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Dramatic Publishing

35 in 10

Thirty-Five Ten-Minute Plays

Compiled and Edited

by

KENT R. BROWN

This excerpt contains strong language
and sexual references.



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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35 in 10

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DOUBLE MANDIBLE

By
Julie Jensen

© 2001 by Julie Jensen

Double Mandible (originally entitled **Water Lilies**) was commissioned by Salt Lake Acting Company in 2001. It appeared on a bill with ten other short plays by Utah writers, produced January 24, 2002, as part of the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics. It also appeared in a volume of plays entitled *Cabbies, Cowboys and the Tree of the Weeping Virgin*, privately published, to commemorate Salt Lake Acting Company's contribution to the Olympic celebration.

CHARACTERS

BETTY: An enthusiastic, yet nervous water ballerina.
Twin to Bella.

BELLA: A desultory, long-suffering water ballerina. Twin to Betty.

SETTING: The pool at the Olympics. The in-water segments should be performed behind a shoulder-high curtain. Mannequin legs can be used for some of the water ballet stunts.

COSTUMES: Both actors are dressed exactly alike: swimming suits, nose plugs, lots of makeup and lacquered hair. Each of them should also wear a large waterlily on top of her head.

DOUBLE MANDIBLE

AT THE CURTAIN: *It is a dark stage. SPOTLIGHT on BETTY. She is in front of a microphone.*

Part I: Before Competition

BETTY (*to AUDIENCE*). Many people have asked me, “What is it with this water ballet?” And I am proud to answer. Water ballet has made America great. For example, water ballet incorporates all other sports—water sports and artistry sports. Go ahead, step right up, name any sport, any sport at all, and water ballet will incorporate some of its features.

BELLA (*off*). Weightlifting.

BETTY (*to AUDIENCE, as if someone in the house answered*). Weightlifting. Yes!

BELLA (*off*). Marathon running.

BETTY (*again, as if another person in the house answered*). Marathon running. Yes!

BELLA (*off*). Greco Roman wrestling.

BETTY (*to AUDIENCE*). Greco Roman wrestling. *Yes!*
You see what I mean!

(BELLA enters. She is carrying some gear.)

BELLA (*to AUDIENCE*). That is my sister. She has a reputation for intensity.

BETTY (*to AUDIENCE*). ...What is more, ladies and gentlemen, water ballet is also the *first* art form. Before

there was ground ballet, there was water ballet. But even before that. Before the human race walked on two legs, there was water ballet. Swimming around in the primordial ooze, there was water ballet. The little mermaids and the little mermen, no feet, just fins. They had water ballet.

BELLA (*to AUDIENCE*). As you can tell, my sister is known for her passionate defense of her career. Our career.

BETTY (*to AUDIENCE*). ...In conclusion, my fellow Americans, may I add the following: water ballet is not the thing that separates us from the animal kingdom, no, it is the thing that connects us to it. Thank you so very much. (*BETTY curtsies.*) Oh, and one more thing. I'm proud to be a waterlily. Proud, proud, proud.

(*SPOTLIGHT out. BELLA claps. LIGHTS up.*)

BETTY. Bella, for the love of Jesus, where have you been?

BELLA. I went to a movie.

BETTY. And left me to do the entire press corps by myself.

BELLA. I had to get my mind off things.

BETTY. You also missed our morning practice.

BELLA. No I didn't. I was at practice for the next part of my life.

BETTY. Bella! *This is the Olympics!*

BELLA. I had to get my mind off it.

BETTY. We are going to fail to medal because of you.

CLASSYASS

By

Caleen Sinnette Jennings

© 2000 by Caleen Sinnette Jennings

Classyass premiered in 2002 in Actors Theatre of Louisville's 26th Annual Humana Festival of New American Plays. Timothy Douglas was dramaturg. The play was directed by Rajendra Ramoon Maharaj, and featured Jason Cornwell, Nikki E. Walker and Robert Beitzel.

CHARACTERS

AMA (or AMADEUS): Black college freshman.

BIG B (or BELINDA): Black woman, 20, dressed like a street person.

MILES: White college senior and radio-station manager.

SETTING: A small room that serves as a modest campus radio studio at Bellmore College.

TIME: The present. Early morning.

CLASSYASS

AT THE CURTAIN: *AMA speaks into the microphone with a suave broadcaster's voice.*

AMA. Okay Bellmore boneheads. That was Tchaichovsky's "1812 Overture." Bet those cannons busted a couple of you dozers. Perfect for 3:47 on a cold, rainy Thursday in finals week. It's the end of time at the end of the line. Study on, people. Bang out papers. Cram the facts. Justify that exorbitant tuition and make Bellmore College proud. *I'm feeling y'all!* Especially those of you studying for Calc 801 with Professor Cobb. Call me if you have a clue about question #3 on page 551. You're listening to Casual Classics, because you don't have to be uptight and white to love classical music! This is WBMR the radio station of Bellmore College. Miles Morgan is your station manager. I'm Ama, Amadeus Waddlington with you until six a.m. Guzzle that warm Red Bull and cold Maxwell House. Here's music to squeeze your brains by. It's Dvorjak's "New World Symphony" comin' atcha. *(He puts on the CD, grabs a beer and a huge textbook and sprawls out on the floor. A bold knock interrupts him. He shouts.)* Go to hell, Miles. I like "New World"! *(Another knock.)* Okay, okay. I'll play Beethoven's Symphony #1 next. Lots of strings, okay? *(Persistent knocking.)* Damn!

(AMA strides to the door and opens it. BIG B strides in, carrying shopping bags and waving several faxes.)

BIG B. You messed up, boy!
AMA. Excuse me?
BIG B. And your smart-assed faxes made it worse!
AMA. Do I know you?
BIG B (*examining the mike and CDs*). I want a public apology.
AMA. Don't touch that. Listen, whoever you are...
BIG B. Whomever!
AMA. Whatever!
BIG B. You ain't got a clue who I am.
AMA. A fabulous person, no doubt, but you've got to go. This is a classical music show and I've got a killer calc final...
BIG B. Color me compassionate. You're shorter than I thought. But I figured right about you being a dumbass. I told you right here...
(*BIG B shows AMA the faxes and he realizes who she is.*)
AMA. Oh my God...you're...Big B! I thought you were...
BIG B. ...a brother. I know, 'cause I ain't hearing none of your bullshit. Well, I thought you was a white boy, and I was right.
AMA. Look, I don't know what you want...
BIG B. How long I been faxing you, moron? You said the "Gloria" was by Faure...
AMA. I told you one thousand faxes ago, "Gloria" is by Poulenc, and when I played it, I said Poulenc...
BIG B. ...Faure!
AMA. ...Poulenc!
BIG B. I know what I heard, you arrogant shithead.

A MUSTACHE AND A MATTRESS

By
Nancy Gall-Clayton

© 2002 by Nancy Gall-Clayton

A Mustache and a Mattress was first produced in 2001 by Love Creek Productions at the Creative Place Theatre in New York City.

CHARACTERS

ROSIE: A shopper, a woman with a mission.

BURT: A mustachioed man, also with a mission.

SETTING: A store. A mattress with a sign reading “Special” placed next to it.

TIME: The present.

A MUSTACHE AND A MATTRESS

AT THE CURTAIN: *ROSIE enters, sees the sign, and makes a delighted little gesture. She goes to the mattress, touches it, traces the pattern, looks around to make sure she's not being observed, and leans down to touch her face to the mattress. She looks at the tag, drops her pocketbook on the mattress, and quickly descends to check the "bounce factor." She is investigating this mattress every way but lying on it when BURT strolls in. ROSIE is so engaged she doesn't notice.*

BURT. Thinking of a new mattress?

ROSIE. Oh! Hello.

BURT. Thinking of a new mattress?

ROSIE. Thinking of a new person.

BURT. When it comes to mattresses—

ROSIE. It has come to mattresses.

BURT. And you've come to the best mattress store in town.

ROSIE. Your...uh...mustache.

BURT. You need a new mattress?

ROSIE. Yes, he's staying the weekend. What a beautiful mus—

BURT. For the new man.

ROSIE. No, no, not new.

BURT. Right, but he's staying the weekend. This weekend?

ROSIE. Yes, but—

BURT. Under your roof.

ROSIE. Under your nose is the most glorious mustache.

BURT. A new man is staying the weekend under your roof? You need a mattress, and we have an excellent one on special.

ROSIE. Not under my sheets, you understand. Well, they're my sheets, of course, but not *my* sheets. When did you start growing your—

BURT. A light sleeper? A man who tosses and turns? A man who stretches out? A tall man?

ROSIE. Yes, but not a new man.

BURT. An old man? Your grandfather perhaps?

ROSIE. Not exactly. How long have you had that mustache? If I may ask.

BURT. My whole life. This mattress has a lifetime warranty.

ROSIE. Absurd. The mustache, I mean. Not *the* mustache, the “mustache for life” comment.

BURT. Since puberty, I've had it since puberty. The mustache, I mean.

ROSIE. You've never cut it?

BURT. Trimmed, yes. Cut, no. A complimentary pad comes with this particular mattress. Quilted. Satin. Your choice of three colors.

ROSIE. Is it religious, Burt? I may call you “Burt,” may I not? It's on your name tag in big navy blue curlicue letters like your you-know-what. It's not a secret or anything, is it?

BURT. I'm Burt.

ROSIE. I'm Rosie. Is it religious?

BURT. My mustache?

ROSIE. Certain religions don't believe in hair cutting.

BURT. I trim it.

JUMPERS AND SPINNERS

By
Bruce Post

© 1996 by Bruce Post

Jumpers and Spinners was first heard at the Westbeth Theatre in New York City in 1996.

CHARACTERS

JOE: A guy.

PETE: Another guy.

SETTING: A lunch break.

TIME: The present.

JUMPERS AND SPINNERS

AT THE CURTAIN: *JOE and PETE sit on a log, eating lunch.*

JOE. Is that all you got? A hot dog?

PETE. I only had three dollars.

JOE. You need a job.

PETE. I had a job until you took it from me.

JOE. Not my fault you got fired.

PETE. I'm still hungry. Let me have some of those chips.

JOE. So I left the post office. You know that road? It's like a cart path. I'm wearing my shades it's still early June and it's bright, the trees haven't all filled in yet. I feel this...I don't know, presence, a bug presence maybe, what does it feel like, something drops on my leg, I'm wearing shorts and sneakers no socks it's hot out, I look down but I can't really see I got sunglasses on but I see something I don't like. I push the glasses on to my forehead and I look down and my heart does a somersault there's the biggest damned ugliest scariest spider on my leg. It's so big it's got fur. Big as a mouse and furry and meaty and I freak. I almost kill myself driving off the road into a ditch. I swat the thing and yank the car over right there and I gotta get out of the car so I jump out and hop up and down the car's running I don't have the emergency brake on and I'm waving my arms like a lunatic brushing all over my body because I can't see the damn thing and I got the heebie-jeebies and I can feel bugs all over. Just my

luck this cop comes by he wants to know why I'm jumping up and down in the road and my car's in a ditch. I tell him. He looks at me like maybe I'm way too stressed about all this but at the same time he doesn't really want to get involved. I'm a grown man I can kill my own demons he says good luck and off he goes. I'm alone with the beast. I can't bring myself to get back in the car with that thing.

PETE. Some chips?

JOE. You can have a few.

PETE. What kind of spider?

JOE. I don't know.

PETE. Probably a wood spider. They're pretty aggressive.

JOE. It was a big spider, that's what it was. All I know the paper's had these articles about nasty spiders coming from Missouri, or Texas, some big-ass place where they ride herd on the bugs and a couple people been bit and the doctors can't confirm the spider 'til they see the corpse and nobody's got anything but what they saw. And the bite can be fatal! Not so much on an adult but sure a kid could die from it and adults get real sick.

PETE. What color was it?

JOE. It was many colors. Its fur was brown and its nose was black...

PETE. It's nose?

JOE. ...it looks like, you know what color, it was like those uniforms they wore over to Saudi Arabia for Desert Storm, sure, that's what color.

PETE. Somebody told me wood spiders don't bite. They drill a hole in your flesh and lay eggs.

FILM NOIR

By
Bathsheba Doran

© 2005 by Bathsheba Doran

Film Noir was produced in 2004 by Point B at the Blue Heron Arts Centre in New York City as part of “States of Undress: An Evening of Ten-Minute Bedroom Plays.”

CHARACTERS

WOMAN:

The classic guy and girl from film noir—
The Maltese Falcon look.

MAN:

AUTHOR’S NOTES: This play was inspired by film noir of the 1940s. When writing it, I saw movement against those filmic locations—a rainy street under a lamppost, a private dick’s office, a nightclub. The play is also about the limitations of roles, for actors and, relatedly, for men and women. In some ways, therefore, the play seems to take place on a film set and in a bedroom.

I do not specify any one of these locations, but encourage a non-realistic design that allows an audience to experience the piece on a number of levels, and affords the actors the possibility of moving through different spaces during the performance. At the very opening, however, the evocation of classic 1940s film noir should be absolutely clear, at least from the costuming.

Finally, above all, we are in a theater. While I specify no particular places in the text, the actors should play with addressing some lines to the audience, as well as to each other.

FILM NOIR

WOMAN. What'cha doin' under that lamppost?

GUY. Thinkin'.

WOMAN. About what?

