

# **Ask Me Anything And Other Short Plays**

By

Philip Middleton Williams

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# Ask Me Anything

## CHARACTERS:

STEVE: early twenties; attractive, dressed for a job interview.

MARTIN: the same.

LEO: older, businessman.

## PLACE and TIME:

An office with a desk and chairs. Present day.

**Ask Me Anything** was written and first performed for a playwriting master class taught by Tina Howe at the William Inge Theatre Festival, April 29, 2006, at Independence Community College, Independence, Kansas. Roles were performed by Luke Yankee (Steve), Steven Kohlar (Martin), and the author (Leo).

**Ask Me Anything** was first produced in a full-stage production as a part of the Miami Summer 1-Acts Festival at New Theatre in Miami, Florida on July 5, 2013. It was directed by William Roudebush with the following cast:

Steve.....Glenn Hutchinson  
Martin.....Jordan Hale  
Leo.....Joel Kolker

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*Scene: An office. A desk with a chair and two other chairs. A small stack of folders is on the desk. At rise, STEVE is standing next to the desk. MARTIN enters. He is carrying a folder.*

MARTIN: I'm here for the interview.

STEVE: Right. Take a seat. (*MARTIN sits in one of the chairs. STEVE indicates the folder.*) Is that your application?

MARTIN: Oh, yes. Sorry.

*(Hands it to him. STEVE opens the folder, leafs through some of the papers, then sits behind the desk, still reading the papers. MARTIN watches him intently.)*

STEVE (*reading papers*): Hmm. (*Turns a page.*) Hmm.

MARTIN: Something wrong?

STEVE (*still reading*): Hmm.

MARTIN: What is it? Did I leave out something?

STEVE (*closing folder*): You do realize that the position you've applied for is extremely sensitive. We'll need to do a thorough background check on you.

MARTIN: I signed the waiver. But...

STEVE (*interrupting*): Yes, I see you signed the waiver. Very good. But there's more to this than just signing the waiver saying that you will allow us to investigate everything about you going back to, oh, high school and beyond. This is, after all, a very sensitive position in the company.

MARTIN: Really? I didn't know that. I thought...

STEVE (*interrupting*): You thought you were applying for the data entry position in the accounts receivable department.

MARTIN: Yes.

STEVE: That position has been filled.

MARTIN: Oh.

STEVE: But you caught our eye in another area.

MARTIN: Oh, really? What?

STEVE: Well, as I said, it's a highly sensitive position. You'd be responsible for some very confidential information and the processing thereof. So I'm going to have to ask you some questions that will determine whether or not you're the right person for the job.

MARTIN (*hesitant*): Okay.

STEVE: You sound hesitant.

MARTIN: No. It's just that...

STEVE (*interrupting*): You thought you were applying for another job.

MARTIN: Yeah.

STEVE: You did sign the waiver, though. It would be a pity to let that go to waste. And you did go to all the trouble to come down here – get dressed up nicely – for this interview. And you're probably just what we're looking for in this highly sensitive job.

MARTIN: Okay.

STEVE: So, I'm going to ask you these questions.

MARTIN: Okay.

STEVE: Good. Ready?

MARTIN: Yes, sir.

STEVE: Have you ever had sex in a public place?

MARTIN (*stunned*): What?

STEVE: I'm sorry, I'll speak up. Have you ever had sex in a public place?

MARTIN: Uh....

STEVE: Perhaps I should have asked if you've ever had sex and then gone from there.

MARTIN: Why....?

STEVE: We have to know these things. You did sign the waiver.

MARTIN: How, uh, how...uh, what do you mean by "public?"

STEVE: In a park. A parking garage. A public toilet. A glory hole. A tea room.

MARTIN: I don't even know what some of those places are.

STEVE: Certainly you know what a park is.

MARTIN: Well, yes...but a – what did you call it – "glory hole?" "Tea room?"

STEVE: Oh, then you're not homosexual.

MARTIN: What?

STEVE: If you were a homosexual you'd know what those terms meant.

MARTIN: Well, I..

STEVE: Are you homosexual?

MARTIN: Can you ask me...

STEVE: You signed the waiver.

MARTIN: I know, but still....

STEVE: You're not a homosexual?

MARTIN: Yes. I mean no.

STEVE: Yes to which question?

MARTIN: The first one.

STEVE: You mean yes to sex in a public place and no to being homosexual?

MARTIN: No... and .... yes.

STEVE: So that's a no to sex in a public place but yes to being homosexual.

MARTIN: I think so.

STEVE: You think?

MARTIN: Yes...I've never had sex in a public place.

STEVE: What about outdoors?

MARTIN: Why do you – I know I signed the waiver – but...

STEVE: We can't run the risk of someone who engages in risky behavior being in a position that is highly sensitive. There's all sorts of reasons – you can understand. Blackmail, temptation....

MARTIN: But what about being gay?

STEVE: Oh, that's fine. We're very open-minded. We just don't want to find you being gay in a place that could put you at risk of some activity that would compromise you – or us. Now, the next question: Have you engaged in sexual activity within the last 24 hours.

MARTIN: No.

STEVE: Are you sure?

MARTIN: Yes. I live alone. I don't have a, uh, you-know, so...

