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*Dramatic Publishing*

# **YOU HAVE TO SERVE SOMEBODY**

**A comedy**

**by**

**WERNER TRIESCHMANN**



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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**For Dr. Rosemary Henenberg**

*YOU HAVE TO SERVE SOMEBODY* was developed at the Mount Sequoyah New Playwright Retreat and presented at the Mount Sequoyah New Play Festival, Fayetteville, AR, June 6-8, 1996. Roger Gross, Retreat Director; Kent Brown, Director; and the following cast:

DENNY STANDARD . . . . . Bliss Daniel  
HECTOR HAZADA . . . . . Rob Hanlin  
CASSANDRA HOOPER . . . . . Bethany Larson  
MARVIN STANDARD . . . . . Mike Thomas  
MILLIE STANDARD . . . . . Patricia Relph  
ABELINE HIPPS . . . . . Vickie Hilliard  
HARVEY GOLD . . . . . Sonny Bell  
SANDY GOLD . . . . . Amy Herzberg

*YOU HAVE TO SERVE SOMEBODY* was presented by the New Theatre in the Networks Festival, Boston, MA, Jan. 30-Feb. 2, 1997. Rick DesRoches, Artistic Director; Victoria Marsh, Managing Director; Ryan Whinnem, Director; and the following cast:

DENNY STANDARD . . . . . Gloria Hennessy  
HECTOR HAZADA . . . . . Alan Natale  
CASSANDRA HOOPER . . . . . Courtney Graff  
MARVIN STANDARD . . . . . Harry Wagner  
MILLIE STANDARD . . . . . Peg Saurman Holzemer  
ABELINE HIPPS . . . . . Paula Caplan  
HARVEY GOLD . . . . . Paul Egan  
SANDY GOLD . . . . . Karen Woodward

# YOU HAVE TO SERVE SOMEBODY

A Comedy in Three Parts  
For 5 Women and 3 Men

## CHARACTERS

### Servers:

DENNY STANDARD . . . . . early 30s, mousy, practical,  
smart, but somehow lost in her life

HECTOR HAZADA . . . . . early 20s, a Latino-looking  
American, hard-working

CASSANDRA HOOPER . . . late 20s, hapless, hypochondriac

### The Served:

MARVIN and MILLIE STANDARD . . . . . mid-60s, retired  
couple looking for an epiphany and a good steak

ABELINE HIPPS . . . late 30s, art gallery owner, brash, single

HARVEY and SANDY GOLD . . . . . mid-30s, apartment  
managers

### PLACE:

Tables at The Epee, Waves of Grain,  
and Taco Circus restaurants.

### TIME:

Dinner, lunch, and a late-night reception.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## PART ONE

AT RISE: *Lights come up on The Epee. MARVIN and MILLIE STANDARD walk in and slowly make their way to the table. Not sure if they have the right one, they stand by the table. After a moment, CASSANDRA HOOPER runs in with two menus tucked under her arm.*

CASSANDRA (*to audience*). I don't have enough!

MARVIN. Miss!

CASSANDRA (*to audience*). My head is gonna split open.  
I don't have it tonight!

MARVIN. Miss!

CASSANDRA (*to audience*). I don't have it for twelve tables for five more hours. It's freezing out, and they're waiting at the door for thirty minutes or more.

MARVIN (*to MILLIE*). Is this our table?!

MILLIE. Don't ask me!

CASSANDRA (*to audience*). When they get inside, they're out of their minds.

MARVIN (*to CASSANDRA*). There's nothing wrong with baloney.

CASSANDRA. Absolutely... welcome to—let me get the chairs—

MILLIE. My husband used to run a college cafeteria. He's not into epicurean adventures.

MARVIN. You don't know what cooking is until you make mashed potatoes for four thousand.

MILLIE. You're going have to treat us like little babies.

CASSANDRA (*to audience*). I hate them all.

MILLIE. This place is the talk of the town! I'm so excited we got in.

