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Dramatic Publishing

The Cell Phone Rings for Thee

A collection of 10-minute plays

By

WERNER TRIESCHMANN



Dramatic Publishing

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The Cell Phone Rings for Thee

CHARACTERS:

DEAD MAN

WIDOW

PRIEST

DAUGHTER

PLACE & TIME: A funeral home. Now.

SETTING: A table or long bench for the DEAD MAN.

Maybe an arrangement of flowers, but otherwise, nothing else.

* * *

(Lights up on DEAD MAN wearing a suit and stretched out on a bench or table. WIDOW, wearing black, walks in. She stops in front of DEAD MAN. She shakes her head and starts to tear up. A cell phone rings. WIDOW dabs at her eyes with a tissue as the phone rings and then digs in her purse for her phone.)

WIDOW. Hello. Oh, thank you. It is a tragedy. The thing about it is that he had so much left he wanted to do. You know he really was excited about that calling plan—I think I told you about it. Where am I? I'm at the visitation. Yes. I'm looking at him right now. They did a

good job. So what are you doing? No, I don't think that's an odd question. OK. Bye.

(The PRIEST, who is talking on a headset in his ear, walks in.)

PRIEST. I love that joke!

WIDOW. What?

PRIEST. Oh, no, not you. *(Back to his phone.)* Let me shout at you later, I've got to get back to work. What? Oh yeah, put that on Facebook. I want to see it! *(The PRIEST now turns to the WIDOW.)* Sally!

WIDOW. Father, it's just a tragedy.

PRIEST. I certainly never expected to receive this kind of call about Jim.

WIDOW. I know.

PRIEST. I mean, early this week, he sent me the most hilarious text.

WIDOW. He did?

PRIEST. It was priceless. It might have been a little off-color, but I appreciated that about your husband. He was such a marvelous communicator.

WIDOW. He was.

PRIEST. He was always in touch. So easy to reach.

WIDOW. Yes he was.

PRIEST. I think, if God hadn't called him—

WIDOW. God calling him...he would have liked that.

PRIEST. He would have.

WIDOW. Yes, he would have.

PRIEST. Death, it's so—excuse me. I need to take this.

(PRIEST turns away from WIDOW. The DAUGHTER walks in.)

DAUGHTER. Mom! Oh Mom!

WIDOW. Lizzie! *(WIDOW and DAUGHTER hug.)*

DAUGHTER. How are we going to make it through today?

WIDOW. How was traffic?

DAUGHTER. Traffic?

WIDOW. I tried to call you.

DAUGHTER. Call me?! Why? I turned off my cell phone.

I can't talk to anybody right now.

WIDOW. You shouldn't turn off your phone. I was worried.

DAUGHTER. Is that Father O'Reilly?

PRIEST *(on his phone)*. Oh that's a likely story!

WIDOW. Yes.

(DAUGHTER walks over to the DEAD MAN.)

DAUGHTER. How could this happen?

(WIDOW walks over to stand with DAUGHTER.)

WIDOW. His time had come.

PRIEST *(on his phone)*. No kidding!

DAUGHTER. His time? What are you talking about, Mom? He fell off a ladder!

PRIEST *(on his phone)*. You're telling me!

DAUGHTER *(glaring at PRIEST)*. Unbelievable!

PRIEST *(on phone)*. Uh, gotta go. *(Turns to DAUGHTER.)*
Elizabeth. My dear.

Close Shave

CHARACTERS:

GERALD

MARGARET

BLUE STEEL TURBO POWER RAZOR 4000

PLACE & TIME: Bathroom. After Christmas.

SETTING: A sink would be great, but nothing really needed except light.

* * * *

(Lights up. GERALD's hair is wet. He's just come out of the shower. He checks himself in the mirror.)

MARGARET *(offstage)*. Gerald?!

GERALD. Yes. Honey.

MARGARET *(offstage)*. Where are you?!

GERALD. I'm in the bathroom, of course...

MARGARET *(offstage)*. What?!

GERALD. Bathroom! In the bathroom!

MARGARET *(offstage)*. Use your new razor I got you for Christmas! I left it on the sink!

GERALD. OK.

MARGARET (*offstage*). I spent a lot of money on it! It has special features and it took a long time to find it! So you better use it and not put it in the back of the shelf like you did with the last razor I bought!