STEVE: What about self-abuse?

MARTIN: What?

STEVE: Jacking off.

MARTIN: No.

**The play is not over. To find out how it ends, contact the playwright at [pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com](mailto:pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com).**

## **Any Second Now**

### **CHARACTERS:**

CLARK: Mid-twenties. Average Guy.

KAREN: Mid-twenties. Pretty Girl.

FRED: Middle age. Average Man.

ETHEL: Middle age. Matronly.

HAL: Mid-twenties. Hot Hunk.

### **PLACE and TIME:**

A waiting room at Characters Equity. Now and forever.

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*The scene is a waiting room like that in a doctor's office or a small business. It is sparsely decorated with perhaps a landscape scene on the wall and comfortable but used furniture: a small sofa, a few chairs, a coffee table with magazines, and a potted palm in one corner. A small table off to the side has a coffeemaker and cups. Stage Left is a door leading off. Stage Right is a reception desk with an office chair, a phone, and a computer.*

*At rise, CLARK is sitting at the reception desk talking on the phone. He is a young man in his late twenties or so, average-looking, wearing business-casual clothes such as khakis and a button-down shirt.*

CLARK: Well, I'll see what I can do. Ten-minutes are all the rage now, and they usually keep the number of characters under five. The largest I've seen is ten, but that was for a crowd scene and they were cut by the time they finally got to the reading. *(Pause as he listens.)* Right. Oh, no, we haven't seen too many full-lengths recently. *(Another pause.)* No, it's not that, it's the attention span. No offense, but most playwrights these days can't go ten minutes without getting up to pee or go make a sandwich. No, of course I don't mean you. I know you can go all day without a break. All right, I'll see what I can do. You too. G'bye.

*(Hangs up phone, sighs, and starts searching on the computer. Phone rings.)*

CLARK: Characters Equity, this is Clark. Hm, let me check.

*(Goes back to the computer. As he searches, the door opens and a young woman enters. This is KAREN. She is mid-twenties, pretty, dressed for work: skirt, blouse, low heels. She is carrying a folder. She looks around briefly, then approaches CLARK.)*

KAREN: Excuse me...

*(CLARK holds up a finger indicating for her to wait. She nods, backs away.)*

CLARK *(on phone)*: Yeah, no, he's not available at the moment. He got called in last night at two a.m. He's fixing a plot hole in Act Two of a full-length that's in rehearsal in Denver. I know, right? Why can't these people do their dreaming in the middle of the day like normal people? Oh, hell no, that was the night shift. Worst job in the place. They get some crazy requests, and by morning, poof. We keep telling them to write the idea down, then call us. Well, what can I tell you, Stan; that's the business. Sure. Okay. G'bye.

*(Hangs up the phone, then smiles politely at KAREN.)*

CLARK *(cont'd)*: Hi, how can I help you?

KAREN: They sent me here from down the hall.

*(Hands CLARK the folder. He glances through it and nods.)*

CLARK: Oh, from Ingenues, right?

KAREN: Right. They said to see you.

CLARK: Great. Have a seat, I'll be right with you.

(CLARK goes back to working on the computer. KAREN, a bit flustered, sits in one of the chairs. A moment later the door opens and FRED and ETHEL enter. They are a middle-aged couple, somewhat dowdy in appearance; he in slacks and a sweater, she in a housedress.)

ETHEL: I told you it was too good to last.

FRED: I know, I know.

ETHEL: We could have made it work. If only we'd been given the chance. But...

CLARK: You're back soon. What happened?

ETHEL: Fired.

FRED: Right in the middle of the scene, too. I had a great line coming up, but then all of a sudden, wham. Deleted. All seven pages. Poof. Like we never existed.

CLARK: Did he say why?

FRED: Do they ever?

ETHEL: Something about "it's just not working." And then we're gone.

FRED: Kids these days. They just don't know how to write for us anymore.

ETHEL: Ain't that the truth. We used to be leads, but now we're either kindly grandparents or nosy neighbors, or worse, just props.

(ETHEL goes to sit on the sofa, sees KAREN.)

ETHEL (*cont'd*): Oh, hello.

KAREN: Hello.

ETHEL: I'm Ethel, and this is Fred.

FRED: Hello.

KAREN (*impressed*): You're the real ones? Fred and Ethel from...?

ETHEL: Oh, that's just who we're best known as. We've done lots of other characters, but when you're part of history, it's just easier to keep the name. And he looks like a Fred, doesn't he?

KAREN: Well, I don't know too many Freds.

ETHEL: It's not a popular name any more. Nowadays they're all Jared and Kyle and Ryan...

FRED (*disapproving*): And Hunter and Tanner and Connor. Those aren't names; they're jobs!

ETHEL: Oh, Fred. (*To KAREN.*) I didn't get your name.

KAREN: Oh, I'm so sorry. I'm... (*Thinks for a second, then smiles.*) I'm Karen now. Had to think of it for a moment.

ETHEL: That used to happen to me. One day you're one, the next day you're the other. (*Looks at KAREN closely.*) You look familiar; have we worked together before?

KAREN: We might have. I've done so many characters it's hard to keep track.

