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Dramatic Publishing

MAKING CHOICES

A Play

by

WAYNE HARREL



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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(MAKING CHOICES)

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MAKING CHOICES

A Play in One Act
For Two Men and Three Women

CHARACTERS

DENIECE "DA ONLY"aged 17
SHAWN KINSEYaged 16
JESSIE SIMPSONaged 15
MICHAEL CARPaged 16
CLAIRE MONTOYAaged 16

TIME:

The present.

PLACE:

The stage is bare, save for some boxes,
one of which contains a large, attractive bowl.
The boxes will help portray, in order:

High School Hallway
Park Bench/Kitchen-Family Room 1
Television Studio Set
Bedroom 1/Kitchen 2
High School Cafeteria
PTA Meeting
Pre-school Playground
Kitchen-Family Room 1
Bedroom 2
Public Zoo
High School Hallway

Acknowledgments

MAKING CHOICES was first presented as *CHOICES*, a co-production of Tapestry Theatre Company and Let's Talk, Judy Urschel and Lani Williams directors, respectively. It premiered February 27, 1993, at West Hills Covenant Church in Portland, Oregon, directed by Ellen Knippel. The cast was as follows:

DENIECE "DA ONLY" Brenda Van Houweling
SHAWN KINSEY Dan Harrel
JESSIE SIMPSON Corrie Mayhew
MICHAEL CARP Matt Coleman/Jodi Eichelberger
CLAIRE MONTOYA Danielle Mendes da Costa

In 1993, the play was a winner in TADA! Theatre Company's Spring Staged Reading Series and was presented on May 1 of that year in New York, New York.

MAKING CHOICES

AT RISE: *The FIVE ACTORS enter, disperse randomly about the stage and freeze. DENIECE steps forward and addresses the audience. The others come to life in turn.*

DENIECE. Life is a series of choices.

SHAWN. Yeah, I'd like a burger with cheese no ketchup, chicken sandwich—extra sauce, large fries, vanilla shake, jumbo root beer...and a salad with that low-fat dressing.

DENIECE. Every day, every minute, every second.

JESSIE. I don't know the answer to this test question. I can see her paper. *(Leans forward, then back, forward, back.)*

DENIECE. Some choices may seem to be purely instinct.

MICHAEL. I think my fly's unzipped but how do I check without making everyone else stare? *(Points over audience's head.)* Look, it's Elvis! *(Quickly checks fly and is relieved to see that it's closed.)* Phew.

DENIECE. Others may feel forced upon us.

CLAIRE. It was come to this assembly or sit in study hall for an hour. Tough choice.

DENIECE. But very rarely, if ever, is life beyond our control.

OTHERS. I can't help myself. I'm in love!

DENIECE. Even that, luuuuuuu. True—passion, emotion and instinct all come into play, but bottom line: we are the product of our choices.

SHAWN. My name's Shawn Kinsey, defensive back. Don't go out much, trying to learn French this year...the *language*, bonehead.

JESSIE. Jessie Simpson. I sing in the jazz choir, baby-sit a lot and...write poetry.

MICHAEL. Michael Carp. I play the guitar, catch a lot of movies. Been getting into astronomy lately.

CLAIRE. I'm Claire Montoya and I don't do a whole heck of a lot other than eat chocolate, watch soaps and go to the mall—once my homework's done, of course.

DENIECE. Speaking of choices, suppose this was "The Dating Game" and you got to choose. Who would it be—Bachelor or Bachelorette one, two, three or four? (*Pause.*) Don't sweat it too hard; they're already taken—with each other. (*The FOUR huddle as if in a school hallway.*) I'm available. But you can't have me. Sing to me all you want but I ain't getting horny with no one. And you know what that makes me, in this "sexually open society"? *Weird*. But hey, that's my choice. That's the way it is. Deniece Da Only. Ain't no man gonna taste these lips 'til I got a signed document and a preacher saying, "Get on with yourselves." If any man will have me. But for now, I'm off the stuff. Maybe that's why my friends want to talk all the time, like I was some Dear Abby. (*Each CHARACTER runs to DENIECE in turn to deliver his/her lines.*)

JESSIE. Deniece, Deniece! He still likes me! He still wants to go out with me. I didn't think he would after our last date since, you know, I didn't, we didn't, it kind of ended in a fight. But I like him so much. He's so cool. And when he smiles at me, all I can think of is Michael, Michael, Michael...

MICHAEL. Yeah, Jessie and I are going out again, but don't ask me why. Never spent so much time with a girl and got so little to show for it. Barely even a good night kiss.

SHAWN. *Claire*, right, that's her. I didn't know you knew her. Wish I had—you could've asked her out for me. I hate doing that, hate it. Once things get going I'm all right, but making that first move? I'd rather floss my teeth.

CLAIRE. Shawn doesn't smoke or drink but he still gets crazy once in a while, like when he held Jimmy Jackson over the bleachers by his ankles at the powder puff football game.