GUY. 'Bout how sordid the underground is. Gambling, gangsters, women who'll destroy you to get at their husband's money.

WOMAN. You wanna light my cigarette? (*He does.*)

GUY. Nice stems.

WOMAN. I grew them myself.

GUY. I gave birth to the rain. I looked up at the weather and it didn't suit my mood, so I thought of rain.

WOMAN. I thought of stockings. I thought of what a man would want to see on my legs if he wanted to come between them. I thought of the hair I hadn't shaved off them. And then I thought of stockings. (*A beat.*)

GUY. You want to fight?

WOMAN. You want to fight and fuck?

GUY. You wanna solve a crime?

WOMAN. You want me guilty at the end or innocent? Or retrospectively understood?

GUY. How 'bout I'm jealous.

WOMAN. How 'bout it's my fault.

GUY. And mine.

WOMAN. Yeah, I play around 'cause you treat me like shit.

GUY. It beats pizza. (*A beat.*)

CHIAROSCURO

By
Lisa Dillman

© 1998 by Lisa Dillman

Chiaroscuro was commissioned and first produced in 1998 by Chicago's Rivendell Theatre Ensemble for its ten-minute play festival "Mommopalooza: Short Takes on Mom." It was a finalist for the 1999 Actors Theatre of Louisville National Ten-Minute Play Contest.

CHARACTERS

JEN: A daughter.

MOTHER: Jen's.

The characters can be played by a young woman and a middle-aged woman; a middle-aged woman and an older woman; or two middle-aged women.

SETTING: Ideally, the action should take place in empty space full of light and shadow, with specific lighting cues serving to enhance some of the transitions.

TIME: The present.

CHIAROSCURO

AT THE CURTAIN: *LIGHTS* come up revealing JEN and MOTHER on opposite sides of the playing area.

JEN. In the beginning. A woman with red, red lipstick and a voice full of jumps and trills and wonder tells me story after story night after night.

MOTHER. "...Soon the princess came to a clearing in the woods. And there, hunched upon a craggy stump, sat a gnome of questionable breeding. He had a wart the size of an egg on the tip of his nose and he was hairy from top to toe. Some might call him matted. He took one look at our princess and found her so enticing that for a moment he was tempted *not* to put a curse on her. But alas! Evil gnome tradition won the day. 'Oh, thou pretty aimless wench. Sit ye on my splintery bench. Bethink all words ye've spake before. From this day on ye'll speak no more.' "

JEN. Later... She and my stepfather yak away all through dinner—their conversations, their *banter* erupting out of them, surging, blasting, spluttering. They warble. They chortle. They tease. They research and excavate each other's day. Words are king and queen and the rest of the royal family too. Words are the real food; what's on their plates is just an excuse. During a pause that many wouldn't recognize as such, I break in. "Hey, what's that? What's *chiaroscuro*?" They look perplexed for a moment— Did you just hear something?

A CHANGE OF PACE

By
Edward Pomerantz

© 1974 by Edward Pomerantz

A Change of Pace first appeared in *Ms* magazine in 1974 and had its first production at the Déjà vu Playhouse in Hollywood, Calif., in 1985. It was directed by Raymond Cole, and featured Shannon Sullivan and David Hunt Stafford. Subsequent readings of the play have been performed at Food for Thought, the dramatic reading series at the National Arts Club in New York City, featuring Daniel McDonald and four different actresses—Judith Light, Marlo Thomas, Barbara Feldon and Betty Buckley.

CHARACTERS

JERRY:

An attractive couple in their 40s.

MARGO:

SETTING: A bedroom.

TIME: The present.

A CHANGE OF PACE

AT THE CURTAIN: *JERRY and MARGO are lying in bed in each other's arms. After a while:*

JERRY. Margo?

MARGO (*sleepily*). Mmmmmm?

JERRY. You still up?

MARGO (*muttering*). What is it?

JERRY. Nothing...I was just lying here thinking... (*Pause.*) Have you ever cheated on me? (*MARGO doesn't answer. We listen to her breathing.*) I mean... what right have I to assume you haven't? What right have I to be so sure of you? Especially now... Back to school after all these years...your whole life centered around the kids...around the house...around me. You must be coming into contact with all kinds of new people...all kinds of opportunities. (*Pause.*) ...Are you?

MARGO (*in her sleep*). Am I what?

JERRY. Meeting new people... Having an affair.

MARGO (*turning over, making herself comfortable*). I'll tell you in the morning.

(*She goes to sleep. JERRY looks at her, then to himself.*)

JERRY. Some English professor who's told you you have a talent for writing...a profound understanding of the human heart. Some kid...with a tattoo and an earring in his nipple—who punctuates your every word, your every breath with wow...and cool...and like that's really deep, man. (*A sigh.*) Well, it was inevitable, I guess.

MA IN HER KERCHIEF

By
Janet Kenney

© 2005 by Janet Kenney

Ma in Her Kerchief was originally produced at The 6th Annual Boston Theatre Marathon, Boston Playwrights' Theatre, Boston, Mass., in 2004. It was directed by Susan Kosoff, and featured Kippy Goldfarb and Helen McElwain.

CHARACTERS

ANDREA: A newly married woman in her 20s.

RUTH: Andrea's mother-in-law, late 50s or so.

SETTING: The living room of Andrea and her husband, Jack. A small suburban home. The place is ready to go for Christmas. There is a picture window behind the tree. A mantel, bare. Boxes of ornaments.

TIME: Christmas morning, two a.m. The present.

MA IN HER KERCHIEF

AT THE CURTAIN: *The tree lights are all off. RUTH is standing at the window beside the tree. She is in her bathrobe. A silky scarf covers her head. What bit of hair shows is wispy and nearly gone. After a moment, RUTH starts to sift through the ornament box. Pause, then ANDREA, in bathrobe and slippers, enters. She startles RUTH.*

RUTH. Oh! Andrea. I thought—Jack's asleep?

ANDREA. You can't hear the snoring?

RUTH. You'll get used to that.

ANDREA. I doubt it.

RUTH. I never did. To Dave's, I mean.

ANDREA. Any sign of Santa?

RUTH. Not yet. But it's only two. He's probably in Spain, or Iceland.

ANDREA. Probably.

RUTH. Can we turn on the tree lights?

ANDREA. Of course— *(She does so.)*

RUTH. I didn't want to, well, I'm not paying the bill—

ANDREA. Don't be silly. Did you have a nice nap?

RUTH. My last Christmas, and I'm sleeping through it.

ANDREA. Well, we'll have a busy day tomorrow. It was smart to take a nap.

RUTH. When the children were young, Dave used to keep a little jingle bell in his pocket and ring it once in a while. The kids would scream and dash up the stairs.

ANDREA. Dave's funny.

RUTH. He's easy with people, not like me.

ANDREA. Oh, now don't say that—

RUTH. I can't live here if you're going to be using that tone with me.

ANDREA. Sorry.

(RUTH pulls a string of white lights out of the box, starts to work on the mantel.)

RUTH. Do you think I should have divorced Dave?

ANDREA. I couldn't know a thing like—

RUTH. Was I too hard on him? He looked so handsome at the wedding. How do they put that in the paper? "Survived by ex-husband"?

ANDREA. I really don't know. What would you like it to say?

RUTH. I'll get back to you on that one. Open your present, will you?

ANDREA. But it's not—all right, if you want. *(She opens a large package. It's a sweater; one of those embroidered/appliquéd Christmas jobs. It's ghastly.)* Oh, I love it!

RUTH. Take it back—

ANDREA. No, no, I love it—I'll wear it tomorrow—

RUTH. Andrea: every little thought shows on your face.

ANDREA.

Oh! I hate that! I've always been like that—I'm—sorry, it's a very sweet gift, it's just a little loud for me, and I'm always hot, especially tomorrow when I'll be cooking the turkey, and that takes all day—Right. Sorry.

RUTH.

It's fine, don't worry about it—

It's fine, return it, I don't mind.

Please, please return it.

18 HOLES

By
David MacGregor

© 2003 by David MacGregor

18 Holes premiered in 2003 as part of Hearlande Theatre Company's "Play-By-Play" at the Studio Theatre at Oakland University in Rochester, Mich. It was directed by Mary Locker, and featured Neil Necastro and David Haig. That same year, it was voted "Audience Favorite" at the Barebones Theatre Group's 3rd Annual 15-Minute Play Festival in Charlotte, N.C.

CHARACTERS

STEVE: 20s to 40s.

JOHN: 20s to 40s.

SETTING: A golf course.

TIME: The present.

18 HOLES

AT THE CURTAIN: *STEVE and JOHN approach each other from opposite sides of the stage, each wearing golf attire and pulling their clubs on pull carts. They will play a faux round of golf, perhaps actually hitting some kind of balls, but perhaps not. The end of each hole can be indicated in any number of ways: movement by the actors, a shift in lighting, or a sound effect of a ball hitting the bottom of the cup.*

STEVE. Hey, how you doing?

JOHN. Just happy to be here. You good to go?

STEVE. Are you kidding me? I've been looking forward to this all week.

JOHN. Then let's do it.

STEVE. All right. Show me how it's done, big man.

FIRST HOLE

JOHN. ...so I'm out walking with Alex the other day and he finds this stick and he's just having a ball with it, right? And then pretty soon he's done playing with the stick, so he kisses it, sets it gently on the grass, and says, "Bye stick!" And I'm standing there watching all this and I'm thinking, "Either he's missing something, or I am."

STEVE. It's probably you.

JOHN. Yeah. That's what I'm afraid of. I used to know what he knows, but somewhere along the line, I must have forgot it.

SECOND HOLE

STEVE. ...so you remember that whole thing when Princess Diana died?

JOHN. Sure.

STEVE. Well, I remember watching all that on TV and people are just going nuts, you know, weeping and crying and leaving flowers everywhere, and as I'm watching it I realized that I didn't feel a damned thing. You might as well have told me that Yosemite Sam or Daffy Duck died. On the other hand, the whole World Trade Center thing, I'm watching that on TV and I'm just crying like a baby. Explain that to me.

JOHN. Well, the World Trade Center, those were real people. Princess Diana, you're right, she was kind of like a cartoon character. She got packaged and marketed just like any other product...just like any other celebrity.

STEVE. Yeah. Maybe that's it. Because I remember thinking, I probably won't die when my chauffeur-driven Mercedes slams into a concrete abutment while I'm being chased by paparazzi.

JOHN. Probably not.

STEVE. Hey, is that wind coming more towards us or more from the side?

THIRD HOLE

STEVE. ...yeah, Taylor's all worried about me getting old and dying, so I told him I'd have myself cloned.

JOHN. That's not going to do him any good. He's what, eight years old? And if they clone you, you'd be a baby.

STEVE. Well, that's part of this deal we worked out. See, right now, I'm the dad. But I'll get myself cloned in twenty years or so, then he can be my dad. And then we'll just keep going like that. I'll be the dad, then he'll be the dad, and so on. I think it would be a pretty good deal, actually. If you knew that somewhere down the road, your child would become your parent, hey, you're gonna make sure you're a pretty good parent.

FOURTH HOLE

STEVE. ...it's Ding Dongs.

JOHN. No, it's King Dons.

STEVE. King Dons? What are you talking about?

JOHN. They're called King Dons. I swear to God. In fact, originally, they were called King Dongs, then they changed it.

STEVE. You're making that up.

JOHN. I'm not. I'm telling you, I wish I'd saved a box of King Dongs. You tell people about them today and they look at you like you're nuts.

FIFTH HOLE

JOHN. ...if you want to find an attractive woman, or man for that matter, it's really just a question of how much money they come from.

COFFEE BREAK

By
Jerry Thompson

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Coffee Break premiered in 2003 with the Provincetown Theatre Company under the direction of Robert Seaver, and featured Peter Scarbo Frawley and Deborah Peabody. It was also produced at the Academy of Performing Arts in Orleans, Mass., and was chosen for the 2003 Last Frontier Theatre Conference in Valdez, Alaska.

CHARACTERS

AL: Early 70s.

ANNA: Early 30s.

SETTING: The back of a modest home in a small New England town.

TIME: The present, late June. About nine a.m.

COFFEE BREAK

AT THE CURTAIN: *AL is painting a door. Downstage of him are two sawhorses standing side by side. A plank is laid across them. ANNA approaches carrying two cups of take-out coffee.*

AL. Took ya long enough! Whaddya do, stop at the beauty parlor fer a manicure? (*ANNA, used to this sort of abuse, does not respond. She places coffee cups on the plank and sits down beside them. AL goes over to a window on the back of the house. Examines the window. Turns to ANNA. Angry. Shouting:*) How many times have I told ya that ya gotta prime the window muntins* before ya putty 'em?

ANNA. Probably a hundred times.

AL. Then why the hell didn't ya prime 'em yesterday, after ya took out the broken glass? Ya can't glaze a window if it ain't primed! I tole ya—the putty won't stick! Jesus! (*Pulls off his hat and hurls it on the ground, moves to the plank. Sits down. Removes the top from the coffee cup. Sips coffee.*) Sometimes you make me so goddamn mad! Now we're goin' ta be here an extra day waitin' fer the damn primer ta dry!

ANNA (*calm, even tone*). I did prime the muntins. You better take a closer look.

AL. Whaddya talkin' about? (*Gets off the plank. Goes to the window and examines it.*) Look here, there ain't a

* Strips of wood separating panes of glass in a window sash.

drop a paint on these muntins? Now we got ta paint 'em and wait all day fer it ta dry before we can putty 'em. These people want us outa here. They're goin' ta be pissed!