ETHEL: Yes... (*It's coming back to her.*) For Bill Inge. You were Marie, I was Lola. The one about the dog.

KAREN: That's right! And then again where I was the beauty queen and you were the next-door neighbor.

ETHEL: Mrs. Potts. And Fred was Howard, the lonely salesman.

FRED: Yeah, I always get the comic relief. First Shakespeare, then a million others. Did some work for Neil Simon, but could never get the New York accent quite right.

KAREN: You worked for Shakespeare?

FRED (*proudly*): Sir John Falstaff, if you please.

ETHEL: And I was Nurse in "Romeo and Juliet"!

KAREN: Wow!

FRED: Of course, the actors get all the credit, and Shakespeare gets quoted out the ass, but who do you think inspired him in the first place?

(*The door opens and HAL enters. He is a handsome and muscular young man in his twenties wearing a skin-tight t-shirt, jeans, and cowboy boots. He strides across the room and goes to the desk.*)

HAL: Hey, Clark. I'm done for the day.

CLARK: Hi, Hal. How'd it go?

HAL: Just a cameo. No lines. Just showed up in some fantasy scene for some guy who's struggling with coming out and I was, uh, well, his nocturnal inspiration. Kinda feel sorry for the actor that actually has to play the part. But, hey, if that's what the playwright wants...

CLARK: Better than the last time, though.

HAL: Hell yes. Didn't even make it to the first read-through. The playwright's boyfriend said "You wrote that character just so you could have some hot young hunk on stage, didn't you?" (*Snorts.*) So, what's wrong with a little eye candy? Worked for Bill Inge. Now there was steady work. Hell, I even kept the name.

KAREN: Oh. My. God. I thought you looked familiar.

(*HAL turns to see KAREN, and he does a double-take.*)

HAL: Wow. Is that you?

KAREN: It is!

*(They embrace.)*

HAL: I haven't seen you since...

KAREN: I know! But we did those three for Inge: I was Madge, you were Hal, then I was Marie and you were Turk, and then I was Elma and you were Bo. That was the one where I got... demoted.

ETHEL: The same thing happened to me. I was Lola, then Mrs. Potts, and then the generic "best friend." Almost ended up as the nosy neighbor on that TV show about a witch.

FRED: Dodged that bullet.

HAL: Yeah, sorry to hear that.

FRED: That's show biz. One day you're so famous they name a beer after you. Next thing you know, you're playing a grumpy grandpa to three boys and a widower. Practically killed the actor.

KAREN: That's so sad.

HAL: So how come you're not up in Ingenue or Leading Lady? Hell, I thought you'd still be there.

KAREN: I don't know. I showed up as usual, and they said, "Oh, you've been reassigned. Report to Seconds. It's down the hall." So now I'm just a supporting character.

*(FRED, ETHEL, and HAL all trade looks, and FRED shakes his head. KAREN sees this.)*

KAREN *(cont'd)*: What?

ETHEL: We don't use that word, dear.

KAREN: You mean "supporting"?

FRED: Yeah, we don't say that.

KAREN: Why not? Isn't that what you do?

HAL: Yeah, but it sounds like all we do is make the lead look good. But we've got our own turf, if you know what I mean. Without us, it'd be just a straight story line with no subplot, no depth, nothing to make it interesting. *(Grins broadly and assumes a muscle-flexing macho pose.)* Or something to look at.

FRED: It could be worse.

HAL: Yeah. We could be down there.

*(HAL indicates somewhere offstage. FRED and ETHEL recoil in disgust.)*

KAREN: What's "down there."

**The play is not over. To find out how it ends, contact the playwright at [pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com](mailto:pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com).**

# **Birds of Paradise**

## **CHARACTERS:**

CHRISTOPHE: a peacock

TEQUILA: a mockingbird

DIVINE: a flamingo

SEBASTIAN: an ibis

BUZZY: a vulture

PETE: a coyote

## **PLACE and TIME:**

A bank on the side of a South Florida Water District canal. Present day.

## **PRODUCTION NOTE:**

All of the characters are, as noted, birds or other fauna. They should present themselves as such, so be inventive with the costuming and the choreography. The roles are non-gender specific.

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*Early morning on the banks of a South Florida Water District canal. The sun is barely up and the lights will come up gradually as the play progresses.*

*CHRISTOPHE enters. He is a flamboyant strutting peacock, very self-absorbed, but also not the brightest bird in the nest. He is blithely unaware of his limitations.*

CHRISTOPHE (*extremely loud*): Hey! Hey! Hey!

TEQUILA (*entering*): Hey! Hey! Hey! Shut up! It's barely light out and you've been squawking all night.

CHRISTOPHE: I beg your pardon!

TEQUILA (*mocking*): "I beg your pardon!" Sheesh. If you're gonna make a racket, at least come up with something new instead of that HEY HEY HEY all the time. I can't believe that chicks actually run *towards* that racket.

CHRISTOPHE: Well! I've had my share of those who have told me that they find me irresistible.

TEQUILA: I think they mean unavoidable.

CHRISTOPHE: Well, *excusé-moi*, Mr. Mockingbird, but at least I don't go around imitating others. I am an original!

