICAS: Good luck, Godiva girl!  
 SUPERVIVA: Con the convent's prosperity, my child; our future hangs upon your hips.  
  
*(There is a chaotic scurrying for position: SUPERVIVA and THOROLD sit on the right end of the chaise and embrace rather Oedipally, mother and son. VERONICAS sits on the left end of the chaise. A space is left in the center where LEOFRIC and GODIVA will soon squeeze themselves in. Their lovemaking will constantly squash up against VERONICAS and threaten to throw her off the left edge. TOM mounts the horse in a single bound and steers madly.)*



*For the moment, LEOFRIC comes rushing fiercely downstage and seizes GODIVA by the arm. He cracks his whip.)*

LEOFRIC: Ah-ha! my luscious, irresistibly lovely buxom box! You must be a lot of fun—with a little less fat.

GODIVA: Why do you grab me?—I won't run away.

LEOFRIC: When you find out what I am going to do to you, you will!

GODIVA: Je veux d'être vedette [*Pronounced Je vedet vedet.*]

LEOFRIC: Never knew the hooer who didn't make some such claim. But a hooer is a hooer is a hooer is a hooer!

VERONICAS: Even if it is true, a gentleman doesn't say so.

LEOFRIC: Silence! No one has asked for your opinion.

VERONICAS: No one ever does.

LEOFRIC: What's your name, baby?

GODIVA: (*With heavy exòtic accent*) Men, in their foolishness, gif me the name which means "beautiful."

LEOFRIC: In their foolishness??—in their blindness, you mean. Get on the couch!

*(LEOFRIC tosses GODIVA on the chaise and attempts to mount her. VERONICAS nearly gets thrown off.)*

VERONICAS: What the heck? And I got here early just to be assured of a good seat.

THOROLD: (*Hugging SUPERVIVA*) I'm glad we decided on the back row, aren't you, Mamma?

SUPERVIVA: Hmmmmm . . . sonny boy . . .

*(GODIVA struggles out from under LEOFRIC, desperately adjusting her collar and hair-do.)*

GODIVA: Er, er—care for a drink?

LEOFRIC: If it's good and dry—or I'll stray lower where the real martinis lie.

GODIVA: That's a manhattan down below . . . (*winking at him*) if you catch my meaning . . .

VERONICAS: Some of the people you can fool all of the time.

SUPERVIVA: And some just when it suits the rhyme.

*(GODIVA pours a drink from the soda pop bottle and hands*

*the glass to LEOFRIC. VERONICAS resumes cobbling the shoes.)*

GODIVA: Here's shit in your face, honey.

LEOFRIC: Thanks, hooer. (*He takes a small sip; an ambiguous expression awakens on his face*) Er—what is it?

GODIVA: It's celery tonic. Don't you like it?

LEOFRIC: Well, the taste is very Art Nouveau. (*He grabs his crotch and drains off the glass.*)

GODIVA: You certainly drank that quickly enough.

LEOFRIC: With some things, the sooner they're over, the better. And you better taste better than this!

GODIVA: What makes you think you're even in a position to judge?

VERONICAS: Position is everything in life.

LEOFRIC: Because I have good taste.

SUPERVIVA: So he claims. But scratch an American deep enough and you'll find a Philistine.

VERONICAS: Oh, I'll bet he has good taste and tastes good, too.

LEOFRIC: What's your line of business, baby?

GODIVA: I'm in the clothes line.

VERONICAS: A clothesline. How sweet. Yet dry. (*Hammering at the shoes.*) I'll have these hoofers soled in just the shake of two tails. Our repair policy: "Sex While You Wait."

GODIVA: Actually, Leofric, I'm a fashion model.

THOROLD: Seems to me Godiva would have more success as a calendar model.

*(GODIVA gets up and takes a model's stroll across the stage. Model music is heard in the background, counterpointed by the NUNS' CHORUS singing softly, "Guadalahooer, Guadalahooer.")*

GODIVA: About this heat-wave time we start exhibiting our exciting new virginsfall creations. We're stressing virgin olive-oil wool fashions for great-great-grandmothers. The high price of the wares is intended to compensate for the limited market.

THOROLD: Imagine that: new fashion for virgin grandmothers by Lady Godiva of Coventry!

VERONICAS: (*Paranoid*) Wonder what he meant by that?

LEOFRIC: I'd like to see your wares for a hotter climate: like Bangkok—or Bumpussy.

(LEOFRIC *leaps up, seizes* GODIVA, *and hurls her back on the chaise. VERONICAS is shoved, by the action, to the floor.*)

Oh, Montana Mush! you're something I could really get my fingers lost in!

(LEOFRIC *falls to his knees and throws up the skirts of* GODIVA's *dress. He kisses her bare feet savagely. She giggles. TOM giggles in unison. Then LEOFRIC pulls away suddenly and examines the bottoms of* GODIVA's *feet.*)

Ever notice how much the sole is like the palm?

GODIVA: What are you doing—reading my future?

LEOFRIC: Yeah, I see a peace march in your future.