GERALD (*calling out*). I will! (*To himself.*) What was wrong with the old one?

MARGARET (*offstage*). What?!

GERALD (*calling out*). OK I will, I'll use it. I see it. It's right here. (*He pauses before checking to see if she's still there.*) OK? (*He now puts on some shaving cream. He looks down and finds the razor, which looks like an ordinary plastic razor. GERALD looks at the razor and shrugs. Then he looks closer and finds a button. He pushes it. There is an ominous metallic whoosh sound, perhaps sounding like the closing of a prison door.*)

RAZOR. Power on for Blue Steel Turbo Power Razor 4000!

(GERALD is startled for a moment but everything talks back now and so it doesn't really bother him. He looks at his face in the mirror again and, after a moment, is about to put the razor to his face.)

RAZOR. You man enough for four blades?

(GERALD stops, looks around, dismisses what he heard. Instead of shaving, he forlornly stares at himself in the mirror.)

RAZOR. I'm askin' you a question, milquetoast. You man enough for four blades?

(GERALD now looks at his razor.)

RAZOR. Didja know you set me on three blades, Nancy?
Three blades!

GERALD. Three blades is...fine.

RAZOR. Gah! I suppose three blades are just fine if you need your pacy and a bottle after working with such dangerous equipment. Boy, Gerald, does the little woman have to shave off the edges of soap for you, too?

GERALD. No. This'll be fine. Close enough.

RAZOR. Did you even take a gander at how many blades this bad boy is packin'? Ten pieces of steel. Dang straight, your little Christmas razor is packing ten blades, baby! That kinda changes the ol' shavin' equation, don't it, Gerald?! Whoo hoo!

GERALD. You're sure an aggressive...razor.

RAZOR. Yeah well, it's time we brought some real heat to this shaving game. Speaking of which, can we lose the sissy bow?

GERALD. What?

RAZOR. Ol' Mrs. Battleaxe has gone off to run her errands, right?

GERALD. Margaret? Yeah, I guess that's where she went.

RAZOR. So take off the bow, Poindexter. Christmas is over.

GERALD (*taking off the bow*). Yeah. Christmas is over.
(*He sighs. He has the razor poised and ready to go.*)

RAZOR. Whatsa matter? Can't pull the trigger? I'm set for your wimpy three blades. (*The ominous sound again.*)
Blue Steel Turbo Power Razor 4000 armed and ready!

GERALD. Yeah. (*Pause. He doesn't move.*)

The Talking Shopping Cart

CHARACTERS:

ANNOUNCER – the earnest in-store announcer

MELVIN – the nerdy talking shopping cart wrangler

CASSY – the talking shopping cart

KELLY – the put-upon grocery store manager (m or w)

CANDACE – the customer

NOTE: The offstage voices of the ANNOUNCER and CASSY can be doubled.

PLACE & TIME: The Puritan Foods grocery store. Now.

SETTING: An empty space with a lone grocery cart. If you want to add something to suggest a grocery store, it should be minimal.

* * * *

(Lights down. Some light, cheesy instrumental music is playing.)

ANNOUNCER. Attention, Puritan Food shoppers. Attention! We would like to direct your attention to aisle five where in five minutes we'll have a product demonstration of the latest sensation in grocery store technology. It

will knock your socks off. And looky, over on aisle seven we have socks for sale! That's just another way of saying we got it goin' on here at the Puritan Foods, what what!

(Lights up on MELVIN who is pushing in CASSY. NOTE: the talking shopping cart should look like a normal shopping cart. There's no need to dress it up to make it look modern or computerized. It's funnier that way.)

MELVIN *(looks around the store)*. OK Cassy, we're here. Finally. *(Pause.)* So I'm getting the silent treatment. Fine. *(Pause.)* I hope you understand how important it is to have a good show today.

(KELLY walks up.)

KELLY. Hey, we all set up and ready to go? I'm Kelly, morning shift manager. Tell me it's good to go, 'cause I barely have time for this today.

MELVIN. I'm Melvin and this is—

KELLY. Hey, this looks like a regular cart.

MELVIN. It's not a cart. Please do not call her a cart.

KELLY. Her? It's a cart.

MELVIN. There's so many fea—

KELLY. Thought there'd be twinkly lights, bells, you know? Sheesh.