MARVIN. Everybody says they can't taste baloney, but I don't eat it for the taste.

CASSANDRA. I'm certain our chef can whip that right up.

MILLIE. We heard you serve the wildest things here.

MARVIN (*to CASSANDRA*). Whip what up?

CASSANDRA (*a drone*). Our forte is exotic game matched with obscure, unexpected spices. I feel that you'll find the selection both substantial and diverse. We aim to cultivate an atmosphere of surprise—

MILLIE. Goodness.

CASSANDRA. —and like to believe our menu is only limited by the patron's imagination.

MILLIE. The review in the newspaper was glowing! So they call this New American cuisine? I love the sound of that, don't you? New American!

MARVIN (*to MILLIE*). Shut up. (*To CASSANDRA.*) Whip what?

CASSANDRA. Excuse me?

MILLIE. Between you and me, I never knew there was an Old American.

MARVIN (*to CASSANDRA*). You said the chef could whip something up.

CASSANDRA. Of course, of course he can. He's absolutely the best, a visionary really.

MARVIN (*to MILLIE*). I don't understand. Do you understand what she's saying?

MILLIE. New American sounds spectacular, like the food comes with computer chips.

MARVIN. Christ on a corn dog, am I gonna have enough money for this place?

CASSANDRA. Certainly, absolutely. Here are your mints, and I'll find your ticket.

MARVIN. Ticket?! We just sat down!

MILLIE. We haven't ordered yet.

MARVIN. There's no silverware.

MILLIE. Remember, we're just little babies.

CASSANDRA. Certainly.

MARVIN. We need silverware! And menus! And water!

MILLIE. I'm very cold. Can you turn up the heat?!

CASSANDRA. Absolutely, certainly, I'm sorry...

MARVIN. How about some menus first!

CASSANDRA. Absolutely. Menus for you. (*Handing the menus to MARVIN.*) I'll check on the heat and be right back. (*To the audience.*) Two more months and I'm in school. Everything paid. Two months and I'm doing research about Beethoven in a library. So peaceful and completely, absolutely alone.

(*CASSANDRA walks off. HECTOR walks in and stands by his table at Taco Circus.*)

HECTOR (*to audience*). Geez, it's cold as a witch's tit, but I've got a warm table for you here at Taco Circus. I'm Hector Hazada, and I've been a waiter for six weeks. The day I started, my mother went into mourning. She called me and was bawling on the phone. "**O dios mio, Hector! Dios mio!**" She wailed in Spanish, and while I couldn't understand a word she said, I knew it was

serious. See, my mother's great-grandparents came from Spain and we think my father's family lived in Mexico. So we're dead ringers for Latinos—well I guess we are Latinos—but we're totally American. We wear Nikes and vote Republican, you know? But my mother says the way I look helped me get this job. She says that places like Taco Circus make Latinos look stupid. Like I care. It's a job, man, and who has time to worry about it, you know? I'm hustlin' my butt just to memorize the seventy-eight entrees and forty-five appetizers including our Big Top Sopaipillas, Seltzer Salsa—the salsa that makes you happy as a clown—and The Day of the Dead Quesadillas, which serves four. We substitute beef for chicken or chicken for beef or bean for chicken or beef in all our appetizers and entrees except the Bean There and Ate That Taquitos, which we'll only substitute chicken and that's only if you beg or are a real pain about it. And no, sorry, we won't take the peanut butter out of our patented Nutty Circus Fajitas because the peanut butter makes it taste great, trust me. I didn't think it was true but it is. And it took me a while to get down the birthday policy. Got a birthday? Present us with your valid driver's license, a credit card and a third form of I.D.—we prefer a passport—you get half off your Taco Circus meal and the crew—basically whoever we can round up—comes to your table and sings this song while I wear a sombrero and juggle three **sopaipillas**. (*HECTOR pulls out a big sombrero from under the table and starts to juggle three sopaipillas.*) Frankly, I'm tired of that song. Some nights we got six or seven birthday tables. But I kick ass juggling the **sopaipillas**. I can do tricks, behind the back and stuff. And they bring out the

big tips for that. Really, I don't know why my mother is worried. (*HECTOR looks off.*) Hey! Table six. All clear.