GODIVA: Wrong:—it'll be a ride.

(LEOFRIC *crawls up her legs, giving them a thorough investigation. But he loses his fierceness as he rises and waxes unexpectedly romantic. VERONICAS is sentimentally touched by proxy; THOROLD and SUPERVIVA too involved to notice right now.*)

LEOFRIC: Ever have a lover before with a beard?

GODIVA: Yes.

LEOFRIC: Oh, you jade!—even that you've had.

GODIVA: Well . . . it's the neighborhood.

VERONICAS: (*Swooning*) Coventry's left bank!

GODIVA: I'd like to see you shave that beard, Leofric.

I mean, so I can see what you really look like.

LEOFRIC: How ridiculous! Shall I shave that dog or that pussy or that bunny or that wooden horse's mane and tail so you can see what they really look like??!! This is what I really look like. *You* are not what you really look like.

GODIVA: I assure you, I ain't the bearded lady.

SUPERVIVA: Yeah, she ain't. But might be one or two here not so free from suspicion.

THOROLD: (*Giving* SUPERVIVA *a phial*) Here, have some Ban, Mother, it takes the worry out of being close.

(LEOFRIC's *hand has entered the exhausted* GODIVA's *bosom.*)

GODIVA: What *are* you doing?

LEOFRIC: Mean to tell me you don't know?

GODIVA: Have you ever read folk tales of Malaysia, Leofric?

LEOFRIC: Yes.

GODIVA: What?

LEOFRIC: (*Annoyed*) "Yam."

VERONICAS: How successfully she fends him off. It's very much like being in the Poconos.

SUPERVIVA: In the what?

THOROLD: Poke whose nose? I'm the law around here.

LEOFRIC: (*Hot and bothered*) Listen, give me an heir, or I'll give you the air!

GODIVA: That's just letting the fart from a loftier locale.

VERONICAS: That line was banned from an earlier version of this scene—to take the worry out of being close.

THOROLD: Hey, Godiva, you've worked his wanter up enough. You can spring the proposition now.

LEOFRIC: Who the hell are you?

THOROLD: I'm Thorold, Godiva's press agent.

SUPERVIVA: My son, the press agent!

LEOFRIC: Your son no less, and a press agent!

THOROLD: Make with the proposition, Godiva.

LEOFRIC: What proposition? What's this about a proposition?

SUPERVIVA: Go ahead, Godiva.

GODIVA: Listen, Leofric dear: are you really a virgin vampire? I mean, that is to say, do you really have a yen for that manhattan lying low?

LEOFRIC: (*Pulling away*) What of it?

VERONICAS: Oooooo—it's all so exciting!

GODIVA: Well, I didn't have the heart to tell you before, but you see, there's a string attached.

LEOFRIC: There's a lot of lace and bodice and crinoline and girdle and leggings too.—O.K., Miss Plumply Teasing, what's the string?

(*A noisy, melodramatic snatch of trumpetry from "Les*

*Preludes*” is heard. LEOFRIC stands up to his full fearsome height. GODIVA goes down on her knees before him. SUPERVIVA, THOROLD, and VERONICAS go down on their knees. TOM goes down on his knees, supplicating before the horse’s pendant crank. TOM assumes the exact same kneeling position, angle, etc., as GODIVA.)

GODIVA: O, beneficent Leofric, good and rich, Earl of Mercia and most merciful, movable Master of Castle Coventry and O worshipful Ward of Warwickshire, O remit the heavy duty that thou hast laid upon the peasant-ric in the hereabouts, that thereby relieved they might come hither to this house and further relieve themselves. Do thou this in remembrance of thine own lecheries. We four supplicate thee, then, for this.

THE FOUR: Amen!

TOM: Ah women!

*(LEOFRIC stands motionless for a moment, puzzled. Everything hangs in suspension. He comes very slowly forward downstage. He pauses dramatically.—Then he undoes his garrison buckle, lets down his trousers, adjusts his leather shirt, and zips up his fly again and fixes his buckle.)*

THOROLD: Hey, Leofric, you wanna take that bit on tour?

SUPERVIVA: My son, the press agent!

LEOFRIC: *(The height of drama)* Ah, always and again there are strings attached! Authority is post-dated. Shall I reign forever in Mercia and never be understood? Is it too much to ask that my every decree, my every gesture be studied? How can you claim to serve me unless you comprehend the manner in which I pick up a pretzel after taking a sip of celery tonic?

TOM: *(Poking his head through the sheer curtain)* James Dean is dead!

SUPERVIVA: *(Sadly)* Ah, well, one less mouth to feed.

*(LEOFRIC walks slowly back to GODIVA and lifts her to her feet. TOM rises with the self-same motion.)*

LEOFRIC: What did you say your name was, my child?

GODIVA: Godiva.

LEOFRIC: Ah, Godiva. Lady Godiva. Then it is clear, my child, what you must do. And my duty is clear too, the demand I must make is clear. For all this was written in the mind of God and thereafter inscribed in the history books long before either of us was born. And all these things I rehearse in you that that which happens in the future may be closer to you.