ANNA. I used linseed oil. You said it worked better. You better put on your glasses, Al.

AL (*examines the window more closely. Touches the muntin*). Oh, yah. Yah. I guess ya did. (*Returns to the plank and sits down, picks up the coffee cup and sips.*)

ANNA (*trying to maintain control after AL's tirade*). Al, if you keep flying off the handle like that, you're going to have a heart attack. You don't have to yell all the time to get the job done right.

AL. I'm the boss. I have to yell. People always try ta take advantage of their boss. It's jus' human nature. Like you! Moseyin' in ta work every mornin' like ya ain't got a care in the world. I got responsibility. I got ta make sure the job keeps movin' along.

ANNA (*angry*). Responsibility? Responsibility? I've got a three-year old daughter. Wouldn't you call that responsibility?

AL. Yeah. (*Pause.*) Yeah a 'course I would but ya got ta...

ANNA. You know full well that the reason I come mosey-ing in here late is because I've got to drop Tina off at daycare. And you manage to make up for the lost time by keeping me here every day 'til five-thirty cleaning brushes.

AL. You ain't on vacation ya know! This ain't Disney World! This is the real world. (*Pause.*)

THE SASMANN AESTHETIC

By
Jules Tasca

© 2000 by Jules Tasca

The Sasmann Aesthetic was first produced in 2000 by American Playwrights Theater, Inc., at the John Houseman Theatre in New York City.

CHARACTERS

DR. GRACE BULLOCK: A woman in her early 40s.

HOWARD SASMANN: A man in his 30s.

SETTING: The office of Dr. Grace Bullock at the Morrisville State Psychiatric Hospital. A desk and chairs suggest the office.

TIME: The present.

THE SASMANN AESTHETIC

AT THE CURTAIN: *DR. BULLOCK sits at the desk and peruses a folder. She pushes the button on the intercom.*

DOCTOR. Would you please tell Mr. Sasmann to come in.

(After a beat, HOWARD SASMANN enters. He is a well-built man who wears a pullover shirt and a pair of form-fitting white pants. The DOCTOR rises and greets him.)

DOCTOR. Howard Sasmann, I'm Dr. Bullock.

HOWARD. Good morning, Dr. Bullock.

DOCTOR. Good morning.

HOWARD. I was supposed to see a Dr. Eric Gutig, I believe.

DOCTOR. I'm his associate. Dr. Gutig's caught up in an emergency right now.

HOWARD. You mean the guy in the restraints who's yelling he's Jesus?

DOCTOR. We don't discuss other patients, Mr. Sasmann.

HOWARD. I understand a professional ethic, Doctor. But your Jesus is obviously mentally ill. I'm not. Let me clear that up right now. I don't really belong in a crazy house.

DOCTOR. *Mr.* Sasmann, this is a hospital, sir.

HOWARD. I stand corrected, Doctor. It is a hospital. All I'm trying to say is that there's nothing wrong with me.

DOCTOR. All right. But can we just talk for a while?

HOWARD. I'll talk all you like, but there's nothing the matter with me.

DOCTOR. Married?

HOWARD. *No*, I'm not.

DOCTOR. Girlfriend?

HOWARD. I date a couple of girls, yes. And they're both upset over this, too. It got into the papers.

DOCTOR. So I read.

HOWARD. I need to explain to them that there's nothing the matter with me. The papers made me into an evil person.

DOCTOR (*sitting*). All right. Then let me hear it from you. What're you doing here at Morrisville State Hospital?

HOWARD. You know what I'm doing here. You have my file.

DOCTOR. You tell me in your own words. Sit.

HOWARD (*sitting*). It was a deal. It was a deal my lawyer made with the judge. Coming here kept me out of jail. I agreed to come here as an outpatient to keep from going to prison. And I have to continue coming here until I'm deemed cured, Dr. Bullock. Does that correlate with what you have in that folder?

DOCTOR. It does.

HOWARD. And there's nothing wrong with me. Prison. That judge threatened me with prison. Oh, I don't say I don't possess the same quirks as every man, but psychologically, there's nothing wrong with me.

BUYING A BRASSIERE

By
Rebecca Ritchie

© 1999 by Rebecca Ritchie

Buying a Brassiere premiered at The Alleyway Theatre, Buffalo, N.Y., in 2000. It was part of Pandora’s Box Theatre Company’s “Escaping the Box” festival of one acts and monologues by women. In 2001, it was a finalist in the Actors Theatre of Louisville National Ten-Minute Play Contest.

CHARACTERS

DIANE: A woman with breast cancer who is shopping for underwear.

MARIE: A French Canadian underwear fitter.

SETTING: The lingerie department and a dressing room in a department store.

TIME: The present.

AUTHOR’S NOTE: Diane must deliver her lines with *joie de vivre* and a sense of self-kery. If this play isn’t funny, don’t even try it.

BUYING A BRASSIERE

AT THE CURTAIN: *Blackout. In the blackout, Spotlight up on DIANE, who stands on a soapbox-sized riser, DL, facing slightly left. In blackout, MARIE stands on a similar riser DR, facing slightly right.*

DIANE (to AUDIENCE). I'm considering buying a brassiere. —The decision unsettles me. It reminds me of visiting Student Health thirty years ago: Then, if you didn't use birth control, you weren't having sex. Now, if I don't buy this brassiere, I must not have cancer. (Pause.) I find myself on the lingerie floor of a large department store. There is a bower of bras the size of a football field: purple bras, cheetah-print bras, push-up bras, strapless bras. And lace, lace everywhere. —But I don't see what I'm looking for. —So I go up to the counter and wait for a clerk, and when she stops chewing gum long enough, I say, "Do you have a fitter?" And she says, "A fitter?" And I say, "For a bra." When she still looks clueless, I point to an advertisement in a Plexiglas stand. "Ohhh..." she says, "that kind of bra. —You'll have to wait for Marie." And she points to a chair against the wall. —I'm not in a hurry. In fact, I'm not completely committed to buying this brassiere. I'm keeping a low profile, so I don't arouse the interest of the Red Beast. It's crouching out there, waiting for the slightest opening: arrogance, or complacency, or a thoughtless moment of joy. —You'd be surprised how even the most benign activity, like shopping for this brassiere, could cause the Beast to lunge for the jugular.

STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

By
Gregory Fletcher

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Stairway to Heaven premiered at Manhattan Theatre Source in 2004. It was produced by Gary Garrison and Brian Otano, directed by Janice Goldberg, and featured Ari Butler and Allison Goldberg. Previously, the play was workshopped with director Kathy Plourde and actors Ryan Bethke and Julie Miller. At the 2004 national Kennedy Center/American College Theater Festival, it was directed by Jon Royal, featured Kaitlin Yikel and Brian Watkins, and was chosen the winner of the 2004 National Ten-Minute Play Award.

CHARACTERS

ELISA: 17 years old.

GIL: 16 years old, Elisa's brother.

SETTING: The carpeted stairway of a family home.

TIME: The new century, 2000.

STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

AT THE CURTAIN: *GIL, wearing a dark suit, is lying down on his back. His sister, ELISA, also dressed in dark colors and wearing a skirt, starts down the stairs. Her hair is pinned up in the messed-up look.*

ELISA. Get up. *(No response.)* I said, get up. Now!

GIL. So go.

ELISA. Like—I'm in a skirt.

GIL. Like—I'm gonna look? Gross.

ELISA. You're sixteen, of course you'll look.

GIL. In your dreams.

ELISA. Shut up. Why don't you go up to Mom so she can see how wrinkled your suit's getting. You should iron it.

GIL. And you should brush your hair.

ELISA. It's supposed to look like this, you jerk. Move!

GIL. Just go if you're going.

ELISA. If you look, that's sexual harassment, and sexual harassment leads to sexual abuse, and statistics show that one out of five women are sexually abused by a family member—

GIL. I can't believe you're quoting your term paper to me. That is so lame.

ELISA. I got an A+ on that paper. Gil, enough! If you don't move, you are so dead meat!

GIL. Two deaths in one week? Doubt it.

ELISA. Please. Go see Mom.

GIL. I'll see her when she comes down.

ELISA. I don't want her to be alone.

GIL. She's probably dressing, let her be.

ELISA. She's dressed, you're dressed, we're all dressed!

Dressed and waiting. (*Sighs.*) And waiting. Go on, at least while I'm making Mom and me a cup of tea.

GIL. Oh, la-de-da, so adult. When did you grow up all of a sudden?

ELISA. When do you think?! (*GIL looks away.*) She needs you.

GIL. No, his...when I had to go up for his dress shoes, for the funeral home...his closet...I could...you can still...

ELISA. Smell him?

GIL. Yeah.

ELISA. Okay, so come down with me, I'll make you your first cup of la-de-da tea. You'll like it.

GIL. No.

ELISA. What?

GIL. Too many...the photo magnets on the refrigerator.

ELISA. Oh. Well, you can wait at the dining-room table.

GIL. His chair. Waiting to be pulled out.

ELISA. The living room?

GIL. The recliner. His impression...

ELISA. Still on the cushion, yeah. The back yard? Never mind. The hammock. Even in the garage. His car.

GIL. I could feel him on the steering wheel.

ELISA. Then go in your room, at least you're safe there. I'll call you when it's ready. (*GIL doesn't move.*) In your own room?

GIL. Every trophy. Every ribbon. He's there, cheering me on.

ELISA. For someone who's dead, he sure is all around. (*She finally gets it.*) Except here.

PLAYTIME

By
Kent R. Brown

© 2004 by Kent R. Brown

Playtime premiered at the Boston Marathon in 2004. It was sponsored by SpeakEasy Stage Company, directed by Elaine Theodore, and featured Roxy Wongus and Cheryl Singleton. It was also a winner of the 2004 “Short & NEAT Play Festival,” sponsored by the New England Academy of Theatre.

CHARACTERS

MAUREEN: Late 30s. Has lead a hard life. Compassionate. Bitter. Needy. Dressed in clothes purchased at Goodwill and church thrift shops.

NICOLE: Early teens. Maureen’s daughter. A runaway. A survivor. Also dressed by Goodwill and hand-me-downs. Carries a knapsack.

SETTING: Playground park: Teeter-totter, swings, benches, merry-go-round, trash can...whatever can be comfortably provided.

TIME: The present, summer. Midnight. Bright moonlight. Warm breeze.

PLAYTIME

AT THE CURTAIN: *MAUREEN is seated on a bench, a picnic basket by her side. On the ground is a large garbage bag stuffed with assorted items and pieces of clothing for NICOLE. For several moments, MAUREEN sits patiently on the bench. Then...*

MAUREEN. Nicole, I'm not gonna sit here all night. Midnight is late in the day for me. I'm gonna pick my butt up off this bench, take this lovely picnic lunch I made you...and go. *(Beat.)* I've got good things in the bag, honey. *(Beat.)* Nicole...you there? Don't make me feel stupid.

(After another moment, MAUREEN gathers up the garbage bag and the picnic basket. As she begins to leave, NICOLE enters. She is as far from MAUREEN as she can be.)

NICOLE. What did you make? Did you bring me any books?

MAUREEN. You do this every time. You make me beg. You shouldn't do that, Nicole. I'm your mother. I don't have to be out here. I don't have to come.

NICOLE. Yes, you do.

MAUREEN. No, I don't!

NICOLE. Yes, you do!

(Beat. MAUREEN returns to the bench, puts down the garbage bag and picnic lunch basket and sits. NICOLE doesn't move.)

NICOLE *(cont'd)*. Where'd you get the picnic basket? It's cool.

MAUREEN. First Baptist.

NICOLE. They're nice at First Baptist.

MAUREEN. The folks at First Baptist, they don't ask a lot of questions. They just give you stuff. You say a coupla prayers, makes 'em feel good. The ones at the Congregational Church, they talk to you so they can get to know you better. Hell, I don't want nobody to know me any better.

NICOLE. How are you feeling, Mama? You getting your beauty sleep?

MAUREEN. Do you want me to give all this stuff back? I could maybe sell it myself maybe and—

NICOLE. I cut my arm. Yesterday. I fell down some stairs, the ones up behind Pitkin Drugs? Out back? I fell down. See?

(NICOLE extends her arm to MAUREEN, who glances over.)

MAUREEN. What were you doing on those stairs? Are you staying in those apartments there, Nicole? Those are terrible places, you know that?

NICOLE. I might not live, I might get blood poisoning. Randy Black did.

MAUREEN. I know Randy Black. He's a viper. A despicable human being. Nothing can kill him. And his mother's no better.

NICOLE. She's a real good cook. Randy got a chocolate pie from her three days ago. I had a piece for breakfast. Uuummm good!

(The tension between mother and daughter is palpable. This is a ritual they play out. To see who is the weakest, who wants the other the most. MAUREEN indicates the basket and the garbage bag.)

MAUREEN. What do you want me to do with all this?

NICOLE. Just leave it on the bench. Step back. Over there.

(NICOLE points to a spot some distance from the bench. MAUREEN complies. NOTE: if the setting and props permit, the continuing action/blocking should integrate the playground equipment, positioning NICOLE on the bars, perhaps; or both could be seated on either end of a teeter-totter. It is important that NICOLE puts an obstacle between herself and MAUREEN. This is done out of habit. She behaves this way with anyone. She lives defensively.)