*(DIVINE enters. A flamingo in gorgeous pink and long legs, they look around, then smirk at CHRISTOPE.)*

DIVINE: Original? Did it ever occur to you that the only reason you're an original is because no one else would dress up like that? Or find the need to wave their tailfeathers like a moving target? Really, Christophe, darling: find one color and work it.

*(DIVINE struts across the stage like a drag queen working the room.)*

CHRISTOPHE: Well, at least I don't have my knees on backward!

DIVINE: And I don't go around bobbing my head like a spastic pigeon.

TEQUILA: Got you there! Got you there!

*(SEBASTIAN enters. They are an ibis, clad in white, casual, the youngest of the group, a bit of a stoner.)*

SEBASTIAN: Hey, dudes, whassup?

TEQUILA: Good morning, Sebastian. How's it hangin'?

SEBASTIAN: Way cool, my repetitive friend. Me and the bros were just boppin' along and pickin' up some chow from the lawn. *(Bobs head down as if looking for food.)* Mmm... munchies.

DIVINE: Well, you're adorable, Sebastian, but basic white after Labor Day?

SEBASTIAN: Dude, I don't call the shots. Least I don't have to wear some bogus costume and run around a football field chasing... Man, I don't know what that dude dressed up like me has been snorting. Crazy!

CHRISTOPHE: HEY! Let's get this meeting started! It's already getting light, and we have things to do!

TEQUILA: What, you need to peck at your reflection in that Mustang over there? Leave a turd the size of a melon over there, or fall through the patio enclosure for the fifth time? Don't let us keep you!

CHRISTOPHE: I shall call the roll! Tequila Mockingbird!

TEQUILA: Here! Here! Been here the whole time!

CHRISTOPHE: Divine Flamingo!

DIVINE: Fabulously present.

CHRISTOPHE: Sebastian Ibis!

SEBASTIAN: Yo, bro!

CHRISTOPHE: Buzzy Vulture!

*(Silence.)*

CHRISTOPHE: BUZZY VULTURE!

*(Silence, then BUZZY enters. A vulture, dressed in black, slouching, not threatening but not really attractive, either. Rather mellow and not especially swift. Slowly settles in among the others.)*

BUZZY: Sorry I was late. I was waiting for a squirrel to fall off the limb. Took forever, it seems. *(Beat.)* But I am present.

TEQUILA: How was it?

BUZZY: Enh. A little too fresh for my taste. A day in the sun would have helped, along with the addition of some fresh maggots. But I can't be choosy these days...

SEBASTIAN: Maggots! Whoa, love me some of them.

BUZZY: I'll make sure there are plenty for you.

SEBASTIAN: Way cool, buddy.

BUZZY: It's Buzzy.

SEBASTIAN: Yeah, gotcha.

CHRISTOPHE: Enough chatter! We all have our duties today! Be sure to do them! Divine, you're doing what?



DIVINE: I'm going to the front yard and standing still for the rest of the day next to the iron deer and the silver ball on the pedestal. I shall try to be tasteful without being gaudy, unlike the tractor tire filled with flowers and butterflies made out of wood. So tacky. (*Sigh.*) Maybe I'll find a decent koi pond... get a little gold color to brighten my outlook.

CHRISTOPHE: Good. Sebastian?

SEBASTIAN: Me and my posse are gonna bop across a few lawns and traffic medians and keep an eye out for those other guys.

TEQUILA: You mean the egrets?

SEBASTIAN: Yeah, those dudes are whack. They ride around on big ole cows picking ticks off their back.

TEQUILA: So, you'll have no egrets!

*(Everybody except CHRISTOPHE and BUZZY laugh as they would with their own call. Finally, CHRISTOPHE allows himself a smile and a chuckle.)*

CHRISTOPHE: All right, back to business...

BUZZY: I don't get it.

TEQUILA (*patiently*): He'll have... no egrets. Like...no...egrets. Regrets?

*(BUZZY thinks for a moment, then the light comes on and they grin. Then BUZZY laughs, but it sounds more like a croak.)*

BUZZY: Ah... *(Laughs again, one croak.)*

CHRISTOPHE: All right, we've had our fun. Tequila, you will do whatever it is you do: dive at dogs, wander around the yard flapping your wings, singing someone else's music; generally being annoying....

TEQUILA: Hey, hey! I'm the official state bird, and they even wrote a song about me. (*Sings.*) "Listen to the mockingbird..."

SEBASTIAN (*interrupting to sing along*): "Peckin' on a frozen turd!"

TEQUILA: Oh, ha ha!

SEBASATIAN: Hey, it's funny, all right? Chill out.

CHRISTOPHE: All right then. Everybody to your posts, do your duty for the Great Bird of the Galaxy... or at least for the Eastern Flyway. And let's be careful out there: those Egyptian Geese mean to take over and –

*(CHRISTOPHE is interrupted by the entrance of PETE, a coyote. He is lean, somewhat scruffy, but not immediately threatening. Nevertheless, all the other birds freeze, then panic, run around flapping, then CHRISTOPE fans out his tailfeathers.)*

**The play is not over. To find out how it ends, contact the playwright at [pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com](mailto:pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com).**

# **Chewie, Get Us Out of Here**

## **CHARACTERS:**

SPOCK  
KIRK  
MCCOY  
CREWMAN  
SCOTTY  
VARIOUS VOICES

## **PLACE and TIME:**

A planet somewhere in the Alpha Quadrant. A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away.