TOM: Oh, go on and tell her already.

LEOFRIC: Lady Godiva:—you must

THOROLD: Ride through the market place of Coventry

VERONICAS: At high noon

TOM: On the back of this old horse

SUPERVIVA: Stark naked!

LEOFRIC: And on that condition only can I remit the tax. You see, you were right, you were all right, you of this house against itself and me:—There are always strings attached.

VERONICAS: *(Very low)* Even if it is true, gentlemen playwright don’t say so . . .

*(A long pause. Everyone on stage maintains his position a little uneasily as if not knowing what to do next; as if there were really nothing to do next.)*

LEOFRIC: *(Unsure of himself)* Godiva, lay this rhyme to thy heart, by way of consolation: When the Queen rides from her den, so, too, ride all her men.

*(Another long pause. Everyone attendant upon GODIVA’s reply.)*

GODIVA: But, good Earl, how can I possibly ride through the market place of Coventry at high noon on the bare back of that old horse when I’m stark naked? I have hemorrhoids.

LEOFRIC: Do they hurt?

GODIVA: No; but they photograph dreadfully.

*(LEOFRIC removes a small tube from his left breast pocket and gives it to GODIVA.)*

LEOFRIC: Here, use this. In case of severe, prolonged irrita-

tion, consult your physician. In case of death, discontinue use.

(GODIVA screams and faints to the floor. SUPERVIVA, THOROLD and VERONICAS rise simultaneously as she falls. THOROLD rubs his hands with juicy anticipation.)

THOROLD: The High Noon Nude Ride Of Lady Godiva—Ah! a press agent's dream!!

LEOFRIC: And now I must take my leave of this holy convent. I shall return when it is time to fulfill my half of the bargain. Adieu, O holy company.

(LEOFRIC cracks his whip and disappears. The others breathe more easily once he is gone.)

VERONICAS: Oh, my goodness, this whole thing has been so dramatic: I don't know if I can sustain the strain.

THOROLD: You've sustained more than this in your time, Veronicas, and you know it. This ain't nothing'.

SUPERVIVA: Yeah, it's nowhere. They got hotter shows every night at the Warwickshire Burlesque, and there ain't such a long build-up before they take it off, either.

(TOM comes out through the curtain with a quizzical expression.)

TOM: Is this the Coventry Convent Infirmary?

VERONICAS: (Sweetly) Yes, my good man, what can we do for you?

TOM: I have prickly heat.

(They all laugh merrily and dance about in a gavotte.)

I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy, and Yankee Doodles often die. A real live nephew of my uncle lamb, scorned on the troth of you lie!

VERONICAS: You know, for a time there on the chaise, I mean when they were really going at it, Lucky Pierre had nothing over me. What was youse two doing?

SUPERVIVA: We was having Oedipus sex, sonny and me was.

VERONICAS: (Firmly) Dinner is served!!

SUPERVIVA: That's my exit cue!

THOROLD: Mine, too. I'm fagged.

(SUPERVIVA and THOROLD bums rush each other out left.)

VERONICAS: Tom, I'm starved. For affection, that is.

TOM: And all things thereto accruing. Sister, ya only gotta ask!

(TOM and VERONICAS go out left arm in arm. For a second the stage is silent and dim over the prostrate GODIVA. Then TOM returns immediately and comes far downstage.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is the divertissement: it has nothing to do with the rest of the play, but then, divertissements seldom do. Actually, its purpose is to give the other actors time to change costumes. Basically, the divertissement is superficial—or superficially, it's basic.

(TOM clowns about briefly, his movements and manners very remindful of GODIVA's walk, gestures, movements and manners. Then he does a comic strip. His particulars remain undisclosed because he never removes the coin-exchange which dangles down over them. His efforts to remove his clothes without budging the coin-exchange should be as excruciating as they are funny. Then TOM goes upstage, permanently pulls aside one-half the sheer curtain, and mounts the horse, not as a taxi-driver this time, but rather imitating the traditional painting of Lady Godiva. He sits demurely and coyly on the horse, unless otherwise specified, from this point on until almost the end of the play.

SUPERVIVA, THOROLD, VERONICAS and LEOFRIC re-enter left, dressed as angels. They are carrying onstage an enormous ladder: this ladder is wide enough to permit two persons to stand abreast on its rungs; also, it has rungs on both feet. They huff, puff and bicker, and finally set the ladder up in the center of the stage. VERONICAS has carried several stones onstage, which she places under GODIVA's head.)

VERONICAS: Take of the stones of this place, and put them for your pillows, sweetie.

(GODIVA rises momentarily out of her faint to adjust to the

*awkward stones.)*

GODIVA: Oh, —er—much obliged.

VERONICAS: Forget it, sweetie, I get prop-man salary for that bit.

