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*Dramatic Publishing*

# **THE LIE**

**From Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s  
"Welcome to the Monkey House"**

**Adapted  
by  
VAUGHN MCBRIDE**



**The Dramatic Publishing Company**

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(THE LIE)

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# **THE LIE**

**A Play in One Act  
For Three Men and One Woman**

## **CHARACTERS**

**DR. ELI REMENZEL III**

**SYLVIA REMENZEL** ..... his wife

**ELI REMENZEL IV** ..... their son

**DR. WARREN** ..... Dean of Whitehill

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

In the directing of this play it must be remembered that the three central characters, Dr. Remenzel, Sylvia and Eli are three people who fit together. They love each other and what is more important they *like* each other very much. Even in the extremity of this situation we must feel that they will survive in their relationship. There is a warmth and easiness between the three even when the circumstance of the situation is difficult for them. Affection in spite of circumstance is a major thread throughout the story.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### THE SETTING

The stage is divided into three areas. Stage right is the car area with four chairs representing the front and back seats of the automobile. Center is the room in the Whitehill Inn. Again chairs are used for seating and two benches represent beds. Stage left is the garden outside the inn. It contains a single bench. The downstage area is used at the opening when Eli addresses the audience and in the scene where Dr. Remenzel confronts members of the Board of Directors. Props may be real or pantomimed. The emphasis should be placed on simplicity of staging and the complexity of the family relationship.

### ADDITIONAL CHARACTER NOTES

**DR. ELI REMENZEL III:** Success is written all over him. He is perfectly dressed in expensive clothes and carries himself with an air of success and authority. He is not a snob. He is simply of the world of control.

**SYLVIA REMENZEL:** His wife. She is a comfortable woman. Born in poverty and married to wealth, she has not changed. There is a common-sense quality about her, but she is at home in Gucci shoes and Dior originals. A rare person who brings reality into her world of wealth and possession.

**ELI REMENZEL IV:** Their son, age thirteen. He is alert, bright and living in the shadow of his father. He has backed himself into a corner, but he will survive. He has his father's sense of dignity and his mother's sense of fun.

**DR. WARREN:** Of the old school. He is the Dean of Whitehill. He is a nice man who finds himself in a diffi-

**cult situation. He does not enjoy it but he is bound by the traditions of his profession. He has real compassion for the predicament of the Remenzels.**

# THE LIE

*SCENE: Lights to black. In the dark the Whitehill School song is heard being sung a cappella by a young male chorus.*

## WHITEHILL SCHOOL SONG

CHORUS.

HOME OF BROTHERS  
HOME OF MEN  
WE REVERE THEE EVERMORE

HOME OF KNOWLEDGE  
HOME OF FAITH  
WE REVERE THEE EVERMORE

HOME OF FATHERS  
HOME OF SONS  
GRANT US JOY  
TOUCH EVERYONE.

*AT RISE: Lights up to half on the car area. DR. and MRS. REMENZEL are seated in the front. ELI is down-stage and speaks to the audience. The song is being hummed quietly.*



ELI. A lie, once told, you gotta live with it...until...well, the trouble is see...a lie is almost always found out. (*He moves into the back seat of the car as the song fades. Traffic sounds are heard as the lights come to full.*) Whoosh—whoosh—whoosh! I just love those cars whooshing! Going by us like we're standing still.

DR. REMENZEL. I won't go over the speed limit.

SYLVIA (*doing her make-up*). Do you like this shade of lipstick better than the Coral Shadow?

DR. REMENZEL. I'm watching the road.

SYLVIA. Can't you take a little sidewise glance?

DR. REMENZEL. No. A driver's eyes should be on the road. Nowhere else.

ELI. Whoosh! Whoosh! There they go. Look at 'em go!

DR. REMENZEL. Fifty-five saves lives. Don't care if they upped it again. There's a right way and a wrong way.

SYLVIA. You can't even peek? I love this new blush.

ELI (*although he is trying to keep it light there is a certain apprehension in his manner. Especially when Whitehill School is being discussed*). How much further is Whitehill?

DR. REMENZEL. A ways yet, a ways.

ELI. Oh, good.

DR. REMENZEL. Why good?

ELI. Oh—oh, just because.

SYLVIA. I always said that when I was a kid—"Oh, just because." I hope I look all right. I'm nervous.

DR. REMENZEL. No need to be.

SYLVIA. Yes, there is "need to be"!

DR. REMENZEL. You fit just fine.

SYLVIA. We'll see.

ELI. Dad...

DR. REMENZEL. What? I'm doing a hard drive here.

We've got Connecticut drivers on every side.

ELI. Sorry.

SYLVIA. Well, listen to him. Might have something to say.

DR. REMENZEL. Say?—Got something to say?

ELI. Not much. Just—(*Changes his mind.*) Whoosh!

Whoosh!—that I wanted to tell you something—

SYLVIA. You know, these designer jeans don't really fit as well as the ones I get at K-Mart.

ELI. —but—never mind 'til later.

DR. REMENZEL. I've waited a long time for this moment. Look out! (*Swerves and honks horn.*) Road hog!

Driver's license testing should be done yearly.