NICOLE *(cont'd)*. Don't move now. You move and I'm gone! I'm fast. I've got everything I need. Don't need you! You don't move! You don't touch me!

MAUREEN. I know the rules. I'm not movin'. 'Sides, you're too fast for me.

(NICOLE crosses to the bench and begins to look through the items: sweaters, sweatshirts featuring a major university such as Michigan or Alabama, a few pair of sweat pants, two pair of sandals. The clothes are old, well used.)

MAUREEN *(cont'd)*. I thought you could cut the sweats if you wanted. For shorts. For the rest of the summer... maybe keep one for the fall? The sweatshirts should fit. Got those for seventy-five cents each.

PARTIAL POST

By
Mark Guarino

© 1997 by Mark Guarino

Partial Post was first produced in 1997 at the Curious Theatre Branch in Chicago. It was directed by Julieanne Ehre, and featured Ed Dzialo and Melissa Culverwell.

CHARACTERS

A: A woman.

B: A man.

Both are in their forties and should not be conventionally attractive. They should look weary, as if they've been shut inside this house for years. They should be simply dressed.

SETTING: A bare stage with only a round, wooden table and two chairs. A window behind it suggests a dark, dreary, snowy day outside. There is a door leading outside. No colors at all should be visible. Everything—the clothing of the characters, the walls, the props—should blend together in a mix of blacks, grays and whites.

TIME: The present.

PARTIAL POST

AT THE CURTAIN: *LIGHTS up. B is at the table, trying to write with a pen. A is standing.*

A So you're writing a letter!

(Beat. B looks up at A. His pen has run out.)

B. Got a pen?

(A walks to him and pulls a pen from behind B's ear and hands it to him.)

A. You're writing a letter. How...1940s of you. A letter. What precious muse must spur you to action! You think? Yes... A Big Man With a Letter. A Big Man With a *Heart*. Postman must make that route bound and gagged by now. All led with the smell of the stamp that he knows to be yours. *(A pause.)* Whatta sap.

B. Who?

A. Oh, who knows. Me, especially. But I'd probably point to that postman. You think? He hates you, surely. Through pain, stains, heat and snow, he's got to trudge your little *affections* every week, every hour to that same address. He's not your slave.

B. No?

A. I am. You think? *(A pause.)* Me.

B. You're not. Especially.

A. Oh. Well...I thank that. I guess I'm a little special like my mama always said I am. I had six toes on each foot when I was born and they made me a queen, she said. We celebrated imperfections back then. We advertised misnomers. We relished in idiosyncratic methods of

living that were contrary to the general populi. (*A pause.*) Barf. That was the first six months. Problem was, baby hadda walk. Now two toes in a pill bottle in a crazy lady's house. But hey. The feeling's still there—to be special? I am *that*, you know.

B. I know.

A. Oh, sorry. You're penning again. (*A pause.*) What does it ever say?

B. "Dear."

A. Oh baby, I know that. "Dear Her. Boo Hoo." A sad tale of lament, I'm sure. A tug. A soppy string of eloquent mash.

B. You don't know what it is.

A. Tell me. Baby, for once, isn't it time? You think? *I do.*

B. I know.

A. *I do.* Isn't it a sign of respect, do you think, that maybe I should know what's inside'a your heart?

(*B puts his pen down.*)

B. I-can't-think.

A. Maybe I'm just a Mason jar you screw shut every night to keep the air out. Fresh air.

B. I'm almost done.

A. I know. (*A checks her watch.*) About that time. For X's and O's. For Met-a-phors, don't you know. Yes. To sign off again is the most creative time, to shine, to *shine*, don't you think? Let's see you do it.

B. No. Make coffee.

A. Oh, the grounds are all caked. It's not to be drunk. Now you...

B. It's personal. Sweet. It's mine.

(*A tries to look at his letter.*)

A. No, no...

DUMBO
(Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass)

By
Wanda Strukus

© 1997 by Wanda Strukus

DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass) was first produced in 1997 at Actors and Playwrights Initiative Theater in Kalamazoo, Mich. It was a winner in the “Off-I-94” festival, under the co-sponsorship of Actors and Playwrights Initiative of Kalamazoo and the Chicago Alliance for Playwrights. The play was directed by Sandra Lupien, and featured James Moles and Derek Potts.

CHARACTERS

JOEY B.: 30s. Gangster and family man. Semi-polished.

EDDIE: 30s. Gangster. More-than-a-little roughed up.

SETTING: Manhattan Bridge. Brooklyn side.

TIME: The present. Dawn.

DUMBO
(Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass)

AT THE CURTAIN: *JOEY, in a dark suit and tie, stands, leaning against a railing. Sound of a car driving up, a door opening, and a body hitting the ground with an audible thump and groan. The door slams and the car drives away. EDDIE enters stumbling, his hands cuffed behind his back. He falls. JOEY watches. After some difficulty, EDDIE rolls over and sees JOEY.*

EDDIE. Hey.

JOEY. Hey.

EDDIE (*pause*). A little chilly out here.

JOEY. You cold?

EDDIE. Naw, I'm fine. Comfortable. A little nip in the air, that's all. A little edge.

JOEY. Feels pretty good.

EDDIE. Hell, yes. Fall. (*He sniffs.*) Mmmm. (*Pause.*)
How's things?

JOEY. Oh. You know.

EDDIE Sure.

JOEY. How's things with you?

EDDIE. Never better. (*JOEY takes out his gun.*) How's your mother?

JOEY. Same. And yours?

EDDIE. Good. Real good.

JOEY. Good.

EDDIE. Gonna be a nice day.
(*JOEY clicks off the safety.*)

JOEY. You never know.
EDDIE (*pause*). You got a cigarette?
JOEY. Naw. I quit.
EDDIE. No.
JOEY. Yeah. Angela said I quit or she goes.
EDDIE. Where's she gonna go?
JOEY. Hey! Angie's a good-lookin' woman.
EDDIE. She's got rotten teeth, Joey.
JOEY. She got 'em fixed. And she did something to her hair. I don't know. She said they wrap it up in tinfoil. Cost me close to a hundred bucks. But she looks good.
EDDIE. You got a picture?
JOEY. Yeah, lemme pull out the photo album. Wanna see the videos? I got 'em in the trunk. Take a minute to set it up.
EDDIE. Evidence, Joey. All I been hearing the last five years is how you nearly killed your ma marrying some skinny, rotten-mouthed Swede and nothing but an ugly kid to show for it.
JOEY. She ain't a Swede.
EDDIE. Pollock. Lemme see the picture. (*Pause.*) What? I know you got one. (*Pause.*) I'd feel better if I knew you weren't doing that shit to your mother.
(*JOEY lowers his gun to take out the picture.*)
JOEY. Angie and Joe Jr.
EDDIE (*whistles*). Very nice. You go to one of those glamour studios?
JOEY. Naw. Took the kid down to Sears.
EDDIE. They do a good job.
JOEY. Very reasonable.
EDDIE. Well, they got high volume.

AN EARTHQUAKE

By
Lisa Soland

© 1992 by Lisa Soland

An Earthquake was first produced in 1992 at the Chandler Theatre in North Hollywood, Calif., by The Faculty Actor/Playwright Company as part of an evening of original works entitled “Words, Words! Words!” It was directed by Charles Nelson Reilly, and featured Pepper Sweeney and Lisa Soland.

CHARACTERS

KATHY: A 25-year-old attractive, friendly young woman who has lived in this Los Angeles apartment complex for almost five years.

STEVEN: A “raw and natural” 29-year-old small-town man who has just moved to the city.

SETTING: In front of a small apartment complex in Los Angeles. The stage is bare except for a doorframe with a sign that reads “Apartments 1-10.”

TIME: The morning.

AN EARTHQUAKE

AT THE CURTAIN: *There are rumbling sounds. LIGHTS come up on a trembling doorframe and swinging sign. A woman enters barefoot, wearing only an oversize T-shirt that reads, "Happy Birthday, Baby." She braces her body in the rocking doorframe and counts to herself. An excited young man, also barefoot, runs through the doorframe, wearing nothing but boxer shorts.*

HIM. Holy shit!

HER. Are you okay?

HIM. Yeah. Man alive! What a rocker!

HER. That was a big one. I could feel it right through my body! Twenty seconds max. I always count them out in my head while they're happening.

HIM. Shit. Incredible.

HER. Was that your first?

HIM. Yeah.

HER. Oh, that's great. I wish it were mine.

HIM. That's really something!

HER. Isn't it?

HIM. Yeah! I never thought it would be like that!

HER. They're pretty powerful.

HIM. The building's pretty solid though, huh?

HER. Oh, yeah. I've lived here four and a half years and it's pulled me through every one of them. I just wish there was some way you could tell when they were coming. Mrs. Penelope in apartment six used to have

this cat named Shirley that would go nuts just before an earthquake but a pot fell on her head and that was that.

HIM. On Mrs. Penelope?

HER. Oh my God, no. The cat. *(Beat.)* Shirley.

HIM. Shirley.

HER. Yeah. Are you my new neighbor?

HIM. Yeah. Steven.

HER. Kathy. Nice to meet you.
 (They shake hands.)

STEVEN. Nice shirt.

KATHY. Nice shorts.

STEVEN *(looking down)*. Oh God. I was sleeping.

KATHY. Me too.

STEVEN. Better than an alarm clock.

KATHY. I'm still shaking.

STEVEN. After four and a half years?

KATHY. Yup. I still shake. I sit straight up in bed and wait. I always do that. I wait and watch to see if it's going to get worse. Then I count, and when I get past ten, I run for the door brace.

STEVEN. Door brace? Is that what you're supposed to do? *(Examining the door brace.)*

KATHY. I don't know. They change their minds every year. Kinda like how many eggs you should eat in a week.

STEVEN. What's that down to?

KATHY. I don't care. I eat 'em when I want. I bet that was six.

STEVEN *(a bit lost)*. Eggs?

KATHY. No. Six on the Richter.

STEVEN. Richter.

CRECHE

By
Monica Raymond

© 2002 by Monica Raymond

Creche was first produced at Boston Playwrights Platform in 2002. It was directed by Monica Raymond, and featured Jennifer Makhholm and Kay Moriarty.

CHARACTERS

TRACY: Female, 17, slender, attractive, appears totally normal, carries a backpack.

CHAI: Female, 17, scrawny, pale, sad, an outsider, slightly alarming-looking.

SETTING: A nativity display in a raised circular island in the middle of a shopping mall, surrounded by a circular seating ledge. A larger-than-life-sized papier-mâché Mary presides over the center of the island, which is also the center of the stage. The display is in a folk-art style, nicely done with piled straw and papier-mâché farm animals—in no way garish or embarrassing. The infant Jesus is missing.

TIME: Christmas Eve, 5:00 p.m.

CRECHE

AT THE CURTAIN: *We hear strands of “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear.” It plays for a moment, then fades. TRACY, her back to us, kneels on the ledge. CHAI enters.*

CHAI. You took baby Jesus.

TRACY. Oh God.

CHAI. I saw you take him.

TRACY. Who’re you? Aren’t you supposed to be shopping?

CHAI. I’m done with shopping. I bought my father an electric train car on eBay. It’s a caboose. I hope he likes it. It cost me thirty dollars. I’m afraid it’s fake, though. The real ones cost hundreds. And my sister’s getting a skull and crossbones. When she decides where she wants it, I told her I’d pay. I told her I’d do it for her for nothing, but she wants to go to one of the real places.

TRACY (*irritable*). Well, what’re you doing at the mall, then?

CHAI. I like to hang out with Mary and baby Jesus. I took the T and a bus to get here.

TRACY. Where do you come from?

CHAI. The projects.

TRACY. I thought they didn’t have projects anymore.

CHAI. They privatized ’em, so now they call ’em condos instead of projects. But they still got that shit linoleum,

still have those weird foam ceilings with all the little holes in 'em...

TRACY (*sympathetic*). Decor is important.

CHAI. Anyway, I like it here. It's peaceful.

TRACY. Peaceful? A mall? You've gotta be kidding. (*Pause.*) You should go to church.

CHAI. Nah, I don't like church. Some greasy-ass minister with BO shaking my hand. (*Afterthought.*) Church is dangerous! You read about those kids that got molested? It's worse than school. No thanks, I'll take this. (*Looks back at the creche.*) Only how'm I gonna hang out with baby Jesus now that you've stolen him?

TRACY (*testing*). You gonna report me?

CHAI. I should. That's not very nice to take Jesus all for yourself. What about the other people who want to be with him?

TRACY. You some kind of Jesus freak?

CHAI. Nah. I have an uncle that is. Born again. I went 'n got saved 'n shit, but the next week they wanted you out on some street corner giving out pamphlets. I mean, forget it!

TRACY. Are you gonna? Report me?

CHAI (*shrugs*). I'm not the police. (*Sigh.*) But you should give him back. I mean, on Christmas Eve...

TRACY (*opens backpack, pulls him out*). Here's your baby Jesus. (*CHAI, ecstatic, embraces him, and stands on the seat to place him back in the manger. TRACY stops her.*) I got something better than baby Jesus.

CHAI (*still facing toward the display*). There's nothing better'n baby— (*TRACY reaches into her backpack and pulls out a real newborn. CHAI turns.*) Oh—wow, that is better. I mean, it's a real one. A real little bab Jesus.