*(GODIVA falls promptly back into her faint. The others begin to mount the back foot of the ladder, one, two at a time. They caution each other to be very quiet during their ascensions, so as not to awaken GODIVA. When they reach the top of the ladder, they clumsily crawl over the top and begin descending the front foot. Then some go up and some go down, all with great difficulty, and, though they try to be serious and maintain angelic dignity, they constantly trip over each other's gowns, get in each other's ways, etc., and make a generally messy show of things. When a certain picturesqueness of position has been achieved, they all freeze and suddenly burst into deafening song. GODIVA awakes with a frightened start and beholds the vision before her.)*

ANGELS: *(Singing)*

Behold, we are with thee!  
With thee, evermore!  
Where e'er thou goest  
We're with thee most.  
Where now thou liest  
There thou shalt diest.  
Hear, what's our need:  
Spread thou thy seed.

Behold, we are with thee!  
With thee, evermore!  
Innermost and nethermost  
We are thy host.  
We'll bring thee back,  
So now hit the sack.  
We don't wanna boast—  
But we're with thee most!!

*(The NUNS' CHORUS is heard singing in the background in counterpoint to the above song.)*

CHORUS: *(Singing)*

Morning horniness!  
O, what corniness!  
That's the thorniness—  
When you awake,  
For goodness' sake—  
Morning horniness!  
Morning horniness!

*(The following repartee between the ANGELS and GODIVA should be a very rapid exchange up until the revelation.)*

GODIVA: What are you all—a band of Thespians?

VERONICAS: Lespians, did she say?

SUPERVIVA: No, my child, the males among us are saints, the females, saintesses.

GODIVA: Oh, I see.

THOROLD: Shut up: we'll do the talking. You see nothing! First of all, be advised that spontaneous outbursts of joy are banned in public:—the reason being that the Earl might pass through at any given moment and needlessly suffer his sensibilities offense.

SUPERVIVA: Pleasure is also against the law. All unauthorized pin-up girls found sitting on street curbs will be summarily picked up!

LEOFRIC: Your father was a rapist!

VERONICAS: Your ma a swinging sadist!

SUPERVIVA: What will be in 30 years? I look at you, Godiva, and I think, "What will be in 30 years?" I mean, if you don't get married soon and spawn brats, how shall it be with you in 30 years? You know what I mean, you know exactly what I mean—how shall it be with me in 30 years?

VERONICAS: We're selling subscriptions. Want to subscribe, Godiva? There's the Saturday evening post, there's the N.Y. daily post . . . most expensive is the entire weekend post, under the lamplight.

LEOFRIC: *(To SUPERVIVA's come-on)* Please, Madam, one tittie at a time.

SUPERVIVA: (*Ignoring the snub*) You see, they used to think the bomb would solve everything. So everyone got lazy. But now they've forgotten how to make atomic bombs. All the taxes that used to go into military expenditures are currently being sunk into peace projects. So I repeat, what will be in 30 years?

LEOFRIC: Make up for lost time, but do not lose present time in the process!

(SUPERVIVA *lights up another cigarette after being snubbed by LEOFRIC. Her cigarette holder gets in THOROLD's way.*)

THOROLD: Smoking again, Mother?

SUPERVIVA: Yes, Lord Raleighs. Ever notice he has balls instead of a beard?

THOROLD: Now listen carefully, Godiva: you are to be fairly forward with the angels, but within good taste, you understand? Sometimes you share a pleasanterie with them, sometimes you pinch their cheeks.

LEOFRIC: You can dye your hair in the rear.

SUPERVIVA: 30 years hath September, April, June, and November. All the rest have 31 thousand millenniums, except February, which doesn't have any days at all—and, child, it never will!!!

THOROLD: I remember, I remember, Godiva, the house where we were born. And, believe me, I've done everything possible to forget it!

GODIVA: (*Despondent, confused*) I need a new nuance. Subtleties are O.K. in their place, but there's nothing like a nuance. A really new ance-er to everything.

SUPERVIVA: It is better to make use of everyday conceptions, and get double everything rolled into one.

VERONICAS: Some prefer cottontail candy.

LEOFRIC: And some a feminized dandy.

GODIVA: (*Impatient*) Listen, I ain't got all night! It's gonna be morning soon and I'll be waking up. Do or don't all you angels have some revelation to make?

SUPERVIVA: Yes, I do—I mean, we do. And hark me well, 'cause this is plot material. Good child, Godsend Godiva, sweet babe o'mine, I am your mother!

GODIVA: You are—?

SUPERVIVA: I repeat (*belching*) I am your mother.

GODIVA: My flesh and blood mother?

SUPERVIVA: Yes, my daughter, I am your flesh and blood mother. Rock-a-bye baby.

GODIVA: How am I to accept that?

SUPERVIVA: What's so hard to accept? Angelic revelations have contained much more shocking information—from time to time.

THOROLD: And I, therefore, good Godiva, am your brother. Your flesh and blood brother.

GODIVA: Well, that would follow logically.

LEOFRIC: Do not fret so, Godiva. Remember, an epiphany is just one god's opinion.

GODIVA: True. But that won't save me from the pickle this one puts me in. According to this play, Thorold is my brother. And Mother Superviva is my real mother. Waking or dreaming, there's no wiggling out of that.