## **PRODUCTION NOTE:**

All the roles can be played by any age, any gender. The play requires voice-overs from a lot of well-known science fiction films and television series. The voice-overs do not have to be genuine recordings from the referenced films and TV series; in fact, it would be more in keeping with the sense of the play if they were voiced by an off-stage actor or actors.

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*The setting is a bare stage. At rise, SPOCK, wearing a blue shirt, KIRK, wearing a gold shirt, and MCCOY, wearing a blue shirt, are gathered around a CREWMAN, wearing a red shirt, who is lying prostrate on the floor. MCCOY is examining the CREWMAN with a tricorder, which looks a lot like a hand-held calculator.*

MCCOY: He's dead, Jim.

KIRK (*opens communicator*): Beam us up, Scotty.

HAL (V/O): I'm sorry, Dave, I can't do that.

KIRK: Who is this?

ADAMA (V/O): This Battlestar is off limits until we are sure the Cylons have left the quadrant.

KIRK: The Cylons?

LEIA (V/O): Help me, Obi-wan Kenobi; you're my only hope.

KIRK: Who is ... Obi-what? Whoever this is, beam us up! We have an emergency!

THE DOCTOR (V/O): Please state the nature of the medical emergency.

KIRK: Now we're getting somewhere. We need an emergency beam out! This is Captain Kirk!

KLAATU (V/O): Klaatu barada nikto!

KIRK: No! Not Klaatu! Kirk! We already have a doctor! Who are you?

BRITISH ACCENT (V/O): Where is your tardis?

KIRK: My what?

BRITISH ACCENT (V/O): You asked for Doctor Who. I'm sorry, he – I mean she – is not available. Please leave a message after the tone.

*(PHASER blast is heard.)*

KIRK: Leave a message? I can't do that! We're under attack!

ROBBIE THE ROBOT (V/O): Danger, Will Robinson!

*(Another phaser blast.)*

RIPLEY (V/O): Get away from her, you bitch!

LUKE SKYWALKER (V/O): I've got a bad feeling about this!

ET (V/O): Phone home!

KIRK: I'm trying!

SPOCK: Captain, if I may. (*Points tricorder at communicator.*) Fascinating.

MCCOY: You always say that, but you never explain it.

SPOCK: It's quite simple, Doctor. The flux capzapitator has been thrown out of alignment by a build-up of tachyon particles which are causing the Bandersnatch to burble when it should frumphaven. Therefore, the gigglesnort has been thrown out of phase, causing a temporal distortion in the chronoton compensator. That has caused a surge in the plasma conduit of the fourth Jeffries tube. This will require an immediate venting of the Schrodinger compartment, which could cause either immediate mortality of the test subject of the feline species. Or not, depending, of course, on the location of the observer.

*(KIRK and MCCOY are flabbergasted.)*

MCCOY: Say what?

SPOCK: Put succinctly, Doctor, we are fucked.

KIRK: We have to get out of here!

BRITISH ACCENT (V/O): But you can't. ("Can't" is pronounced with a long A.)

KIRK: Yes. We. KHAN!!!!!!

SPOCK: Calm yourself, Captain.

MCCOY: We have to at least TRY to get off this forbidden planet. I'm a doctor, not a castaway.

YODA (V/O): Do or do not. There is no try.

KIRK: Oh, shut up, you green-blooded wizened little troll.

MCCOY: I think that's my line.

KIRK: What is?

MCCOY: I get the green-blooded insults. It's in my contract. *(Pointing to SPOCK.)* And they're supposed to be directed at him.

KIRK *(sarcastic)*: Well, excuuuuse me!

MCCOY: It's bad enough that you get to kiss all the nubile young alien women.

KIRK: Yeah, where is Ann Francis now that I'm all hot and bothered under this cheap toupee?

MCCOY: All I get is the occasional spat with Spock and southern-fried cornpone humor, which ain't worth a tribble-fart on a Georgia peanut farm. Now I gotta play doctor on this third rock from the sun and look at some poor struggling actor where all he gets to do is put on his resume "Dead Guy."

SPOCK: Are you quite sure he's dead, Doctor?

MCCOY: Well, he has to be. He's wearing a red shirt. That's the rule: Red shirt means you're dead before the first commercial.

**The play is not over. To find out how it ends, contact the playwright at [pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com](mailto:pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com).**

# **The Christmas Commercial Conspiracy**

## **CHARACTERS:**

BARNEY: Any age, any ethnicity. Ad writer.

JUDY: Any age, any ethnicity. Ad writer.

## **PLACE and TIME:**

The office of an advertising agency in Miami. Memorial Day weekend.