SHORT-TERM AFFAIRS

By
Donna Spector

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Short-Term Affairs was first produced in 2001 by Actors on the Verge in New York City. In 2003, it was a finalist in the Actors Theatre of Louisville National Ten-Minute Play Contest and was a winner in the Palm Springs National Short Play Fest.

CHARACTERS

MARK FANBERG: Age 34.

DENISE DELANEY: Age 32.

SETTING: The Bureau of Short-Term Affairs. A stark office in a mid-town Manhattan building. A small table with a telephone and two chairs.

TIME: The present.

SHORT-TERM AFFAIRS

AT THE CURTAIN: *DENISE is seated at a table. She is talking on a small pink phone.*

DENISE. No, I'm sorry. You must have misunderstood our advertisement.

(MARK enters.)

MARK. Hello. I'm looking...

DENISE *(puts her hand over the mouthpiece)*. Sorry. I'll just be a moment. *(Back to phone.)* Listen, if you're looking for something "real," whatever that means, you've got the wrong number. *(She slams down phone.)* Yes?

MARK. Yes, I, uh, I'm looking for a...

DENISE. Oh, let me guess. You're looking for the perfect woman to fall in love with, get married, have 2.5 children, a springer spaniel, some cast-iron lawn ornaments—deer and cute little dwarfs painted in bright Christmas colors—a ranch-style house in the suburbs...

MARK. Well, actually...

DENISE. And you want to grow old together and take long walks on the beach, and when you become senile and incontinent, you want her to take care of you.

MARK. No. I must be in the wrong place.

DENISE. Oh. Sorry. It's been an unnerving day. So what are you looking for?

MARK. A relatively brief affair. Six months to a year. Fun and exciting, but no kidding ourselves that it's going to last. That sort of thing.

DENISE. Really? You're sure this is what you want?

MARK. Yes. I've tried other dating services, but they're always trying to match perfect people, and when I go out with a woman, she starts talking love after a few weeks, and she uses words like "commitment," and I break out in hives, and I feel this *panic*, so I thought your ad sounded more, uh, realistic.

DENISE. You're an emotional coward?

MARK. I suppose so. Yes.

DENISE. Good. That's important. We specialize in emotional cowardice and/or disillusionment.

MARK. I've never opened up enough to be hurt or disillusioned.

DENISE. That's fine. You have hurt women, of course?

MARK. Yes. Though I prefer not to.

DENISE. That's good. We're not looking for cads. Just decent people who understand the brevity of attraction.

MARK. Yes. The transitory nature of all things.

DENISE. We're born alone and we die alone. And all in between is ephemeral.

MARK. *Yes!* A mere façade. And true communication between people is impossible.

DENISE. *Yes.* Because if I say I was bitten by a dog this morning, you might see a German shepherd, when actually it was...

MARK. ...a small but vicious schnauzer.

DENISE. That's...odd. Just what I was going to say.

MARK. I knew it! It was as though I was taking down dictation right from...your brain.

DENISE. Yes. I felt that too, I... *(Beat.)* But down to business. Let me explain our process. First, I take detailed notes about you. Then I go through our files and find someone so obviously wrong for you that you will immediately feel attracted...

MARK. Good so far.

DENISE. I'm glad. This attraction and attendant excitement will be based, of course, on your knowledge...

MARK. ...that she's so wrong for me that we would never speak of love or commitment.

DENISE. Yes. You do understand. You will both know that all you're in this for is...

MARK. ...fun.

DENISE. Yes. Fun. *(Beat.)* You do seem to be an ideal candidate. Now, our fee is \$100 per short-term affair. Is that too much for you?

MARK. No. It would be worth it to know...

DENISE. ...that you were free of entanglement.

MARK. Exactly.

DENISE. Good. Let me get down some vital statistics. *(She takes a notepad and pen.)* First and last name?

MARK. Mark Fanberg.

DENISE. Age?

MARK. Thirty-four.

DENISE. You don't look that old. Where are you from?

MARK. I was born in Chicago, but I grew up in New York.

DENISE. Yes, your accent.

MARK. We live in New York. How can you detect an accent?

DENISE. I'm from Los Angeles.

MARK. I thought you had a California accent.

RUMPLE SCHMUMPLE

By
Megan Gogerty

© 2003 by Megan Gogerty

Rumple Schmumple was a finalist in the 2003 Kennedy Center/ACTF National Ten-Minute Play Festival and premiered at Dad's Garage Theatre Company in Atlanta, Ga. It was directed by Sean Daniels, and featured Alison Hastings and Geoff Uterhardt. It also received a Write Angle Productions Ten-Minute Play Award in 2003.

CHARACTERS

QUEEN: A queen.

RUMPLESTILTSKIN: A funny-looking little man.

SETTING: A royal nursery room in a tall tower.

TIME: A long time ago.

RUMPLE SCHMUMPLE

AT THE CURTAIN: *The QUEEN is guessing.*

QUEEN. Are you Carl?

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. No.

QUEEN. Shifty?

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. No.

QUEEN. Needle Nose Pliers?

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. No.

QUEEN. Philomena?

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. No.

QUEEN. Randy?

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. No.

QUEEN. Jean-Luc Picard of the Starship Enterprise?

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. No.

QUEEN. Rumplestiltskin?

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. What?

QUEEN. Forget it, that's a dumb one. Betharina?

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. No.

QUEEN. Bethlehem?

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. No.

QUEEN. Bethanphetamine?

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. No.

QUEEN. Gee, this is hard. Give me a hint.

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. No.

QUEEN. Come on.

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. Forget it.

QUEEN. Okay, fine. I give up. Here. *(Hands the baby over to RUMPLESTILTSKIN.)* She needs feeding every

two hours. I've already pumped, so she's set for the next day or so, but then you'll have to switch to formula. Cloth diapers give her a rash, so I use disposable. I know, it's hard on the environment, but tough rocks, I have a life, you know?

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. Uh...

QUEEN. Be sure to give her a good burping after meals too. Spit-up is inevitable, so if I were you, I'd invest in some good washable knitwear.

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. Wait.

QUEEN. She can't go anywhere without her blankie, or she makes the most ear-splitting noise. Also, she's a biter.

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. Wait! Don't you want to guess some more?

QUEEN. No, I told you, I give up. Take her talking Elmo doll. She's not that attached to it, but it drives me crazy, so you might as well.

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. You're supposed to keep guessing, remember? I spin straw into gold, you promise first-born baby, I give you name-guessing loophole. That was the agreement.

QUEEN. What's it been, three days? I know when I'm licked. Here's the bottle sanitizer, and her pacifier. It's shaped like a lady's nipple!

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. Slow down. Let's think about this.

QUEEN. She's got some books that make animal noises somewhere...

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. You don't want to do this.

QUEEN. Yes, I do. Fair's fair.

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. No, it isn't. This is your firstborn baby.

STUFFED

By
Jeanette D. Farr

© 2005 by Jeanette D. Farr

Stuffed was first performed at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, in the Paul Harris Theater in 1999. It was directed by Anthony Persanti, and featured Andrew Kaemper and Traci Allanson.

CHARACTERS

BUBBA-BLUE: In his 30s to 40s. A large, menacing figure but soft as a bubble.

AUDREY-LEE: A little spitfire on the verge of puberty.

SETTING: A garage. It's where Bubba lives. There is a cot, hotplate and crates which he has made into a workbench. The "prized possession" is a large stuffed owl that should have a place of distinction.

TIME: The 1950s. A hot, summer evening at sunset.

STUFFED

AT THE CURTAIN: *BUBBA-BLUE* is trying to drive a nail into a board by hitting it with an old rusty coffee can. In frustration, *BUBBA-BLUE* strikes the nail harder and harder with the coffee can. As the rhythm increases, *AUDREY-LEE* enters out of breath. She stops and looks back from where she came. She carries a burlap sack. She approaches *BUBBA-BLUE* and watches for a while. He catches *AUDREY-LEE*'s eye. He pounds the nail softer, then stops.

BUBBA-BLUE. I don't have time to get made fun of today.

AUDREY-LEE. Not this time.

BUBBA-BLUE. Whatever it is—it don't matter—

AUDREY-LEE. I'm here on business.

(AUDREY-LEE walks over, opens the burlap sack and shows him what's inside)

BUBBA-BLUE. So?

AUDREY-LEE. I'm willin' to pay.

BUBBA-BLUE. I don't know what you mean.

AUDREY-LEE. Twenty-seven cents...

BUBBA-BLUE. Go home.

AUDREY-LEE. Three of them cents is wheat pennies.

BUBBA-BLUE. Don't you have a home?

AUDREY-LEE. I can get you more...come Friday.

BUBBA-BLUE. Or somewheres to be besides here?

AUDREY-LEE. ...or if I find pop bottles...I can—

BUBBA-BLUE. Get lost!

AUDREY-LEE. Take in the pop bottles. *(Pause.)* I brought you a whole box of Tasty-cakes. I know it must be a long time since you had somethin' sweet. They make all kinds now. Not just filled in the middle with cream. But lemon kind and berry kind.

(He takes the box of Tasty-cakes and eats three in a row. She watches him and smiles.)

BUBBA-BLUE. Bury it.

(Her smile disappears.)

AUDREY-LEE. Uh, uh.

BUBBA-BLUE. It's gonna start to stink up the place.

AUDREY-LEE. You can fix it.

BUBBA-BLUE. You think you know somethin' and you don't.

AUDREY-LEE. I know you like Tasty-cakes the way you scarfed 'em down the way you did. I know everyone thought you was weird 'cause you ate raw meat once. I know your mama thought you was sick in the head and sent you away for a long, long time and while you was there you learned...

BUBBA-BLUE. That wasn't me.

AUDREY-LEE. Tellin' lies again, Bubba-Blue?

BUBBA-BLUE. Don't call me that.

AUDREY-LEE. I also know that's what they called you.

(She sings—children's rhyme style.)

Buh-buh-Blue

What he do.

Stuffed his Mama

With a rus-ty shoe.

BUBBA-BLUE. That's what's a lie!

DUMPSTER DAN

By
Christopher Wall

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Dumpster Dan premiered at the First Look Theatre Company's Festival of New Works in 2003, sponsored by New York University. It was directed by Nancy Robillard, and featured Craig Lenti and James Brill. It also won the SlamBoston! Ten-Minute Play Competition, sponsored by Another Country Productions.

CHARACTERS

DAN: High-school freshman.

DAN'S FATHER: 40s.

SETTING: Two mats represent Dumpsters on opposite sides of an alley. A milk crate is used as a chair throughout. Dan's Dumpster is empty. His father's Dumpster contains a baseball cap, clipboard, glasses, books, beat-up suit jackets, tie (already knotted), towel and a toy ray gun.

TIME: The present.

DUMPSTER DAN

AT THE CURTAIN: *DAN sulks in his Dumpster. FATHER sits in another Dumpster across the alley. He tries to get DAN's attention.*

FATHER. Hungry? *(No response.)* Not hungry? *(No response.)* Alive? *(DAN turns farther away and sulks. His FATHER gives up. To the AUDIENCE.)* I was at the kitchen table. Looking at all the stuff we'd accumulated over the years. Mounds of—! Piles of—! I could hardly find the darned sink and get a drink of water. *(Pause.)* At some point you have to make a decision and take control of your life. So that's what I did. I decided to get rid of it all, everything I owned, and live off the land.

DAN. Which was hard to do, 'cause we live in a city.

FATHER. Good point. That started me thinking. *(Scratches his chin.)* I love thinking. *(Scratches some more.)* I came up with an inspired solution: urban resource reclamation.

(DAN can't resist. He gets out of his Dumpster. Leading question.)

DAN. What's that, in layman's terms?

FATHER. You subsist on stuff people throw away.

DAN. Which means?

FATHER. You climb into metal containers and wade around 'til you—'til you— Fine. Have it your way. *(Together.)*

DAN. Dumpster diving.

FATHER. Dumpster diving.

DAN (*to the AUDIENCE*). Dad didn't stop there. He got rid of our furniture and quit his job, but we still had our apartment. 'Til one day he came home and said—

FATHER (*as if waking from a nap*). I fell asleep behind the A&P on an egg crate. Best sleep I've had in years. Hmm. (*Scratches his chin.*)

DAN. Please. No more thinking!

FATHER. I passed my old partner on his way to the office. He was hunched over, weighed down by all the *things* he had to maintain. I got a better night's sleep than he did. What other proof do we need? (*Pats DAN playfully.*) I'll give the keys to the first person I see. Ha ha! Can't wait to see the expression on their face! (*FATHER starts off.*)

DAN. Wait! What about my books and clothes and—and *stuff*?

FATHER. You'll find better stuff out there.

DAN. Mom would never let you get away with this!

FATHER. Dan! (*A flash of anger. He calms himself.*) It's you and me now, all right? Trust me. (*He pats DAN on the arm.*) You'll feel better once we're out of here. (*DAN huffs as his FATHER goes to his Dumpster and reads.*)

DAN (*to the AUDIENCE*). After a few weeks, Dad began to change. He stopped drinking. His hygiene improved.

FATHER. That makes one of us.

DAN. He read five books a week. We had the best conversations. There was even talk of him entering the Boston Marathon. (*DAN climbs on the milk crate outside his dad's Dumpster.*) As for me, it took a while to get the hang of it.