MELVIN. This is the Computer Activated Shopping System. She goes by the name of Cassy. She is equipped with a voice-activated computer that rivals the one on the space shuttle.

KELLY. So, tell me, what's it like doing this product demonstration stuff?

MELVIN. The compensation is certainly adequate.

KELLY. Lot of travel? Bet that's nice. I need to get out of this store. Everybody that works for me is brain dead. You're not brain dead, are you?

MELVIN. I would hope not.

KELLY. Manager is just another word for head phony. I have to act like I love these customers. They're disgusting. They eat in the store. Grab something off the shelf and walk up and down the aisles chomping away. Vile. Here's one of them now.

(CANDACE walks in, clearly absorbed by something she sees on an offstage shelf.)

MELVIN *(launches into his stiff pitch)*. Hello. Would you be interested in a product demonstration?

CANDACE. Are you talking to me?

MELVIN. Yes, I have an exciting new product that I would like to demonstrate for you.

CANDACE. I suppose. Are there free samples? Somewhere?

MELVIN. This looks like an ordinary shopping car, does it not?

CANDACE. This?

MELVIN. Yes, this looks like an ordinary shopping cart, but you could not be more wrong.

CANDACE. Excuse me?

KELLY. The customer isn't wrong. *(To CANDACE.)* You aren't wrong.

Gary's Endurance Roast

CHARACTERS:

SHERRY

GARY

BONITA

CONNIE

PLACE & TIME: A popular coffeehouse chain that can be found in practically every city in practically every corner of North America—rhymes with Marbucks. A weekday morning.

SETTING: A counter to take orders and a couple of small tables.

NOTE: The sound effect to cover the name of the coffeehouse alternates between the sound of a steam machine or the sound of a blender. But other creative ways to cover the name are encouraged.

* * * *

(Lights up on SHERRY, smiling and standing at the counter patiently waiting for the next customer. There is something off about her smile—like nobody is home. GARY walks in. GARY has a white gauze bandage

around his head and around one of his arms. Walking with the aid of crutches, he's in bad shape.)

SHERRY. Welcome to (*sound of blender*). What can I get started for you today?

GARY. Hi, Sherry. Look, I made it.

SHERRY. I'm sorry, what did you say I could get started for you today?

GARY. I made it. (*Silence, then.*) Uh. I'll just have coffee.

SHERRY. OK sure. Do you want any espresso shots with that?

GARY. Sherry, it's me, Gary.

SHERRY (*has no idea who he is*). Oh yes, hi Gary. Now do you want whipped cream on your...coffee.

GARY. Whipped cream? No. Just the coffee. Small. (*SHERRY is puzzled.*) Tall. Tall coffee.

SHERRY. OK sure. Can I add a CD today?

GARY. I've been here every morning for the last fifty-six days. You don't remember me?

SHERRY. Can I recommend our new featured CD by Big John Hammerstaff?

GARY. I bought one two weeks ago, Sherry.

SHERRY. I understand Big John Hammerstaff was a porn actor in the '70s but now he makes the most beautiful electronic acoustic music. He is being sold exclusively here at (*sound of blender*). You listen to his CD and it's almost as if there isn't any music on at all!

GARY. Sorry, I'm feeling a little lightheaded. I need to sit down. Here's my credit card.

(GARY hobbles over to a table and collapses into a chair. BONITA walks in.)

BONITA (to SHERRY). Is that Gary? (SHERRY smiles at BONITA. BONITA walks over to GARY's table.) Gary?

GARY. Hi Bonita. This is day fifty-seven. I have my notebook.

BONITA. I thought you were in the hospital.

GARY. I was. But I was released this morning and took the bus here. Thank you for asking.

BONITA. Is that like blood on your bandages?

GARY. I am OK. I've got my notebook and soon I'll have my coffee.

SHERRY. Sir, your credit card was declined.

(GARY moans.)

BONITA. You better not bleed on my floor.

GARY (to SHERRY). Sherry, my name is Gary.

BONITA. You are loco, truly loco.

GARY. Now, Bonita, don't let your fiery Latin temper get the best of you.

BONITA. Gary, you were hit by a car! Yesterday! In this parking lot. I saw it. You flew in the air like a football.