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*The setting is an office at an advertising agency, suggested by two desks with the usual office items: in-boxes, phones, scattered paper, and laptop computers. At rise, it is morning on the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend. BARNEY, an ad writer, is sitting at one of the desks. He is wearing casual business clothes: short-sleeved button-down shirt, slacks, and loafers. He is staring at the monitor, drumming his fingers. He shakes his head, turns away, staring into the air, trying to think. After a beat he turns back to the computer and hits a couple of keys. A moment later cheesy sleigh-bell Christmas music starts to come out of the tinny speakers. He grimaces, chooses another selection, and this time a heavy-metal slash version of "Feliz Navidad" blasts out of the speakers, filling the room. BARNEY gets into the beat, gets up from his desk and starts slam-dancing around the room as the music gets louder and louder, his dancing gets more and more antic and frantic. In the middle of this, JUDY enters. She is wearing a heavy-duty South Beach casual outfit: a sleeveless top, summer shorts, sandals, sunglasses, and a straw beach hat. She is carrying a tote bag decorated with flamingoes and palm trees. She sees BARNEY dancing and stops dead in her tracks, open-mouthed, gaping at him.*

JUDY: What the...?

*(BARNEY does not see her. He keeps dancing.)*

JUDY: Hey!

*(BARNEY keeps at it.)*

JUDY *(at the top of her voice, over the music)*: HEY!

*(BARNEY hears her, turns and sees her, stops dancing, and shuts off the music. The echoes fade as they stare at each other.)*

JUDY: What are you listening to?

BARNEY: It's the Severe Tire Damage Christmas album. Just trying to get into the spirit of it all.

JUDY: What spirit? You looked like you were possessed.

BARNEY: Yeah, well, I gotta get into the mood, y'know.

JUDY: Mood? What mood?

BARNEY: Christmas!

JUDY: It's Memorial Day!

BARNEY: Didn't you see the memo?

JUDY: What memo?

BARNEY: The one Charlie sent out last night.

JUDY: Last night? I left the office at five.



BARNEY: Check your e-mail. We got new assignments for Christmas commercials, and the drafts are due Tuesday morning.

JUDY: Why didn't you call me?

BARNEY: I did. I left three voicemails. Where were you?

JUDY: Well, not picking up my voicemails. I just got your last one.

BARNEY: Yeah, no kidding. Where were you, at the beach?

JUDY: If you must know, I was on my way there with a date.

BARNEY: Who with?

JUDY: Hugo.

BARNEY: The new guy in production? The one with the nice biceps and killer smile?

JUDY: Jealous?

BARNEY: Not interested. He once asked me if I'd ever heard of some oldies group called Nickelback. I haven't got the energy to both make out *and* educate. So anyway, we've got a wagonload of work to do.

JUDY: Define "wagonload."

BARNEY: Four new clients, and –

JUDY: Who are they?

BARNEY: Bayside Bait and Tackle, Suarez's Septic Tank Service, Pagoda Palace Sushi Buffet, and Great Horned Owl Taxidermy.

JUDY: Wow. Okay, Barney, you're new here, so you gotta know that Christmas is a huge deal for Charlie.

BARNEY: Yeah, I know. That's why I called you. I'm sorry, but he said –

JUDY: It's okay, it's okay. I was *SO* not looking forward to spending Memorial Day weekend out on South Beach. There's nothing going on there anyway.

*(JUDY sighs, drops her tote, pulls off her hat.)*

BARNEY: Charlie wants them all to be ready to go to the art department and prepped for production next week.

JUDY: Wow, that's cutting it close.

BARNEY: So, what do we have to do?

JUDY: Well, I guess we gotta pull out the magic Christmas formula.

BARNEY: What's that?

JUDY: The Christmas formula is where you can't mention the reason for Christmas while selling the daylight's out of stuff to buy for Christmas.

BARNEY: Huh?

JUDY: It's gotta be purely secular. We can't mention the Baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Bethlehem, the manger, the Three Wise Men, the Star of Bethlehem, angels, shepherds, or anything remotely related to Christmas.

BARNEY: Why not?

JUDY: Because it will offend the atheists, the Jews, the Buddhists, the Quakers, and anyone else who doesn't buy into that whole son-of-God, virgin birth, and no room at the inn story.

**The play is not over. To find out how it ends, contact the playwright at [pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com](mailto:pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com).**

# **END OF PLAY.**

With apologies to Murray Burnett and Joan Alison.

## **CHARACTERS:**

STAGE DIRECTIONS

RESPONDENT 1

RESPONDENT 2

RESPONDENT 3

PLAYWRIGHT

FIVE READERS (optional; they do not speak and exit at the beginning of the play.)

## **PLACE and TIME:**

A conference room at a theatre festival. Present day.

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*The setting is a conference room being used for readings at a theatre festival. There are five music stands with chairs behind them in the front of the room or on the low stage if available. There are READERS in each chair with script notebooks on each stand. Off to one side is another music stand with a chair. STAGE DIRECTIONS is sitting in the chair off to the side. The RESPONDENTS and PLAYWRIGHT are sitting in the front row of the chairs for the audience. Each has a notepad and pen.*

STAGE DIRECTIONS (*reading from script*): Lights out. End of play.