ROCKS IN THE BED

By
Kathleen Warnock

© 2003 by Kathleen Warnock

Rocks in the Bed was first produced in 2003 by En Avant Playwrights at Hunter College in New York City. It was directed by Peter Bloch, and featured Joanne Joseph, Chance Muehleck and Campbell Bridges.

CHARACTERS

MRS. PERRY (Maisie): A very old woman.

THE YOUNG MAN (Wally): In his 30s.

PHOTOGRAPHER (Cliff): In his early 30s.

SETTING: A cramped bedroom in the first-floor apartment of an old house in Greenwich Village, New York City. It is distinguished chiefly by the fact that there are small, round white rocks everywhere: on the bed, on the bureau, on the bedside table, on the floor. In the corners.

TIME: Some years ago. Late morning.

ROCKS IN THE BED

AT THE CURTAIN: *MRS. PERRY enters, slow, but businesslike. She leads two young men, one with a camera, one with a notepad.*

MRS. PERRY. ...he lasted a long time, he did. Not one of those quick and easy ones: like an execution or fall down the stairs break your neck. Not long overall, I mean in a lifetime...a year out of seventy, but a long time if you're there every day.

THE YOUNG MAN. And you were here for all of it?

MRS. PERRY. Scrubbing the steps outside, all those visitors tracking in mud. Cooking soup, washing him when he couldn't make it to the toilet by himself. I didn't sign up for that! But the man had no family. Friends... he had friends, if you call 'em that, all the day and the night. Lot of poets. I never would have let him have a room if I knew he was a poet.

THE YOUNG MAN. What did he tell you he was?

MRS. PERRY. He didn't. But with his hands, you know. They were all rough, and he didn't say much, and he didn't talk like an educated man. I thought he worked in a factory, maybe on the docks. He paid the rent. If he had something to drink, it was the way a working man drinks, he made it to work on Mondays. He paid his rent on Fridays before he hit the bars.

THE YOUNG MAN. So you had no idea who he was?

MRS. PERRY. A man lives with you twenty years, you get a very good idea who he was.

THE YOUNG MAN. I mean his work.

MRS. PERRY. The poems. I been given copies of the books. You people. Students, writers, you come by here and tell me the stuff I didn't know. Didn't need to know. Didn't have to know.

PHOTOGRAPHER. Wally, what kind of shots are you looking for?

THE YOUNG MAN. How's the light?

PHOTOGRAPHER. Not good. But I don't want to use a flash.

THE YOUNG MAN. Yeah. I agree. Natural light.

MRS. PERRY. No flash. Makes my eyes hurt. Washes out the faces in the pictures.

THE YOUNG MAN. People take a lot of pictures here?

MRS. PERRY. Oh yes. Some take 'em for themselves. I'm in a book, too. The man sent it to me.

THE YOUNG MAN. What does it mean to you?

MRS. PERRY. A picture of me in a book? Means he gave me some money to use it. Means I see myself on the postcard stands in some of those fancy bookstores. I get the postcards from the people who come here.

PHOTOGRAPHER. I know the photo you're talking about. You're holding a picture, and standing behind the bed. It's very good.

MRS. PERRY. You know the photo...

PHOTOGRAPHER. ...but I don't know you. I know. But I like it as a record. Of a time. Of a person. I like the mystery of it.

THE YOUNG MAN. Some mystery.

MRS. PERRY. Mystery to some. Pain in the ass to others, pardon my French.

BODHISATTVA BY LAGOON

By
Cass Brayton

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Bodhisattva by Lagoon was first performed in 2004 by Actors Theatre in Santa Rosa, Calif., as part of “Quickies: A Festival of Short New Plays.” It was directed by Celeste Thomas, and featured Carol MacRae, Karl Mossberger, Maria Giordano and Tim Earls.

CHARACTERS

The play may be performed either by a single actor, or by two men and two women.

WOMAN : Female, elderly.

GUY : Male, 30s.

GIRL: Female, early 20s.

QUEEN: Male, 40s.

SETTING: The setting of the play can be fairly minimal. Sets and/or lighting could suggest a location in a hidden corner of a large urban park. Characters are not talking directly to each other. They share the space of the stage but inhabit it separately. The degree to which they are aware of each other is a choice to be made by the director and actors.

TIME: The present.

BODHISATTVA (bow-dee-SA-tva) – A being who postpones entering nirvana (the final stage of enlightenment) in order to remain in this world to reduce the suffering of others.

BODHISATTVA BY LAGOON

WOMAN.

Lotta trouble today.
Things were settling down, yeah,
to a nice quiet smooth kind of calm
down here by the water,
what I call my lake,
even if it is the color
of the green pea soup
my mother used to make.
The calm went all to hell
with the trouble that come this morning.
I ain't the one that found it.
No sir, I was nowhere near that
floating body,
nowhere near it.
But they come asking me all manner of questions,
suggesting I might've somehow
had something to do with what they found.
And I just told them straight up,
the wages of sin...
I don't know nothing,
nothing—
and I don't want to know nothing.
They said we know you saw more
than you're letting on,
and that much is true.
That is true.

GUY.

I told him right out.
When it came to boosting grub
he was useless as an extra tit on a cow.
“That’s me” he said. “Udderly useless.”
Udderly useless.
You could never stay mad at the guy.
His problem was he’s too pretty.
Walk in a store with him
and right off the bat
they’d be shadowing us.
One time he got caught at a check-out
with tofu dogs stashed down his pants.
Tofu dogs!
Now I ask you,
was it really worth the trouble?
I had to fake like I was having a seizure
so he could skip out
’fore they called the fuzz.
We hooked up later
and he gave me one of those
fuckin’ tofu dogs
—wasn’t half bad—
and he pulled out this other thing
he got away with—
a frisbee.
A stupid fuckin’ frisbee.
But it was the color of grass.
So I say,
“Who the fuck steals a green frisbee
for fuck sake?
You’ll lose it soon as it hits the ground.”
He says “It’s not green. It’s loden.”
“Who the fuck cares,” I said.

“You’re still gonna lose it.”
That’s the thing about him.
he never thinks a—
never thought ahead.
As a con? Udderly useless.

GIRL.

O-o-o-ou, he was one crazy fucker, man,
one cra-zee fucker.
Hell-bent on having a good ole time
no matter how bad things seemed to get.
He’d come by and say,
“Girl, you get your ass in gear,
we’re goin’ dancing.”
And I’d say “Ah shit, man,
I’m too wasted. Come back tomorrow.”
And he said “Nuh-unh-unh.
That’s a day never ever ever comes.
The moon’s out tonight and
I gotta see you dancing your dance
down by the lagoon
out in the moonlight.”
Then he said, “Let’s get dolled up.”
And he brought out some nail polish.
Emerald topaz.
And he took my hand
and he painted my nails
and then he blew on them
to get them dry.
His breath felt warm, so warm,
like my hand was being kissed
by an angel from God.

CONVERTING

By
Catherine Filloux

© 1995 by Catherine Filloux

Converting premiered in 1995 at Women's Project & Productions in New York City. It was directed by Anne D'Zmura, and featured Bill McGuire and John Daggett.

CHARACTERS

HARRY: Old and shaking.

FRED: Old and shaking.

SETTING: Central Park.

TIME: The present.

CONVERTING

AT THE CURTAIN: *HARRY and FRED sit in Central Park. A flash of fluorescent light streaks across the stage.*

HARRY. Now, that roller-skating. You're young, you could do that...

FRED. Oh, sure. I could do that.

HARRY. Why don't you? I don't mind. I'll just sit here and watch. If you want, go ahead and take a turn around with all of them, with their fluorescent clothing. Please, it would give me pleasure to know someone is having fun.

FRED. Well, maybe I will.

HARRY. Go. It will be light for hours.

FRED. Are you sure? I hate to leave you alone.

HARRY. Oh, come on. You're young, you should enjoy yourself.

FRED. And you? You shouldn't enjoy yourself?

HARRY. The young should enjoy themselves. The old should watch.

FRED. Well, you're right, I am in rather good physical shape.

HARRY. It's from all that pingpong you do.

FRED. Yes, you do develop a strong, supple arm. (*FRED flexes his arm, admiring its sinew.*)

HARRY. Is the sex still as good?

FRED. Oh, sure.

HARRY. Even with Jan gone, and all?

FRED. Oh, yeah!

HARRY. Ah, youth!

FRED. Well, yes. I'm just lucky, I guess.

HARRY. I envy you your energy, your vitality.

(FRED breathes with difficulty, touching his heart.)

FRED. Oh, of course...vitality.

HARRY. Go ahead, go get some of those roller skates.

FRED. In a second.

HARRY. Is the sun getting to you?

FRED. No.

HARRY. It's coming down a bit hard, shall we move into the shade?

FRED. In a second.

HARRY. Tell me, the writing? On its way to Broadway yet?

FRED. ...On...its...way, sure. Agent...confident.

HARRY. Oh, well that's good. I wish I could write. I dictate, but I can't transcribe. That movie I wrote for Paul Newman, he still wants to make it. They're still in discussions with DreamWorks.

FRED. Huh...

HARRY. But *you*, you have your life in front of you. You're worth another few plays. And they'll probably be your best, you devil. *(FRED grunts. He is nearly laying on the bench now.)* Taking a little nap? That's what I envy most I think. The way you all can sleep. Anytime, anyplace. I resign myself now to an hour or two a night. The rest of the time I'm *thinking* about sleeping. But you, you can even sleep during the day. Don't let me bother you, go ahead and get some shuteye. Then you can go rent the skates.

FRED. Blades.

DEFROSTING

By
Domenick Vincent Danza

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Defrosting premiered in 2002 at Chicago Dramatists as part of the Ten-Minute Workshop festival. It was directed by Tania Richard, and featured Casey Hayes and Robert Koon.

CHARACTERS

HUGH: Mid-30s, average height, thin, wiry, high-strung.

LOUIE: Mid-30s, tall, heavysset, easygoing.

SETTING: A kitchen and dinette in an apartment. There is a kitchen table and chairs, and an empty spot where the refrigerator should be. An exit UR leads to the rest of the apartment. An exit UL leads to the back porch.

TIME: The present, summer. A Sunday evening.

DEFROSTING

AT THE CURTAIN: *HUGH is frantically preparing food in the microwave. There is a knock on the door.*

HUGH. It's open.

LOUIE. (*enters from UR*). Hey Hugh.

HUGH. Hey Lou.

(*Dog barks.*)

LOUIE. Where's the dog?

HUGH. Outside.

LOUIE (*looks out back door UL*). Hey, Dewie. (*To HUGH.*) What's the refrigerator doing on the porch?

HUGH. That's why I invited you.

LOUIE. I thought you invited me for dinner.

HUGH. I did.

LOUIE. Who else is coming over?

HUGH. No one.

LOUIE. Why so much food?

HUGH. The freezer needed to be defrosted.

LOUIE. So you put it out on the porch?

HUGH. No. I chopped at it with a hammer and a screwdriver.

LOUIE. And...

HUGH. I broke something in it and Freon came shooting out.

LOUIE. So you carried it out to the porch.

HUGH. No. The firemen did.

LOUIE (*laughing*). You called the fire department?

HUGH. No. I looked in the yellow pages for an emergency phone number because the Freon smelled bad and I didn't know if it was toxic. The operator connected me to the fire department and they sent over four burley men to check it out.

LOUIE. Is Freon toxic?

HUGH. No, but they said it would be safer if they put it out on the porch.

LOUIE. So they did.

HUGH. Yeah. Veggie Burger? (*LOUIE takes one and sits.*) Take more.

LOUIE. No thanks.

HUGH. Lean Cuisine?

LOUIE. What kind?

HUGH. Turkey.

LOUIE. I like the chicken.

HUGH. Sorry. All out.

LOUIE. Any lettuce or tomato? Veggie Burgers are gross without lettuce and tomato.

HUGH. No.

LOUIE. Ketchup?

HUGH. Mustard.

LOUIE. Maybe I'll have the Lean Cuisine.

HUGH. Sure. Iced tea or beer?

LOUIE. Beer.

HUGH. Here you go.

LOUIE. It's warm. (*Beat: HUGH gives LOUIE a sarcastic look.*) Oh yeah. Maybe I'll have the tea. Notice I didn't say "iced."

HUGH. You're catching on.

LOUIE. Why didn't you just put everything in a cooler?

HUGH. Don't have one.

**THE LATE AFTERNOON (AROUND
3:45 OR SO) BEFORE CHRISTMAS**

By
Brett Neveu

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The Late Afternoon (Around 3:45 or So) Before Christmas premiered in 2001 at The MehaDome Theatre at Frankie J's on Broadway in Chicago. It was produced by C'est Destine as part of "A Triple XXXmas Special: 3 Xmas Plays, 3 Playwrights, 3 Directors." The play was directed by Clint Corley, and featured Don Blair and Matthew W. Roth.

CHARACTERS

RICHARD BARTLET: In his 30s.

SANTA CLAUS: Older (yet ageless...)

SETTING: Santa's office. There is a chair and a desk. Another chair sits opposite.

TIME: The present.

THE LATE AFTERNOON (AROUND 3:45 OR SO) BEFORE CHRISTMAS

AT THE CURTAIN: *SANTA CLAUS, dressed as SANTA would be dressed, sits in the chair behind the desk. He has a coffee cup, a pen and a manila folder. He sips his coffee a few times. A pause. RICHARD BARTLET enters. He wears a festive sweater and khaki pants. RICHARD stands for a moment looking at SANTA. He walks to SANTA and attempts to sit on his lap.*

SANTA. No, no.