(*As HECTOR walks off, DENNY walks in and stands by the table at Waves of Grain.*)

DENNY (*to audience*). The real history of Waves of Grain, a restaurant for the real people. Two brothers, Jack and Jake, liked each other but loved food more. They loved food sooooo much that they decide to travel around the world to find the very best. First, they went to China and ate China food. Two hours later, they were hungry again so they went to Japan and ate Japan food. But Japan food is nothing but a bunch of cold fish parts so the two brothers went to Germany. In Germany they were served a lot of food, but it all smelled funny and tasted like old beer. The food was fine in Italy, but everybody was singing opera and Jack and Jake hate opera. France was awful; don't ask Jack and Jake about France. And as for the food in Britain, all Jack and Jake will say about British food is thank God for the revolution. So the two brothers went around the world to figure out that the best food could be found right here in their own country. And since the day it opened, Waves of Grain has been an American restaurant where Americans could be served up big portions to satisfy their big appetites. So now they serve meat and potatoes with no apologies. No cold fish parts. No opera. God bless this country! The real history of Waves of Grain, as interpreted by Denny Standard, a real waitress of five years and counting. Jack and Jake don't exist. The owner, a thin man named Steven Shaw, stopped by our restaurant one day. He

didn't eat anything, which I thought was kind of strange. But I shook his hand. He has to be happy with his restaurants because they do real well everywhere and everybody loves the gas station signs and old ads. Personally, I think the decor is kind of tacky and overdone, but I don't let the customers know that. One thing about Waves of Grain that is truly American: There's no comprehensive health plan for the employees. I tried to get the other waiters and waitresses to sign a letter about how we want full coverage. But most of them are in college or just out of college. And they all leave after six months. Or six days. So I tell them that if they want to stay healthy, don't eat the food. (*DENNY looks stricken, as if she has violated some unwritten rule.*) But I don't tell the customers that.

*(DENNY walks off. Lights dim at Waves of Grain and Taco Circus. Lights come up at The Epee.)*

MARVIN. I can't read this! Can you read this?

MILLIE. Oooh, the decor is smashing. So chic!

MARVIN. The type on this menu is the size of ants!

MILLIE. And the light is... I feel like I'm on a stage.

MARVIN. Are you even looking at the menu?

MILLIE. It's another starring role for Millie Standard. The audience wants to eat her up with a spoon.

MARVIN. The only word I can see is... **piñata**.

MILLIE. Thank you. Thank you.

MARVIN. Is that a dish? **Piñata**?

MILLIE. Yes, Marvin. It's a chicken stuffed with cinnamon.

MARVIN. The **piñata**?

MILLIE. Or lamb with mango gravy. I forget. It's open season with this New American craze. Nobody knows what the chefs are going to do.

MARVIN. I'd like them to put the food in a buffet where I can see it.

MILLIE. I think I impressed the waitress.

MARVIN. I bet the piñata gives me the runs.

MILLIE. Well, don't order the piñata.

MARVIN. That's the only word I can read on the menu.  
(*Small pause.*)

MILLIE. You know Denny could come up with something like this. The food is marvelous.

MARVIN. We haven't eaten!

MILLIE. It doesn't matter. This is where we want to be! Restaurants used to be so dreary and ugly. Now they're magical, with the costumes and the lights and objects of art.

MARVIN. You didn't mention the food.

MILLIE. You go to sleep one night and there's another diner with a pirate theme that's sprouted up down the block. We could eat out every meal every day and have a new adventure. Look at this place! Denny should be here.

(*Lights come up on Waves of Grain. DENNY leads ABE-LINE over to the table.*)

MILLIE. Marvin, we've got to encourage her. She's doesn't see the doors she could open. She doesn't see that she's stuck.