SUPERVIVA: Ah, what a dutiful daughter! I knew she wouldn't deny her own mother. You see!

THOROLD: Or her mother and brother's request that she ride nude through Coventry. Or would she?

LEOFRIC: Well, Godiva, are you now willing to make your historic ride? Or do you have some legitimately defensible position from which to object to it?

GODIVA: It's hard to say where I want to divide the legitimately defensible position from my neurosis—although these days who could divide the two?

SUPERVIVA: My poor neurotic daughter! Hasn't your shrinker been of any help? Godivy, I do hope you're perfectly frank with your shrinker.

GODIVA: (*Shocked*) Really, mother—I try to keep our conversations on a high level at all times!

ANGELS: (*Singing*)

Godiva! Godiva! Godiva!  
Naughty nudie on a horse,  
Lovely limbed but slightly coarse,  
There's no warrant for remorse—  
We thy gallop strong endorse:  
So do what must be done  
And, doing so, have fun!

GODIVA: I will, but what is it that really must be done?

ANGELS: *(Singing)*

Strip thyself of earthly dress:  
 Topless gown we doubly bless:  
 Angels at thy acquiesce  
 Shalt thy nakedness caress!  
 Then do what must be done  
 And, doing so, have fun!

GODIVA: If God will be with me, and will keep me in this ride that I go, and will give me hair to hide, and raiment to put off, so that I come again to my mother's house a piece; then shall the Lord be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that she my mother shall give me I will surely give the tenth unto Him.

VERONICAS: I take it she's gonna ride.

SUPERVIVA: Well, that's a weight off my chest!

ANGELS: *(Singing)*

She'll ride! She'll ride!  
 Hath thus decide  
 For mother's hyde!  
 So dignified  
 A horse bestride,  
 If Leofric's lied,  
 Then matricide—  
 Godiva tried—  
 Is justified!

GODIVA: *(Singing)*

I'll ride! I'll ride!  
 Though tits collide  
 And legs divide,  
 I'm purified—  
 Or mother chide.

ANGELS, GODIVA, and CHORUS: *(Singing)*

Then naked, naked ride  
 Thou daughter mother's bride!  
 For naught remains to hide:  
 Betrothal now abide.

THOROLD: Well, that's over with!

LEOFRIC: And the name of this city called Luz at the first, shall hereafter be called Death-el, Where She Rode, Arizona.

VERONICAS: Wonder how Tom's making out?

*(LEOFRIC comes up behind SUPERVIVA on the ladder and pushes her falsies practically up to her neck.)*

SUPERVIVA: Oh! I'm up to my chin in troubles!

*(One of SUPERVIVA's falsies falls out onto the floor.)*

GODIVA: You dropped a line, mother.

LEOFRIC: One could do worse than be a swinger of tits.

SUPERVIVA: *(To LEOFRIC)* Hey, could you change your rung?—you smell.

LEOFRIC: Sorry, madam, just having some fun, that foreign word.

SUPERVIVA: Well, go somewhere foreign and have it, if you don't mind. *(She pulls out the other falsie and casts it off, begins to descend the ladder toward GODIVA.)* I'm changing my channel, baby!!

*(The ANGELS descend the ladder singing the last chorus, "Then naked, naked ride," over and again. SUPERVIVA advances menacingly toward GODIVA, divesting herself as she does, first of the angel's garb and, after that, of the nun's habit. TOM and GODIVA are both very frightened by this. Finally, SUPERVIVA stands revealed as a man. The others stop singing for a moment.)*

GODIVA: Why, Mother, are you making overtures?

SUPERVIVA: *(Deep masculine voice)* No, daughter, I'm going right into the first movement!

*(THOROLD, VERONICAS, LEOFRIC and the CHORUS resume singing "Then naked, naked ride." SUPERVIVA seizes GODIVA and throws her to the floor. TOM falls to the floor by the horse in the self-same moment. SUPERVIVA falls on top of GODIVA and rapes her. LEOFRIC whips VERONICAS with his whip; she screams and rushes out left, still singing. LEOFRIC turns and whips THOROLD.)*

THOROLD: Shit! I wish this were a different play—like

Shakespeare or something!

LEOFRIC: (*Whipping him*) Shakespeare?!—he belongs to the ages.

THOROLD: (*In pain*) Yeah—and this is one of them!

(TOM writhes on the floor by the horse as if being ravished. VERONICAS *re-enters left carrying a dressing-screen which she places in front of the recumbent SUPERVIVA and GODIVA to hide them from the audience. But nothing hides TOM's ignominy.*)

VERONICAS: Enough of the sordid details. Some people have no modesty. We'll ban this scene to take the worry out of being close.

THOROLD: (*Ducking the whip*) Kindly desist, I beg of you, my noble Earl! I don't think you realize just how civil-minded I am!

LEOFRIC: Ha-ha! Don't you enjoy my kind of person?

THOROLD: Certainly—but you're the kind who's good in well-spaced doses!

LEOFRIC: (*Holding up contraceptives*) Sale on contraceptives! Contraceptives for sale! Soiled! Second-hand! Syphilitic! With holes punched in them!