RICHARD. Oh. I'm sorry. (*RICHARD stands, embarrassed. A beat.*)

SANTA (*gesturing to chair*). Please sit down.

RICHARD. I'm sorry.

SANTA. Sit down please.

RICHARD. No problem.

(*RICHARD sits down in the chair opposite the desk. A pause. SANTA looks at the name on the folder.*)

SANTA. Richard Bartlet?

RICHARD. Yes.

SANTA. Of Bloomington?

RICHARD. Yes.

SANTA. What is your address?

RICHARD. 303 Harling Street.

SANTA. Did you move?

RICHARD. Oh. Yes. Last April.

SANTA. Your previous address?

RICHARD. 1618 Menker. Road.

The Late Afternoon (Around 3:45 or So) Before Christmas 287

SANTA. Okay.

RICHARD. Menker Road.

(SANTA opens the folder for a brief second. He quickly closes it and puts it back on the desk.)

SANTA. What do you want?

RICHARD. What do I want?

SANTA. For Christmas. What do you want?

RICHARD. Oh. I'm sorry. I thought you meant, "what did I want from you?"

SANTA. That is what I mean.

RICHARD. No, I thought you meant that I wanted something. That I had a complaint or something.

SANTA. That's not what I meant.

RICHARD. I know that. Right. I'm sorry.

SANTA. That's not what I meant.

RICHARD. Okay. I guess I would like a new jacket.

SANTA. Let's back up for a moment.

RICHARD. Okay.

SANTA. You've been naughty.

RICHARD. I have?

SANTA. Don't joke.

RICHARD. I *may* have been naughty, I don't quite remember the specifics—

SANTA. We should talk about you being naughty before we continue.

RICHARD. Oh.

SANTA. You knew what could possibly happen at the time when you were being naughty, didn't you?

RICHARD. The incident you may perhaps be referring to happened this past summer, so, in my defense, Christmas seemed quite far away.

SANTA. It's not like things change here, Richard. Naughty is still naughty no matter what the circumstances.

RICHARD. I understand that.

SANTA. Warm weather is no excuse.

RICHARD. I understand.

SANTA. Do you think I'm some sort of rube?

RICHARD. I don't think you're a rube, Santa.

SANTA. Santa?

RICHARD. Um. Santa *Claus*.

SANTA. I don't mean to be a hardliner, here. It's not as if you don't know what's going on in your own life. It's not that you don't know if the situation you are in is "naughty" or if it's "nice." It's not even a judgment call. It's merely common sense.

RICHARD. Some things fall into a gray area.

SANTA. No they don't. Don't try to get me into a semantics discussion. You certainly know the difference, no matter the seeming confusion. There is no gray area.

RICHARD. This incident I believe you're referring to wasn't actually that naughty. Parts of it were naughty, I admit, but some other parts of the incident were quite nice.

SANTA. I'm not in the business of dissecting "incidents." I don't have time to go over every part of a person's actions and say, "Well, this part was half nice, and this part over here is leaning toward naughty, so I'll go ahead and give it a seventy-thirty split towards 'nice.'" That's not how things work.

RICHARD. Yes, but, if you were in my shoes—

SANTA. How long have you been coming to see me, Richard?

LILLIAN GOES TO THE MIRROR

By
Cherisse Montgomery

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Lillian Goes to the Mirror premiered in 2004 at the Mae West Fest in Seattle, Wash. It was directed by Judy Jacobs, and featured Crystal Eney and Erik Eagleson.

CHARACTERS

LILLIAN: Early 30s. Wears blazer, glasses, skirt and loafers. Beneath her button-down blouse is a black bra stuffed with white tissue.

DAN: Early 30s. Dressed comfortably.

SETTING: The stage is divided into three areas: the poetry-reading area, where the unseen audience is female; Lillian's changing area; and Lillian and Dan's kitchen. The changing area consists of house shoes, a coat tree, and a robe with a ponytail holder in the pocket. Hanging near the coat tree is a full-length mirror. The kitchen is represented by a table and two chairs. They will pantomime preparing and eating their breakfast using no food, silverware or plates. The only other prop is a metal spatula.

TIME: The poetry reading is in the present. The kitchen scene with Dan takes place in memory. The changing area blends both past and present.

LILLIAN GOES TO THE MIRROR

AT THE CURTAIN: *LIGHTS up on LILLIAN who walks from the audience to the stage. She preens a bit before reaching the stage, perhaps smoothing her skirt and checking her hair. Applause, wolf calls, and murmurings are heard from the audience.*

LILLIAN. This one I call “Amazons Gone Wild.” *(Pause.)*
We have waited for the Moon who guides
our waters, our yolkblood, and the hunt.

Under her light and by the fire, she
blesses the knife and my pound of flesh.

The women welcome my new body
with gifts of pine cones and skyward howls.

They say my brunette train of hair will
cover the persistent scar, but still,

it is strange to be forever marked
by an absence.

(Sound of applause. Then the clatter of a falling chair. LIGHTS up on DAN who scrambles to pick up the chair then continues cooking breakfast. LILLIAN notices but tries not to react.)

LILLIAN (*to AUDIENCE*). This poem is based on the traditions of the ancient Amazons who, in ritual, severed their left breasts. Unlike traditional women, Amazons wavered between male and female gender identities. Warriors with long hair, a single breast, and blades of steel.

DAN. Out of bed, Lily! Beauty sleep is no substitute for breakfast.

LILLIAN (*to AUDIENCE*). But, there must have been an unhappy few, who felt empty, lacking, and were haunted by memories of when they were whole and beautiful...

DAN. C'mon, beautiful! I didn't slave in this kitchen for nothing.

LILLIAN (*to DAN*). You are not welcome here. I have washed my hands and memories clean of you.

DAN. You aren't gonna make me eat all this by myself, are you?

LILLIAN. I have forgotten you. Height, your brand of shampoo, eye color, your crooked bottom tooth.

DAN. C'mon, Lily, like a big girl.

LILLIAN. I don't want to.

DAN. Don't let your eggs get cold. Last two.

(LILLIAN walks to the changing area.)

LILLIAN. I just bought a dozen this week. *(LILLIAN begins exchanging her blazer for the robe, her glasses for the ponytail holder, and her loafers for house shoes.)*

DAN. Forgot to use butter the first few times. We'll have to buy more.

LILLIAN. Are you burning them now?

DAN. No, that would be the sausage. Out of that, too.

LILLIAN. I could've cooked this morning.

GRUNIONS

By
Barbara Lindsay

© 1988 by Barbara Lindsay

Grunions premiered at Theater/Theatre in Hollywood, Calif., in 1988 as part of the Golden West Playwright's "Epiphany Plays." It was directed by Richard J. Nierenberg, and featured Joan-Carrol Banks and Sanford Clark. It was a finalist in the 1989 Actors Theatre of Louisville National Ten-Minute Play Contest.

CHARACTERS

AUGIE:

A married couple

CARLA:

SETTING: A beach along the California coast.

TIME: The present. Late at night.

GRUNIONS

AT THE CURTAIN: *AUGIE and CARLA are there. There is a refreshing unabashedness about AUGIE, while CARLA, on the other hand, is more tightly wound.*

AUGIE. What time is it? They're supposed to run around midnight. This is great, isn't it? Look at this night we've got here. Couldn't be better. Actually, I wanted to go a little farther up the coast, get away from the lights and the people, but I was afraid we'd miss it. How you doing?

CARLA. Fine.

AUGIE. Is that...? No. Is that just foam? I can't even tell. Although if you can't tell, it probably isn't them. It'll probably be unmistakable, don't you think? How you doing? Oh no, you know what I did? I forgot my flashlight. How could I be so stupid? I should have brought my flashlight.

CARLA. What flashlight?

AUGIE. The flashlight. The silver one. There's only one, isn't there?

CARLA. That's not your flashlight.

AUGIE. Whose is it?

CARLA. It's ours. It's mine, too.

AUGIE. Well sure.

CARLA. You kept saying "my flashlight" as if it's somehow just yours. How's that supposed to make me feel?

AUGIE. No, of course, our flashlight, yours and mine. *Mi flashlight es su flashlight.* Naturally. How could we not think to bring it? Hope the moon stays out. I wonder, do they always run during a full moon? I can't remember if it was full last year. Remember?

CARLA. Yes.

AUGIE. Are you cold? Do you want my jacket? We should have brought the blanket. Our blanket. This is great, isn't it? I didn't even think to bring a six-pack. A six-pack would be just the ticket right about now. I can't believe I forgot. I'm like a kid. It's amazing I got out of the house with my fly zipped. Oh. *(He zips his fly.)* I wonder if they can hear me talk or feel the vibrations in the sand when we move around.

CARLA. I'm cold.

AUGIE. You want my jacket?

CARLA. It's after eleven. Let's go home.

AUGIE. Are you kidding? We'd miss it. We just got here. What's the point of coming down if we just turn around and go home?

CARLA. There is no point in coming down here.

AUGIE. Right.

CARLA. That's my point.

AUGIE. That's my point, too.

CARLA. So let's go.

AUGIE. No no, that's not my point. My point is that there's no point in coming down here if we just leave. Don't you want to see it?

CARLA. Not particularly.

AUGIE. Why not?

CARLA. I just don't. It's stupid.

TRIO

By
Mark Smith-Soto

© 2004 by Mark Smith-Soto

Trio (originally entitled **Deal With This: Trio From the Holocaust Museum**) was first produced by Theatre Orange of the Arts Center of Carrboro/Chapel Hill as one of the winners of the 2003 “Ten by Ten in the Triangle” Competition. It was directed by Thomas (TeKay) King, and featured David Byron Hudson, Donald Shenton and Larry Evans.

CHARACTERS

SOLDIER: In his early 20s. Thin, dark, nervous.

CAPTAIN: In his late 30s. A precise and controlled man.

PRISONER: In his 40s. Thin, dark, intense.

SETTING: A Nazi camp. The theatrical space should be filled with an impressionistic use of light and sound, the shadow of barbed wire, background echoes of metallic voices and muffled grief. The specific details do not matter, just the nightmare sense that pervades those awful moments when our humanity is tested beyond its limits, and even God seems to turn His face away.

TIME: 1941...2001... Anytime.

TRIO

AT THE CURTAIN: *Shadows and light.*

SOLDIER.

Why me? Was it merely an accident
he found me alone for a moment, I stooping
to hike up my boot, he the last of the group
to leave the room? Or had he planned ahead:
this is the one, he's my best shot? I caught
him staring at me twice, and twice I held
his eye to teach him how to give, to force
my will like when a boy must train a dog
to stay. He must have misunderstood, I
don't know what he imagined he saw,
maybe pity for the blonde and her two girls,
I did speak gently to them before I
felt his eyes on me, almost forgot for
a moment why they and I were here. Didn't
really forget, who could, but fell into
a place inside myself where these faces
repeated like words that somehow mattered...
What were they saying? Nothing my own wife
and daughters said, as I got up from breakfast
months ago, hanging in play from my belt
and holster, kissing my neck goodbye at the door.
That was the language of home; now a different
language ordered things along...

PRISONER.

...And so I watched

him check the bodies one by one, touching us
as little as possible and pushing us on,
afraid to feel the muscle and the bone
move under clothes already turning rags.
I saw him talk too much so his lip would
not tremble, I noted the way his eye
lingered on the woman ahead of me,
her voice soft in her girls' ears explaining
that the trip would go on for just a while longer,
that they were almost there...

SOLDIER.

...I moved them by
and passed on to the next, and this was him:
a shapeless jacket torn at the lapels,
stony eyes behind those dirt-smearred glasses,
and had the thought, not much lost here,
and shoved him to the left. But later then,
my watch almost over, his face appears,
me hunched over my boot, he hunched over
his words, hands together like they were glued,
mouth moving softly, quickly, whispering
his pleases, shooting looks like a frightened bird...

PRISONER.

...They hate it when
you beg; it makes them feel. I'd seen it before,
could count on that recoiling fear to fall
all over me and make the world stop.
It is important that you understand.
Death was the only freedom that could matter
to a man who'd stood and watched from somewhere
outside his skin, his sister picked up by

the arm and flung against a wall. The stain of that sound ran down my throat into the pit of my body, and the look she turned on me stuck and hardened; I was a stone myself. She screamed and ran at the man who took her to the next room and made her quiet at last, but very slowly...

SOLDIER.

Some sixty years have passed, and still I see him crouched in front of me, his dark intense smell in my face, his sudden body scaring me to my feet so I almost fell. They know how to shrink their shoulders and beg in that aggressive way— I don't know what he saw in my face, why choose me to wheedle with his yellow eyes?

CAPTAIN.

All wrong, the way he lost all pride. scrambling to his feet like a frightened dog, the way he held his head stiff listening to the Jew jabbering away, face gone blank, dry mouth ajar. Even from the other side of the yard, through the open window, I could see him breathing hard, could feel him tremble in his uniform, saw how he was listening. I almost yelled, but felt compelled to let them show me what could happen between the two of them, the way any nakedness demands to be watched.

CHEATING DEATH

By
Frank Higgins

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Cheating Death was first presented in 2003 by Atlantis Playmakers in Billerica, Mass. It was directed by Adam Perlman, and featured Carlos Zaldondo, Gwynne Flanagan and Will McGregor.

CHARACTERS

CAROL: A woman approaching middle age.