*(Polite applause like golf claps from RESPONDENTS and PLAYWRIGHT. The READERS collect their scripts and exit. RESPONDENTS sit on the edge of the stage or pull their chairs around to face the audience.)*

RESPONDENT 1: Well, thank you very much. (*To audience.*) Let's give another round of applause to our actors... (*Waits for applause.*) ...And to our playwright for bringing us this very interesting story. (*More polite applause.*) So. Let's talk about this story. I took some notes and a few words popped into my head as we went along. Now of course the last thing I would want to do is to re-write your play, but I couldn't help noticing some inconsistencies and perhaps a few plot holes that you might want to take a look at when you do your re-writes. Of course, that's assuming you'll do that. After all, I believe it was Neil Simon who once said that a play is never written, it's re-written. (*Self-satisfied chuckle, then looks at notes.*) I'm not quite sure we know what kind of play this really is – well, actually, who really knows what kind of play any play really is – but it seems to be torn between a love story, a history play – there's a lot of foreknowledge required in terms of geopolitical events and the time and place – and then there's also the aspect of the suspense of a thriller, with bad guys chasing the good guys and ending up trying to determine who the real hero is. After all, the main character really doesn't have that many redeeming qualities; he seems to live only for the moment, for himself, and while I thoroughly enjoy the idea of an anti-hero becoming a hero in the end, he's just another one of the schemers that populate this story. You have the skeevy policeman on the take, the crime boss, Señor Martinez, who buys and sells people for any price, and the cut-rate smuggler; you make them all seem somehow noble, while the only true hero is relegated to being portrayed as a weak and wishy-washy do-gooder named Laszlo who can't even trust his own wife to, as they say, do the right thing. So, while I get the *mise en scene* of this particular *milieu*, I'm not really sure that you do, and... Well, I've talked enough. (*To RESPONDENT 2.*) Over to you.

RESPONDENT 2: *Mise en scene? Milieu?* Seriously?

RESPONDENT 1: Yes, I believe that's what I meant. After all...

RESPONDENT 2 (*interrupting*): Okay. Well, we all know you have a PhD in theatre. You're a doctor of theatre. You can cure a ham.

RESPONDENT 1: Ha ha.

RESPONDENT 2: All righty then. I want to turn my attention to the role of – (*Looks at notes.*) - - I believe her name is Lois? She seems to be rather thinly drawn, and I'm not really sure of the relationship you've put her in with – (*Again to the notes.*) – I think his name is Rich? Anyway, there's a suggestion that they have a past, but it's not really clear, and I'm wondering if you can't give us more of a backstory on them, because the way you portray her now, it clearly seems – or

it seems to me – that the only reason she’s interested in him is to manipulate him with her sex, and I think we’re long past the time when someone has to, excuse my French, sleep their way to the top. (*Glaring at RESPONDENT 1.*) Wouldn’t you agree? There are more ways to get ahead in this crazy world, isn’t that right? Even in this *mise en scene* and *milieu*?

RESPONDENT 1: I have no idea what you’re talking about.

RESPONDENT 2: The hell you don’t. You knew I was up for that position.

RESPONDENT 1: Now is not the time...

RESPONDENT 2 (*Deep breath*): You’re right. (*To PLAYWRIGHT and the audience.*) My apologies. Moving right along. The character of ‘The Rabbit.’ Who is that? What’s the purpose of having someone, especially a Person of Color, who doesn’t even have a name and speaks with a stereotypical dialect? It seems like rank tokenism. And while I get it that he is seen as the chorus, the conscience of the piece, not unlike the Fool in Lear or the Stage Manager in ‘Our Town,’ you must remember this: if you’re going to resort to symbolism or semiotics in a play such as this, the fundamental things apply, and as time goes by, the role can’t be just a cardboard cut-out, as background music if you will, playing on the leitmotifs of the main characters.

RESPONDENT 1: Oh, so now who’s showing off, Mr. (*or Ms.*) All-But-Dissertation.

RESPONDENT 2: As I was saying, the focus of this story has to be more immediate than what happens to the lovers and the triangle. It goes way beyond that. (*To the PLAYWRIGHT.*) Isn’t that what you really mean? A case of... how shall I put it... Do or die?

PLAYWRIGHT: Well, I...

RESPONDENT 3: I really think the way you’ve set this story, this exotic locale, the intriguing characters, you’ve set yourself up for making some more interesting choices in terms of how the characters interact. For instance, you have an opportunity to present some more alternative relationships, especially since you have Rich give up Lois and end up alone. But what about the policeman, what’s his name, Captain Rinaldo? It sounds like there could be the makings of a friendship that could be beautiful.

RESPONDENT 1: Are you saying they could be...?

RESPONDENT 3: Well, why not?

RESPONDENT 1: Because it’s a historical play, not modern, and that would ruin the story line. (*To the PLAYWRIGHT.*) Am I right?

PLAYWRIGHT: Well, I...

RESPONDENT 1: Of course I’m right.

RESPONDENT 2: Wait, don’t tell him how to write his play. (*To PLAYWRIGHT.*) Go ahead, write it whatever way you want. But for what it’s worth, as long as you’re exploring tense relationships and lost loves, you might as well show how Rich really has to struggle to give up

Lois even though he's trying to be noble, even though he's no good at that. (*In the direction of RESPONDENT 1.*) Some people never get it.

RESPONDENT 1: Oh, we're back to that, are we? You never really got over me, did you? Well, well. It finally comes out.

RESPONDENT 2: Oh, well, speaking of coming out...