SHAWN. She mentioned that? Great. Probably thinks I'm some bonehead jock. Jimmy and I are friends. I never would have done that to someone I didn't like.

MICHAEL. Something makes me keep calling her, something mysterious—her hair, her eyes, the way she dresses...

JESSIE. He likes my clothes? Really? I can't stand my clothes.

MICHAEL. ...her *Obsession* cologne? I don't know.

CLAIRE. It wasn't until I wore that black top with the scoop neck that Shawn even said "Hi."

SHAWN. She's so gorgeous, it's scary.

CLAIRE. Then it was three more weeks of new outfits before he finally asked me out.

SHAWN. Frightening. I was afraid to even talk to her.

CLAIRE. Good thing, too, because Mom just got her Visa bill.

SHAWN. But the girl is so...mmm!

MICHAEL. I'd like to figure out what it is that gets me. This has got to be the longest relationship I've ever had.

JESSIE. Tomorrow's our anniversary—one month!

MICHAEL. It's weird.

JESSIE. I know, he's gone out with a lot of girls, and he keeps...making suggestions. But this is my first regular going out with anybody and I don't think I'm ready for... it...yet.

SHAWN. Sex? Well...you *know* I want to. Who wouldn't? Who isn't? Everybody but me, seems like.

CLAIRE. If I like the guy enough, sure. But not without a condom. And never unless I say so.

MICHAEL. I don't know. Maybe it's because we haven't had sex yet. Ha! Like that makes any difference.

DENIECE. They talk all the time but I hardly ever listen. Always sends me back to me and my man, breezing along, squeezing hands, looking into his big brown eyes. (*Pause.*) Don't look so surprised. You know I had mine. And then some. He was fine and we were good. Better than these goofball lovebirds. (*DENIECE crosses U while the OTHERS form two pairs D.*)

(*MICHAEL and JESSIE are sitting on a bench, star gazing.*)

MICHAEL. No, *Ursa Major*, the big dipper. *Ursa Minor* is the little dipper and it's pretty hard to see unless you can find the North Star.

JESSIE. Which is...?

MICHAEL (*pointing*). That one there.

JESSIE. Which one?

MICHAEL. The one that tree's pointing too.

JESSIE. It's an oak tree. They point in all directions.

MICHAEL. No, that pointy, Christmas tree-like tree.

JESSIE. Cedar tree?

MICHAEL. Whatever.

JESSIE. For someone who can say *Ursa Minor*, you sure have trouble with trees.

MICHAEL. Let me show you. (*Puts his arm around JESSIE and points. They freeze.*)

(*SHAWN is at a kitchen counter, reading a bag of microwave popcorn, while CLAIRE is fiddling with the TV.*)

SHAWN. "Remove package from container but do not remove contents from package"? You understand this?

CLAIRE. No.

SHAWN. "Place unopened package in microwave for recommended time period and temperature. Rotate a quarter turn and repeat."

CLAIRE. Don't have to do that because this microwave rotates.

SHAWN. Here on the counter? Doesn't that knock the dishes onto the floor?

CLAIRE. Inside the microwave, bonehead.

SHAWN. Hey, don't be calling me that. I'm the only one who can call me that.

CLAIRE. Nuke the popcorn so we can start the movie.

SHAWN (*removes glass bowl*). Ooh, this is nice.

CLAIRE. No, don't touch that. My folks just brought that back from Santa Fe. They'll kill me if anything happens to it.

(*They freeze and DENIECE steps up.*)

DENIECE. "Scooter," I says—that's what I called him, Scooter—"come on over here and ease my weary soles. We've been walking that mall all afternoon and these dogs are tired." And he'd do it. Every time! Just slip off my shoes and socks and rub and caress until I couldn't walk if the house was on fire. And he wouldn't stop there. No sir.

Next came the ankles, all sore and achy, then my calves, the back of my knees, above my knees...mm-hmm.

(MICHAEL and JESSIE come back to life.)

MICHAEL. Here, let me show you. Put your head next to mine. Now follow my arm. See?

JESSIE. I see a car.

MICHAEL. Good, because that's what I'm pointing at.

JESSIE. That car's the tip of *Ursa Minor*?

MICHAEL. No, but they left their lights on. Now what am I pointing at?

JESSIE. The mailbox.

MICHAEL. And now?

JESSIE. Chimney.

MICHAEL. Uh-huh. And now?

JESSIE. Tree...moon...oh, the big dipper.

MICHAEL. Keep watching.

JESSIE. That bright star, all by itself?

MICHAEL. That's the North Star.

JESSIE *(turning to MICHAEL)*. Really?

MICHAEL. Don't turn away!

JESSIE. I lost it. Show me again. *(They freeze, inches from kissing.)*

(SHAWN and CLAIRE spring to life.)

CLAIRE. Shawn, don't, don't play with that!

SHAWN *(singing, using bowl as top hat)*.

*Overture,
dim the lights,
this is it,
the night of nights...*