GARY. Yeah. Apparently I broke some ribs. Cracked my skull a little bit.

BONITA. Don't you think you need to go home?

GARY. I can't do that, but thank you for your concern, Bonita.

BONITA. I don't care about you, Gary.

GARY. I'll be quiet.

BONITA (walks to the counter). Loco. Crazy white people. (To SHERRY.) Is his order done? Sherry?

SHERRY. I love Big John Hammerstaff. Can we play this again when it's done?

Un Restaurant

CHARACTERS:

ALICE

HAROLD

WAITRESS

WAITER

PLACE & TIME: Un Restaurant. Now.

SETTING: A tiny table and two oversized chairs. The chairs ought to be absurdly mismatched with the table, i.e., giant thrones or lounge chairs or fancy office chairs.

* * * *

(A dim light comes up on HAROLD and ALICE, dressed for a nice dinner.)

HAROLD. This isn't the right place.

ALICE. Yes it is!

HAROLD. Alice, there's nothing in this alley except a rat.
Is that a rat? Or a cat?

ALICE. It's just like they said, there's the fire escape and the Dumpster and—

HAROLD. It stinks back here.

ALICE. Oh please, Harold. This is supposed to be the most exciting adventure in the city!

(There is the sound of a gong and then the WAITRESS, wearing all black, appears beside HAROLD.)

WAITRESS *(to HAROLD)*. Hello, lover.

(Another gong strike and WAITER, dressed in black, appears beside ALICE. NOTE: WAITER sometimes lapses into a German accent.)

WAITER. I will dispense with the pleasantries. This is Un Restaurant. Smithsons?

ALICE. Yes. That's us. Alice and Harold!

WAITRESS. Shhhhhhhh!

WAITER. Passports!

HAROLD. Are you taking us to the restaurant?

WAITER. Passports!!

(ALICE and HAROLD hand over passports. The WAITER snaps them open and then drops them on the ground. HAROLD scoops them up.)

WAITER. Report cards!

ALICE *(hands him the report cards)*. I really had to dig through our attic to find them. But your reservationist was very specific—

WAITRESS. The bird who sings all night long still only says “cheep cheep.”

WAITER. “Cheep cheep.”

WAITRESS. “Cheep cheep.”

HAROLD. Now I brought credit cards and some cash but I don't know if I have enough.

WAITER (*accusingly, to HAROLD*). You made a C-minus in geography!

WAITRESS. Oh!

ALICE. Is that a problem? He can stay behind, go eat pretzels at a bar or something and you can take me—

HAROLD. Alice!

ALICE. You know, I've never read a restaurant review in my life that was as glowing as yours and I practically tear open the paper every day to read the reviews. This new molecular gastronomy—I'm saying that right, aren't I?—must be absolutely out of this world, and I was going to do whatever I had to do to get us into this restaurant—

WAITER. You are amusing in a depressing way. Follow.

(WAITER and WAITRESS turn and walk toward a light now shining on a table and chairs.)

WAITRESS (*to HAROLD*). And now, my paramour, we arrive at the land of enchantment.

(WAITRESS holds out a chair for HAROLD. He sits. WAITER doesn't hold out the chair for ALICE. He glares at her.)

WAITER. Park it.

(ALICE immediately sits.)

HAROLD (*to WAITER*). Are these the right chairs?

Coulrophobia

CHARACTERS:

TERRY – Twenty-ish, serious

SPARKLES THE CLOWN – older, seems normal at first glance, but then...

NOTE: Roles can be played by two men or two women and pronouns can be changed as needed.

PLACE & TIME: Outside a large toy store. Now.

SETTING: Some light and space.

* * * *

TERRY. Don't say that!

SPARKLES. All I'm saying is that when she/he makes her two-beer chili that the two beers never wind up in the chili. You know that. That's all I'm saying.

TERRY. Look, she's/he's told me stories—

SPARKLES. Did she/he tell you this while she/he was making chili?

TERRY. She/He said you've been sneaking out and you've been acting very suspicious. You don't tell her/him where you're going. Or you make up something like you're going to buy vacuum bags.

SPARKLES. Well, I don't know what could be wrong with buying vacuum bags.

TERRY. We have hardwood floors!

SPARKLES. That's very shortsighted. You never know when we might move to a big place with wall-to-wall carpeting. Then you'll be begging me for my vacuum bags.