(LEOFRIC *laughs demoniacally and tosses the contraceptives behind the dressing-screen. Then he cracks his whip and whips THOROLD into lifting up the ladder and bearing it off stage-right. LEOFRIC, laughing evilly all the time, follows THOROLD out at right. VERONICAS is excited by all the goings on and rushes about the stage irrationally.*)

VERONICAS: Mississippi dyke attacked by waves! Watch out for flying spumes! (*She spits at the audience.*)—Spumes as many as the virginities that get lost at Niagara Falls!! (*She is pensive for a second, points to the screen.*) I'm supposed to cry throughout this whole scene . . . dreadful scene, dreadful scene!

(VERONICAS *checks out the writhing TOM, spins about, and slips out left. The singing of the CHORUS lowers dramatically and slowly fades out. A second of silence, and then GODIVA appears from behind the dressing-screen.*)

*She is bedraggled, her dress completely twisted, her hair-do all undone. She is weeping. TOM rises, messy and worn, and remounts the horse.*)

GODIVA: Ah, all these years and this long life spent at nothing but an attempt to avoid that. That!—It was to avert just that, that congress, to sidetrack *her*, that I turned to prostitution! To love with all and thus love none, no single one; to love not—with *her*! And how has it profited me?

(GODIVA *and TOM dry their tears. VERONICAS comes bouncing back in nun's habit, carrying a wig long enough to hang down to the floor. GODIVA does not turn to face her.*)

VERONICAS: But you do love all, Lady Godiva, you do wish to demonstrate your love for all. That is why you will take this nude ride.

GODIVA: Will I?

VERONICAS: Won't you? To save the people? I mean, isn't that what you want to do, Godiva?

GODIVA: That vision of angels got me so mixed up, I almost thought I knew what I wanted. But it is nice to have known once what you were doing, and to no longer now . . .

(GODIVA *submits stoically while VERONICAS adjusts the long yellow wig over her head. It flutes stiffly against her back.*)

VERONICAS: (*Very satisfied*) A perfect fit—and so stylish, too! So arty-farty!

GODIVA: Where'd you commondear this rug? Wigs—how I hate them! They make you look ten years younger, and feel ten older.

VERONICAS: (*Stepping out of character into the actress that she really is*) I am the rug-maker's daughter! Don't laugh—just think whose daughter you are!

GODIVA: (*Stepping out of character into the actress she really is*) For years the public has clammered to see more of me. This play answers their request!

(*At this point, the NUNS' CHORUS enters from behind the*



*dressings-screen, a chorus line of Rockettes of sorts. They are each wearing a floor-length wig over their nun's habits. The wigs so completely cover them, only a single eye of each is visible; this somewhat impedes their attempts at graceful movement. GODIVA turns toward them in surprise.)*

CHORUS: (*Brooklyn accents*) We hoid our cue.

GODIVA: What are they—male or female?

VERONICAS: If you can't tell, they ain't for you.

*(The striptease music starts and GODIVA and the CHORUS get in line ready to begin. VERONICAS stands aside watching.)*

TOM: Hum. Her mother must be real proud of her now.

*(GODIVA sings, and talks where indicated, this burlesque number, the CHORUS dances in the background. GODIVA strips slowly as she sings; when she has finished her number, she is nude except for the long yellow draping wig.)*

GODIVA: (*Singing*) Welcome to Boston!

Shoppin' for the brand of boy  
Partial to the type of toy  
That Mama wants to give him on his birth-  
day . . .

I used to date those college guys  
That had their heads up in the skies,  
The kind that never used their eyes,  
Forgot to zipper up their flies:

You gotta get your feet on earth—  
Come down off that upper berth,  
Believe me, College Joe, you'll find  
A lot of worth in this girl's girth!

Hunters hanker after deer,  
Go great lengths and know no fear,  
But that healthy outdoor type

Never shot my home-cooked tripe.

Businessmen go ape for money,  
Got no time to suckle honey,  
Nothin's wrong with heaps of dough—  
Except there are other heaps, you know:

CHORUS: (*Singing*)

Like that extra pound  
So long as it's around  
That certain place  
—ain't ever outta place!

GODIVA: I mean, I used to wear these expensive off-the-shoulders type gowns: well, I been in a lot of parked cars in my day—and nobody ever nibbled on my shoulders!

Then there is the muscle man  
Liftin' all the weights he can,  
Workin' out in some hot gym—  
Wastin' weights I've got for him.

Other fellas fancy poker,  
Spend the night in smoky dens,  
Leaving me at a loss to stoker  
Up my fire with a poker.

What kind of a guy would I like to spend the evening with in front of my fireplace?—oh, any really manly type—like Rock Hudson, Rip Torn, Ed Fury, Chuck Steak, or Stark Naked.

Yeah, I'm shoppin' round and lookin'  
For the fella likes home cookin',  
For the boy who knows what's best:  
Leg o' lamb, chicken breast.