MARVIN. Unless I can eat, I won't go to her restaurant.

DENNY. Here we go. So there's only one tonight, right?

ABELINE. Yes.

DENNY. I'm Denny, and I'll be your server tonight. What a night, huh? I hear the wind chill is supposed to get to ten below.

ABELINE. Yeah, I think my dinners are frozen stiff.

DENNY. Dinners?

ABELINE (*massaging her chest*). My dinners. My boobs. It's one of the problems with havin' a big chest your mama didn't tell you about. Lord.

DENNY. Would you like to hear about our dinner...our specials? (*DENNY starts picking up the silverware from the other empty places.*)

ABELINE. Listen, hon, don't take those other places away. Put those knives and forks back down. Put 'em back down.

DENNY. Oh, ah, I wanted to clear this off for—

ABELINE. Give a me a break. You're gonna pick up every knife and fork and place mat. You might have to make two trips. And then some dumb-ass busboy is gonna wander in and throw the water glasses in a big tub and that's noisy as hell. And I'm stuck here waitin' for my frozen dinners to thaw, watchin' this parade of dishware and thinkin' about how I don't have anybody sittin' in those places.

DENNY (*slowly puts down the silverware*). Ah, sure, right. Let me tell you, ah, let me start by explaining what soups—

ABELINE. Look, here's what I want. Give me the John Quincy Adams meat loaf dinner.

DENNY. With or without the *jalepeños*?

ABELINE. That's not the John Quincy Adams.



DENNY. Oh right, that's the Thomas Paine casserole. My mistake.

ABELINE. With the meat loaf give me the purple hull peas instead of potatoes. Vinaigrette on the salad. Coffee black to drink. And give me that Cup O' Constitution chicken soup. No, make it a bowl. Maybe I'll stick my dinners in it.

DENNY. Ah, got it.

*(Lights come up on The Epee.)*

MARVIN *(reacting to the lack of service)*. What the hell?!

ABELINE. And I know if I need you t' come runnin', I raise this flag like this.

DENNY. Right, yes, thank you. *(DENNY trots off.)*

MARVIN. We've been left for dead!

MILLIE. I thought the waitress liked us. Or at least she liked me. You probably scared her to death.

*(DENNY runs back in.)*

DENNY. Um, ah, do you need something now? I wasn't sure if you were putting it up for an example or—

ABELINE. No. *(ABELINE puts down the flag. DENNY trots off again.)*

MARVIN. Well I'm never coming back to...I don't even know the name of this place.

MILLIE. At least we made it this far.

MARVIN. This isn't an evening out, it's pure torture. I defy you to find the name on the menu!

MILLIE. Oh don't be so indignant. It's The Eel or The Egret, something similar to that.

MARVIN. Balderdash! I would not walk through the door of a restaurant with eel in the name.

MILLIE. I'm afraid it might have eel in the name. And what if it did, Marvin? Is that so bad?

MARVIN. Yes. Restaurants should have single names. Like Steak. Or Catfish. Nobody likes this fru-fru junk. All these new-world, third-world cuisines.

*(DENNY runs on with a glass of water.)*

MILLIE. Yes. Everybody likes mashed potatoes served in a cold big heap.

DENNY. Water. *(DENNY sets the water down. ABELINE immediately moves it. DENNY trots off.)*

MARVIN. If I learned anything, it's that flavor is over-rated.

MILLIE. You are so old-fashioned. You might as well be trapped in amber and put in a museum. It hurts me to see you so diminished. I really think this place has eel in the name. Or is it swan? I haven't the faintest idea of where we are.

MARVIN. Seems like a hell of a lot of trouble for a steak.

MILLIE. Oh golly.

MARVIN. What?

MILLIE. I don't know that they serve steak.

MARVIN. Millie!

*(DENNY trots out with coffee.)*

MILLIE. Stop worrying about your poor stomach.

DENNY. Black coffee. *(DENNY sets down coffee. ABELINE immediately moves it. DENNY trots off.)*