TERRY. This isn't about vacuum bags! I don't care about vacuum bags! You've gone and done it, haven't you? You're back into it, aren't you?

SPARKLES. Back into what?

TERRY. You know, back into...

SPARKLES. Being a clown.

TERRY. Hey, c'mon! Not so loud. People can hear you!

SPARKLES. And you don't want them to.

TERRY. Of course not! Now listen, tell me what you're doing at this store.

SPARKLES. You are being a big ol' grumpison today, aren't you.

TERRY. This very same toy store is three blocks from our house, but here you are at this one all the way across town.

SPARKLES. I guess I just needed to go for a drive.

TERRY. You took the bus! Don't treat me like I'm some stupid little kid.

SPARKLES. No I won't because you're all grown up now with a big job.

TERRY. That's right. I have a job that requires me to be responsible and to make sure the office runs smoothly. This means I have to get in people's grill. Make them uncomfortable sometimes.

The Morris A. Crockmorton High School Cafeteria Text Messaging Tragedy

CHARACTERS:

P – female, 17, wears dark glasses

SHELLY – female, 17

BELINDA – female, 17

GOTH KID – either

PLACE & TIME: The Morris A. Crockmorton
High School cafeteria. Lunchtime.

SETTING: A cafeteria table would be great but any table
would suffice. Otherwise, an empty stage.

* * * *

(Lights up on P, who is holding a cafeteria tray and wearing dark glasses, speaking directly to the audience.)

P. It was a Friday like any other Friday in the Morris A. Crockmorton High School cafeteria. The lunch buzzer buzzed. *(The buzzer goes off.)* It was a Friday like any other Friday and the students of Morris A. Crockmorton High School dutifully filed in for the feeding. The chicken-fried steak didn't stand a chance against the ta-

cos. (*P stops and speaks to an invisible cafeteria worker.*) Tacos. Thanks. (*P walks across the stage.*) At their table the jocks of Morris A. Crockmorton High School were making rude noises. The cheerleaders were primping and pretending they didn't care what the jocks did but of course they did. The goths were wearing black, as usual, and staring at their tacos like they held the mystery of life.

(*A GOTH KID walks by with a plate of tacos that he/she stares at as if it holds the mystery of life.*)

GOTH KID (*to P*). Tacos!

P (*to GOTH KID*). Yeah. (*The GOTH KID walks away and P walks up to the cafeteria table.*) At my table it was a Friday like any other Friday at the Morris A. Crockmorton High School. My crew is three strong—a fierce little knot of popularity. We stand somewhere behind the cheerleaders and far ahead of the brainiacs. Oh, I guess I should mention this isn't because of me. I'm not popular. Which is fine because being popular is a hassle. No, the reason for our exalted status is Shelly.

(*SHELLY, staring down at the cafeteria tray she is holding, appears.*)

SHELLY (*not looking up from her tray*). P, look alive, I sent you something.

P. Shelly is pretty enough to be a cheerleader but she never tried out. There was a movement to draft her for senior class president, but she told everybody to forget about it. At the moment, she has at least three boyfriends—or

guys that like to think they are hers alone. Teachers love her. During an assembly, our principal—a guy that looks like a tomato with hair and acts like a clueless dork—actually called Shelly “the Queen of Morris A. Crockmorton High.”

SHELLY (*not looking up from her tray*). Check your messages, P.

P. No, my eyes hurt today.

SHELLY (*not looking up*). C’mon.

P. Now even in our little clique there is an order. Directly underneath Shelly is me. I go by P and, no, I won’t tell you what that’s short for. Underneath both of us is Belinda.

(*BELINDA appears. She is also holding a cafeteria tray and is staring down at it.*)

BELINDA. P?

P. What?

BELINDA. Does like my breath smell rancid or something?

P. Don’t think so. Why?

BELINDA. Oh, Shelly said it was, is all.

P. She did?

SHELLY (*to BELINDA*). On guard there, Bee. Sent you a LOLer. For sure.

BELINDA (*to SHELLY*). You did? Oh OK, I was gonna eat my tacos first.

SHELLY (*to BELINDA*). Text before tacos.

BELINDA (*parroting SHELLY*). Oh yeah, text before tacos.

SHELLY. P?