Yeah, I've got a certain kind,  
Special brand of boy in mind—  
Just that homey type inclined,

Feelin' here and there, to find

CHORUS: (*Singing*)

That that extra pound  
So long as it's around  
That certain place  
—ain't ever outta place!

GODIVA: And you better believe it:—I ain't the Singin' Nun!

TOM: Well, well. She acquitted herself professionally.

VERONICAS: Will you be getting any money for your ride,  
Lady Godiva?

GODIVA: (*Tough, resuming her Brooklyn accent at this point*) No:—I'm dong it for the exposure.

VERONICAS: (*As in an Elizabethan play*) Soft you now: here comes Thorold, the press agent.

(*THOROLD enters from the right; he is dressed as the Sheriff once again, but with a press agent's hat on.*)

THOROLD: Ah! Lady Godiva:—she keeps a tired businessman awake. Hey! how come you got so much hair?

GODIVA: I'm retentive.—Is that the nag I'm supposed to ride?  
(*Indicating the wooden horse.*)

THOROLD: Yes. Its name is "Vehicle." A vehicle well suited to your burlesque charms.

GODIVA: "Vehicle," huh? Is it male or female?

THOROLD: Kneel, my child, and know.

GODIVA: Skip the religious bit:—I had this convent pegged for what it is from the start.

THOROLD: Why, Godiva, how could you speak so lightly of this establishment? Why, this is holy Coventry Convent.

GODIVA: More likely Coventry Convention, and not so holy. O.K., O.K., get the nag ready and let's get this show on the road.

THOROLD: Wait a minute, hold your horses:—I must announce you first. If you please, Madam.

(*Lights, a flourish, dramatic effects, the CHORUS quivering together, VERONICAS expectant, GODIVA very impatient.*)

Ladies and Gentleman! Presenting for the first time on any

stage and live before your startled eyes:—"The Life Of Lady Godiva," a curtain raiser . . . A difficult subject, handled with delicacy and taste. And relish.

TOM: Hubba, hubba!

(*A flourish, etc., GODIVA moving whorishly toward the horse. Suddenly SUPERVIVA re-enters left on the arm of LEOFRIC. He is once again in his sado-masochist leather garb and is carrying his whip. SUPERVIVA is all done up like the opera Delilah. She carries a huge pair of shears. She and LEOFRIC are laughing like well-healed lovers. All movement stops and focuses on them. SUPERVIVA flexes the shears.*)

LEOFRIC: And then what happened?

SUPERVIVA: (*Laughing*) Then when?

LEOFRIC: When you demanded of her that she go through with her historic ride.

(*SUPERVIVA moves up to the NUNS' CHORUS as she speaks and begins cutting off their wigs, one by one, as if it were the most natural action in the world. The CHORUS line is too startled to defend itself adequately. Her physical masculine power overcomes each objector and her cries to desist.*)

SUPERVIVA: Well, it was very much like Greek tragedy, you understand, what with the audience knowing the whole story in advance and all, and just sticking around to see *how* it would all come off, being all along well advised, of course, of *what* was coming off. It's all in the "how," not the "what." I.e., not the "what" am I, but the "how" am I, the "how I live." But then, you see, with Lady Godiva of Coventry, one of history's sexsational heroines, the Eternal Woman, etcetera, etcetera, that need to have her personally love us, personally love me, shall never really be fulfilled. Clip, clip. Ah, yes, it is an imaginary perfection, however ardently sought, amongst our quotidian imperfections . . .

(*The CHORUS is scattered in outraged bewilderment. Their*

wigs, totally sheared, fall in heaps to the floor. SUPERVIVA surveys her work with satisfaction. Then she advances toward GODIVA with the awning shears extended menacingly.)

GODIVA: (*Resuming her natural voice*) Who are you?

SUPERVIVA: I am Delilah—history's first female barber, and the Queen Bee of castration ladies.

GODIVA: I have submitted to you in everything. You turn your shears on me without provocation!

SUPERVIVA: Your cloaking, protective tresses are provocation enough, my child. Accept my apologies and kindly submit.

GODIVA: I do not like apologies. And I do not like the instances that necessitate them.

SUPERVIVA: Come, come, the morn shows the day, young harlot. You'll swim as well as Aquanetta soon as I've pared away your hindrances.

GODIVA: So—there are necrophiliacs in the tombs!

(GODIVA steps back with unexpected quickness and wrests the whip out of LEOFRIC's hand. She holds off SUPERVIVA, threateningly. The others all freeze where they are.)

SUPERVIVA: Who are you?

GODIVA: I am she who has policed her own ambitions, Mother. I am the corpse you had in mind.

SUPERVIVA: What an active cadaver! Leofric—protect me!

LEOFRIC: I beg your pardon?

SUPERVIVA: I said protect me, defend me from that monster!

GODIVA: Of your filial making!

LEOFRIC: What did you say, Delilah?

SUPERVIVA: Don't you speak British, Earl Leofric, don't you understand me? (*Very frightened, rushing from one to the other.*) Thorold, you, my son, help me!!

THOROLD: What did you say, Delilah?