SYLVIA. You should have let Ben drive us.

DR. REMENZEL. Didn't want a chauffeur for this trip.

Just the three of us.

SYLVIA. I know, dear.

DR. REMENZEL. And I'm a good driver.

SYLVIA. I know, dear.

DR. REMENZEL. Better than most.

SYLVIA. I know, dear. You should have let Ben drive us.

DR. REMENZEL. Women are not logical!

SYLVIA. I know, dear. Paprika is a wonderful shade of eye shadow.

DR. REMENZEL. Stop crowding me, you *cretin!*

SYLVIA. It's a semi.

DR. REMENZEL. He's a cretin!

SYLVIA. What's a cretin?

DR. REMENZEL. Never mind!

ELI. Dad, some people say a Cadillac is better than a Rolls Royce—in the long run.

DR. REMENZEL. That's not true. What people?

ELI (*distracted*). Is that true?

DR. REMENZEL. I just told you.

ELI. Oh, yes—that's not true.

DR. REMENZEL. What people?

ELI. Oh, just some people. I like this car.

DR. REMENZEL. Smooth ride.

ELI. And it's a—

DR. REMENZEL. Rolls Royce.

ELI. —not a Cadillac. Sure. I know.

SYLVIA. I can't wait to get there. (*Puts on some perfume.*)

DR. REMENZEL. You've been there before.

SYLVIA. Like this perfume? It's called "Crush."

DR. REMENZEL (*laughing*). At least I don't have to take my eyes off the road to know its there.

SYLVIA. Not like this time. I haven't been there like this time.

ELI. How much further?

SYLVIA. What number is Eli, hon?

DR. REMENZEL. What number of what?

SYLVIA (*watches a truck pass them by*). They're so loud. Why didn't you let Ben drive us up?

DR. REMENZEL. I like this drive. Besides, I'm a better driver than Ben. (*Car swerves.*) Pot hole!

SYLVIA. 'Course you are.

DR. REMENZEL. A pot hole?!

SYLVIA. No—a better driver than Ben. (*Kidding him.*) Chauffeurs are notoriously bad drivers.

DR. REMENZEL. Don't nudge me. I won't go over the limit. Rules are made for a reason.

SYLVIA. So, anyway, what number?

DR. REMENZEL. What number of what?

SYLVIA. Of Remenzels? Going to Whitehill?

DR. REMENZEL. What does that matter?

SYLVIA. I'm just curious. Simple-minded little country girl at heart.

DR. REMENZEL. Remenzels were there before Whitehill was. And that's why I married you.

SYLVIA. What?

DR. REMENZEL. Thought I could keep you simple-minded.

SYLVIA. I had an education! *(There is obviously great affection between them.)*

DR. REMENZEL. To me, you *are* an education. *(Truck passes.)* There's a double standard here.

SYLVIA. You or me?

DR. REMENZEL. Neither. Me and the semis. They can go as fast as they please and nobody's going to stop them. If I go two miles over the limit they'll get me.

SYLVIA. They being?

DR. REMENZEL. America's finest. Our men in blue. Anyway, I'm certainly glad I finally talked you into wearing shoes.

SYLVIA. Oh, stop it. I started wearing shoes my second year of business college. *(They laugh.)* So, just guess.

DR. REMENZEL. Your age?

SYLVIA. No! *(She is laughing—out of control.)* What number is Eli?

DR. REMENZEL *(to ELI)*. Eli—what number are you? *(ELI tries to be as small as he can in the back seat. The closer they get to Whitehill, the more nervous he becomes.)*

SYLVIA. Don't joke with me on this. I can look it up once we get there. I'd call ahead on the car phone—if we had a car phone.

DR. REMENZEL. Never! A car is not an office. And don't you dare. The Remenzels created that school, the Remenzels support that school, but when the Remenzels are in town they are the same as anyone else. Equals. Whitehill was founded on equality. Oh, Lord, the plans! Did you put them in?

ELI. They're back here, Dad.

DR. REMENZEL. Honey, check them out. Are they all there? (*ELI passes a roll of blueprints to SYLVIA.*)

SYLVIA. Sure, hon.

DR. REMENZEL. I hate "hon."

SYLVIA. Know you do. But Riverside Drive is a—

DR. REMENZEL. —long way from—

DR. REMENZEL and SYLVIA. —Gary, Indiana. (*BOTH laugh.*)

SYLVIA (*looking at blueprints*). Well, there's a lot of professional-looking stuff here—and it says, "thirty-room addition to Remenzel Dormitory—" and that, for the life of me, is all I can make of it. Maybe if I hold them upside-down.

DR. REMENZEL. My son entering Whitehill! My building plan enlarging the facilities! My day! My day! This is my day. A long way since 1779.

SYLVIA. You're not that old.

DR. REMENZEL. No, no. Seventeen seventy-nine, Eli Remenzel I donates the land, furnishes the materials—even pays for the labor. The beginning of Whitehill. And now my son, my Eli will carry on that tradition. When they wanted to change the name of the place to "Remenzel School," I said—

SYLVIA and ELI (*they have heard this before*). —No!

DR. REMENZEL. I said—