DEATH: A young, handsome man.

HERB: Carol's husband.

SETTING: The bedroom of Carol and Herb.

TIME: The present.

CHEATING DEATH

AT THE CURTAIN: *CAROL and HERB are sleeping in their bed. The dark, shrouded figure of DEATH enters with his staff.*

DEATH. Carol. Carol Milberger.

CAROL. Honey?

DEATH. Wake up, Carol.

CAROL. What time is it?

DEATH. Later than you think.

CAROL. No, it's not even light yet. We've still got time.

Let me rub your neck... C'mon, you know it helps you. (*DEATH hesitates, then sits on the bed. She rubs DEATH's neck.*) You worry too much. So they hired a younger guy at the office; he doesn't know *half* what you know. You know *people*. You're in the people business. The boss knows that; you'll last forever, 'til death do us part.

DEATH. Carol, I've come for you.

CAROL. Oh honey, it's okay.

DEATH. Open your eyes.

(*She sees him, and notices her husband still snores beside her.*)

CAROL. Herb! Herb, wake up!

DEATH. He won't be joining us.

CAROL. Take what you want; take anything but get out!

There's nothing valuable in here anyway.

DEATH. Not true.

CAROL. So that's what you want? You've come to the wrong place, buddy. *(She takes out a can of pepper spray and a stun gun.)* Get out of here right now and I won't hurt you— I warned you. *(She sprays him in the face; DEATH does not react. CAROL steels herself and charges. She stabs at him with the stun gun. DEATH makes no effort to defend himself, and the electric charges have no effect. She drops the stun gun and takes a karate stance. She hacks away; DEATH stands mute and passive. CAROL is finally exhausted. She claps her hands twice and the LIGHTS come on.)* What the... All right, get up, Herb. Joke's over. *(She shoves her husband who continues to snore.)*

DEATH. It's no joke.

CAROL. Right. My birthday was *yesterday*. Who do you work for? Singing telegrams? Well no tip for you— And *you* stop pretending you're sleeping.

DEATH. He can't hear us.

CAROL. That was some act you put on; pretending to be so worried about the young guy at the office, pretending you had to take a sleeping pill. Well it's not funny, and it's not funny you took the batteries from my stun gun. *(She touches her husband in the rump with the stun gun and he reacts and we hear the SNAP of electricity.)* Oh my God! Herb! Oh baby!— Call nine-one-one.

DEATH. He'll be all right. He's not on my to-do list.

CAROL. ...Oh God...this is real.

DEATH. Yes.

CAROL. No. I'm dreaming! I'm hallucinating! Drugs in college: bad *bad!*

DEATH. Prepare yourself.

I'LL FLY AWAY

By
David Rush

© 2004 by David Rush

CHARACTERS

RACHEL: About 30.

POPPY: Her father, old and frail.

SETTING: A clearing in a forest preserve.

TIME: October. Six a.m.

I'LL FLY AWAY

AT THE CURTAIN: *RACHEL leads her father, POPPY, on. She has a large bag filled with items as needed, and carries a folding canvas chair.*

POPPY. Come on, we can't be late.

RACHEL. All right, all right.

POPPY. Did you bring the harmonica?

RACHEL. Yes, I brought the harmonica.

POPPY. And the tambourine?

RACHEL. Yes, I have it all. How's this, this good enough?

POPPY. ...We're too close to the water, the water'll scare them away.

RACHEL. Where would you like to be?

POPPY. By the trees. Those tall trees. Those tall oak trees.

RACHEL. But then they won't see us. I think we should stay by the water.

POPPY. The water'll scare them away. They won't be able to land.

RACHEL. Poppy, please. Now come on, here, sit down.
(She unfolds a portable canvas picnic chair.)

POPPY. The water'll scare them away. They won't stop. They'll go right on without me.

RACHEL. It's a little stream, Poppy; nobody's going to be afraid of a little stream.

POPPY. They won't know what it is.

RACHEL. Poppy, their civilization is a million years older than ours; they've figured out how to sail through black holes, and they talk to you through your electric razor.

I think they should know what water is.

POPPY. Maybe they don't.

RACHEL. Think about it, Poppy; how do they take baths, how do they keep themselves clean, how do they replenish their vital bodily fluids? They must have water.

Now, here, sit down.

POPPY. They wash themselves with machines.

RACHEL. Sit down, Poppy. You'll wear yourself out.

POPPY. ...I'm afraid they'll miss me. I'm afraid they won't see me.

RACHEL. Then we'll go back home.

POPPY. They'll go right on, won't they? They won't stop and wait. They'll just go right on ahead without me and I'll be stuck here.

RACHEL. We'll go back home and I'll make you French toast.

POPPY. I'll be stuck here for another two thousand years.

We should move away from the water.

RACHEL. How about a Pop-Tart; you want a Pop-Tart? I got strawberry and apple cinnamon. Take your pick.

POPPY. I'm not hungry.

RACHEL. You sure? You might be later.

POPPY. Later I'll be asleep.

RACHEL. Asleep...?

POPPY. Of course; how else do you travel a thousand light years away? They put you in frozen sleep, I told you.

RACHEL. No, you didn't. You never told me that part.

PHONING IT IN

By
Michele Markarian

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Phoning It In premiered in 2003 at the Piano Factory in Boston, Mass., as part of Devanaughn Theatre’s “1st Annual Dragonfly Festival.” The play was directed by Andrew Sarno, and featured Carl Schwaber and Molly Kimmerling.

CHARACTERS

BRIAN

STEPHANIE

SETTING: A city park.

TIME: The present.

PHONING IT IN

AT THE CURTAIN: *BRIAN and STEPHANIE are seated on a bench. They are holding hands.*

BRIAN. You know, I really love you.

STEPHANIE. Oh, that's nice. I really love you, too.

BRIAN. Really?

STEPHANIE. Yeah. Really. (*BRIAN tries to speak. Cell phone rings.*) Excuse me. (*Answers cell phone.*) Hello? Oh, hi! Hi! How are you? I'm—oh. Oh. Really? Really? You like him that much? Of course it's a lot! Carrie! Come on! You're telling me you want to marry the guy, well, that's liking someone an awful lot. Wouldn't you say? Oh. Yeah. (*Nods head.*) Okay. Carrie, I'm kind of—oh, is that your buzzer? It could be him? All right, I'll let you go. Bye. (*She hangs up.*)
Sorry.

BRIAN. What was that about?

STEPHANIE. Oh, Carrie's just— (*Cell phone rings.*) Excuse me. (*She picks up phone.*) Hello? (*She hangs up.*)
Wrong number.

BRIAN. So anyway, I really—

STEPHANIE. I was telling you about Carrie. She wants to marry this guy.

BRIAN. What guy?

STEPHANIE. The guy she's been seeing!

BRIAN. What's wrong with that?

STEPHANIE. Brian, come on! I mean really!

BRIAN. What, really?

STEPHANIE. I mean, she's only been seeing him two months!

BRIAN. So?

STEPHANIE. You can't just marry someone you've been seeing for two months! It's not right!

BRIAN. Why not?

STEPHANIE. Well, jeez, we've been seeing each other for eight months.

BRIAN. Yeah? *(He leans closer.)*

STEPHANIE. Exactly!

BRIAN. What do you mean, exactly?

STEPHANIE. Exactly!

BRIAN. Are you saying that—you think we shouldn't—
(A cell phone rings.) Excuse me. *(He answers phone.)*
Hello? Scott. Yeah. Yeah, well, I'm kind of—no. No, not yet—
(He looks at STEPHANIE.) What? What do you mean, don't do it? You said last week that—what? She *what?* Scott, are you sure? Uh-huh. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, that's pretty serious. That's really serious. Just be sure you got your information right, buddy. You wouldn't want to—oh. That's your call-waiting. Okay. Good luck. *(He hangs up.)*

STEPHANIE. Who was that?

BRIAN. Scott. *(He looks glum.)*

STEPHANIE. Oh. *(BRIAN starts to speak, then stops.)*
Why the face?

BRIAN. What face?

STEPHANIE. You know. *(She exaggerates glum face.)*

BRIAN. I don't wanna talk about it.

STEPHANIE. Is it about Scott? *(BRIAN nods.)* What about Scott?

BRIAN. I don't wanna talk about it.

4-1-1

By
David Fleisher

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4-1-1 was first produced in New York City in 1996 by Expanded Arts as part of its “Bread and Circuses Festival of New Plays.”

CHARACTERS

OPERATOR

CALLER

SETTING: A telephone company, and a private residence.

TIME: The present.

4-1-1

AT THE CURTAIN: *LIGHTS up on OPERATOR.*

OPERATOR. Information.

(LIGHTS up on CALLER.)

CALLER. Yes, Operator, I'd like the number for a Dr.

Phillip Carey on Ridgmont Avenue.

OPERATOR. Carey?

CALLER. Yes, that's right.

OPERATOR. Is that spelled C-A-R-E-Y?

CALLER. I believe so.

OPERATOR. Checking.

CALLER. Thank you, Operator.

OPERATOR. With a C?

CALLER. Yes, with a C.

OPERATOR. I don't see a Dr. Phillip Carey with a C on
Ridgmont Avenue.

CALLER. I wonder if he spells his name with a K.

OPERATOR. I don't know, sir.

CALLER. Would you see if there's a Dr. Phillip Carey
with a K on Ridgmont?

OPERATOR. K-A-R-E-Y?

CALLER. Yes.

OPERATOR. Checking.

CALLER. Thank you.

OPERATOR. There's a Phillip Carey with a K on
Columbo Circle.

CALLER. Columbo Circle?

OPERATOR. Yes, sir.

CALLER. But I was told his office is on Ridgemont Avenue.

OPERATOR. The one I've got listed here is on Columbo Circle.

CALLER. Columbo Circle?

OPERATOR. Yes, sir.

CALLER. Wonder if that's the same Phillip Carey.

OPERATOR. I wouldn't know, sir.

CALLER. I don't even know where Columbo Circle is.

OPERATOR. Question.

CALLER. Yes, Operator?

OPERATOR. Could he have moved?

CALLER. I don't know.

OPERATOR. Is there a way for you to find out?

CALLER. Not until I get the phone number and ask him.

OPERATOR. Would you like me to give you the number?

CALLER. I just don't think that's the correct Phillip Carey. I never heard of Columbo Circle, plus I honestly believe he spells his name with a C.

OPERATOR. Did you say you would like the number?

CALLER. Yes, give me the damn number.

OPERATOR. Beg your pardon, sir?

CALLER. Please give me the number.

OPERATOR. The number is...are you writing this down?

CALLER. Yes, Operator, as we speak.

OPERATOR. As what?

CALLER. Nothing. Just give me the number, thank you.

OPERATOR. The number is 689-3417.

CALLER. Operator?

OPERATOR. Yes?

LET ME COUNT THE WAYS

By
Jay D. Hanagan

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Let Me Count the Ways was originally produced in 2002 by Gatesinger Company, Ltd. in Pultneyville, N.Y. It was directed by Jay D. Hanagan, and featured Sara Blankenberg, Andrew Meyer and Mike Mulberry.

CHARACTERS

SHE: A woman.

HE: A man.

FATHER: A father.

SETTING: A living room/bare stage.

TIME: The present. Evening.

LET ME COUNT THE WAYS

AT THE CURTAIN : *SHE and HE about to embrace and kiss...if they're lucky.*

SHE. I love you.

HE. I love you.

SHE. Kiss me. (*HE immediately leans in and SHE just as immediately—*) Wait!

HE. What?!

SHE. My father. He will hear.

HE. I'll be quiet.

SHE. I love you.

HE. And I love you.

SHE. Kiss me. (*HE leans in.*) Wait!

HE. I'll be *very* quiet. (*Leans in.*)

SHE. Do you say you love me because you love me, or do you say you love me so that you may kiss me.

HE. Yes.

SHE. "Yes" to what?

HE. "Yes" to whatever it is that will allow me to kiss you.

SHE (*turns*). So you admit you do not love me.

HE. I admit nothing of the sort!

SHE (*turns back*). But you do not deny it!

HE. I deny nothing of the sort!

SHE. You don't.

HE. And I shan't!

SHE. So you love me?!

HE. I suppose I do.

SHE. And I suppose—

HE. —I love you! Kiss me! (*Leans in.*)
SHE. Wait!
HE. Should I have said it the other way around?
SHE. *Why* do you love me?
HE. I don't know.
SHE. You don't *know*?!
HE. I mean, I know, but...but my love is far too great for mere words.
SHE. It is?
HE. I just said so, didn't I?
SHE. Kiss me! (*HE leans in.*) Wait!
HE. You will not be-*lieve* how quiet I can be!
SHE. Are you saying you are not attracted to me?
HE. Of course I'm attract—...is this a trick question?
SHE. Would you still want to kiss me were you not in love with me?
HE. Of course!
SHE. So love has nothing to do with it.
HE. Of course not.
SHE. So you would nigh be happy going about kissing whomsoever you fancied with nary a thought of love.
HE (*beat*). No.
SHE. No!?
HE (*confused*). I don't *think* so.
SHE. Well I wouldn't think so either.
HE. Love truly hurts.
SHE. Aye, it does. But wait! You hurt?
HE. Sorely.
SHE. So you love me!
HE. If this is heading where I hope it is, then "yes."
SHE. Kiss me, my love!
HE. Then yes! (*Leans in.*) Wait.