SUPERVIVA: Can't you comprehend me, either?

THOROLD: No, I can't. But I think you're repeating (*belching*) yourself.

SUPERVIVA: Sister Veronicas, Leofric—

LEOFRIC: Please, Superviva, words are an art form. Stop

trying to use them to communicate with.

SUPERVIVA (*Desperate*) Thorold! what should I do?

THOROLD: Look demure and coy, such is always effective when there are no appropriate stage directions.

VERONICAS: Or try snubbing everyone. That usually goes over in a pinch.

SUPERVIVA: (*Frantic, with GODIVA advancing on her*) Will nobody rescue me? I, who am the mother of all? Don't I get out of this tight spot?

LEOFRIC: I'm afraid you don't.

SUPERVIVA: That's funny: my friends never seem to read the same history books I do.

(GODIVA cracks the whip and knocks the shears from out of SUPERVIVA's hand. SUPERVIVA trembles in dread.)

GODIVA: Your poetry is minor, Mother, your hang-ups major! All products to the test of market now!

SUPERVIVA: But, Godiva, think about tomorrow!

GODIVA: Why should I? Tomorrow never thought about me!

SUPERVIVA: You idiots, you ungrateful bastards, all of you! World War Three will teach you all a lesson . . .

(GODIVA whips SUPERVIVA and pushes her down to the floor on her hands and knees. The others do not move.)

GODIVA: In dreams the stopped blood of February has already begun mulling over the changing fashions of madness . . . Tally-ho! •

(GODIVA cracks the whip again and mounts SUPERVIVA's back as if she were a horse.)

SUPERVIVA: Godiva, think of what you're doing, think of the commitment you're making! You may have to live the rest of your life like this!

GODIVA: Mother, you may have to live the rest of your life.

SUPERVIVA: (*Crying*) Godiva, my child, my dearling daughter, have you no mercy for she who gave you birth? You are my flesh and blood daughter!

GODIVA: What do you mean your daughter? Have you ever

seen me for the thing I was, stood to the side of the thing I am? What am I ever but a dream of you, fantasy versions of your own self, your projects down-decade projected and utterly minimized? I am fenced in the claustrophobic saddle of your back, like the whole wide world on the shell of a tortoise—you have never provided another place in your imagination for me to exist.

(*A flourish. THOROLD rushes up to GODIVA and gives her a riding stick.*)

THOROLD: Presenting Lady Godiva of Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Worchestershire, and Newark—New Jersey! Lady Godiva rides nude at high noon! Turn up the lights, will you? Full house lights on for high noon—let nothing, not a single detail be hidden!

(*The stage lights go up to their full brilliance. GODIVA stabs SUPERVIVA's side with the riding stick and begins to prod her into moving off as if she were a horse.*)

LEOFRIC: Godiva atop her named terrors, and by this act becomes she an adult.

(*TOM, with his special Peeping-Tom prongs and instruments, pries aside the sheer curtain and peers at the riding GODIVA.*)

TOM: (*In Mexican accent*) Hubba, hubba!

LEOFRIC: Who are you?

TOM: I am Tom, the Peeping Tom. *The Peeping Tom* of history, if you please. A voyeur, to you.

LEOFRIC: What does that mean?

TOM: (*Peering through a telescope*) Voyeurism?—Oh, it's a sitting back and watching proposition. A watching of yourself.

LEOFRIC: But you're playing the Peeping Tom on Lady Godiva.

TOM: So? If I'm watching her, she and I are the same person really. Ah! hubba, hubba! I mean, aren't we? I mean—that's me out there on the horse and I'm back here by the horse, not responsible at all, you see, but responsible of all,

you see, an audience, a Godiva, of sorts.

VERONICAS: (*Cobbling the shoes*) He don't make horse-sense.

THOROLD: Forget him, Leofric, he's just a brutish, imbecilic cabbie.

TOM: Hey, Leofric, how does this plot wind up, anyhow?

LEOFRIC: It winds up tragically. Despite her naked ride through Coventry at high noon, I never remit the tax.

THOROLD: You don't?—A bit of leather, aren't you, Earl Leofric? S-M at the fringes.

TOM: Bastard!

(*At this point, the end of "Les Preludes" begins to play. The NUNS' CHORUS re-enters slowly from the left and slowly moves toward the right. There is something suggestive of riding movement in their steps. VERONICAS, frantically cobbling the soles of the shoes, at last completes her work. She rushes up to GODIVA and fits them on her bare feet.*)

VERONICAS: Lady Godiva, my martyred child, your oxfords are finally fixed. There, dear, that's it—so you won't be completely naked!

GODIVA: (*Sadly*) Thank you, Sister Veronicas. The only article I don't need, since I'm riding. Someday, have faith, Sister Veronicas, and pornography will be accepted. (*Smiling slightly.*) But nudity shall never be understood.

(*"Les Preludes" whelms up to a full blast.*)

GODIVA: Giddyup! Giddyup!

(*GODIVA rides SUPERVIVA out right with the NUNS' CHORUS following; TOM peeping with delight.*)

END