RESPONDENT 1: It was that one time. I was...

RESPONDENT 2: Dazed? Confused? Drunk?

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# Going There

## **CHARACTERS:**

SAM: 17, high school senior. Nerdish. Gary's best friend.

GARY: 17, high school senior. Jock. Sam's best friend.

## **PLACE and TIME:**

A bench outside of school. Various times.

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*Lights up on a bench in a courtyard outside of a high school. It is the night of graduation, and off-stage we can hear the sounds of people still inside the school and perhaps some music.*

*SAM enters, followed by GARY. SAM is wearing a shirt and tie and nice pants and polished shoes, as is GARY. Both boys are seventeen. SAM is nerdy; GARY is a jock, but they are best friends since childhood. They are in a celebratory mood, but not loud about it; they're more relieved than anything.*

SAM: Well, we did it.

GARY: Yup! Finally made it. Graduated from high school. Whew.

*(GARY goes to SAM and gives him a brotherly hug including a pat on the back. SAM returns it, then sinks down on the bench.)*

SAM: I thought I'd never make it.

GARY: Oh, c'mon, buddy. You had it all the way. You're going to M-I-T. You got Nobel Prize written all over you.

SAM *(scoffing)*: Yeah, right. Look at you: Princeton. Full ride.

GARY: Aw, that's just because I can throw a football. I still gotta do the work.

SAM: You'll be fine. You can do it. You did it here. Three-point-oh GPA.

GARY: Yeah, but that was with your help. *(Chuckles.)* Isn't that how it goes in all those teen rom-com movies: the jock and the nerd as best buddies?

SAM: Right outta Central Casting. So, you gonna go to the party? Should be fun.

GARY: I might.

SAM: Or...

*(GARY shrugs.)*

SAM: Go see Cathy.

GARY: Yeah, I might.

*(Beat.)*

SAM: Good. So, you think you might...

GARY: Finally do the deed?

SAM: I wasn't gonna say that, but –

GARY: Yeah, we've been talking about it. Finally....

SAM: I can't believe you two have never, y'know.... I mean, you and she have been dating since freshman year. I mean, if I had the chance and there was someone like –



GARY: Jealous?

*(SAM gapes and struggles to say something but nothing comes out.)*

GARY *(cont'd)*: It's okay, Sam. I know.

SAM *(flustered)*: Know what?

GARY: That you have a crush on me. It's okay. To be honest, I'm flattered. Seriously, I am. It's just that –

SAM: Yeah, I get it. Look, I'd never –

GARY: Sam, we've been best buddies since third grade. We did all those things kids do; games, sports, sleep-overs, school stuff. You're the closest thing I've had to a brother, including my own brother. And I knew all along that you were....

SAM: Okay, you don't have to say it.

GARY: It's just that I'm....

SAM: I get it. But it's not just some stupid crush. I've seen you naked and it's not like I wanna jump your bones. I just –

GARY: I get it. Listen, if there was ever any guy I'd wanna do the deed with, you'd be the first, okay?

SAM *(chuckling)*: I'll be waiting.

GARY: Good. *(GARY pats SAM on the back, gets up from the bench.)* So, you going to the party?

SAM: Yeah, for a little while at least. Y'know, put in an appearance. You're gonna go see Cathy, huh?

GARY: Yeah, might as well get it over with.

SAM: Well, you had your chance with me.

*(GARY laughs, they bro-hug again, then GARY exits, SAM watching.)*

SAM *(to himself)*: See you later.

*(Lights fade to black. A bell rings and the lights come up on the bench. It is evening. The stage is empty. Off we can hear voices of people at a party and background music playing. SAM enters. He is wearing the same outfit, carrying a drink glass. He is wearing glasses. He sees the bench, smiles in recognition, then sits and looks around, perhaps reminiscing. He sips his drink. A moment later, GARY enters. He too is dressed the same way as before. He is also carrying a drink glass. He sees SAM.)*

GARY: There you are.

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# **Goodbye, Bobby**

An epilogue to **Can't Live Without You**

## **CHARACTERS:**

DONNY HOLLENBECK: Mid-thirties. A writer.

BOBBY CRAMER: Mid-twenties. A character.

## **PLACE and TIME:**

Donny's writing place in his home.

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*The setting is the writing place of DONNY HOLLENBECK. It is a room in his home with a desk, a chair, a computer with a monitor and printer, and a bookshelf loaded with a variety of books. There is another chair, perhaps a rocker or a comfortable old easy chair. It is late morning.*

*As the lights come up, DONNY, a man in his mid-thirties wearing a t-shirt, shorts, and sneakers without socks, is sitting at the computer writing. BOBBY, an attractive and well-built young man in his mid-twenties, wearing a polo shirt, jeans, and sneakers, is sitting in the easy chair watching DONNY as he writes. DONNY talks to himself as he writes, but we cannot understand his mutterings. Then he stops writing, stares at the monitor, reading back, whispering what he's reading, then stops. He nods, then slowly, deliberately types.*

DONNY: The. End.

*(DONNY leans back in his chair, staring again at the monitor. BOBBY, who has been watching patiently, sits up in the chair.)*

BOBBY: That's it? You're done?

DONNY: For now.

BOBBY *(teasingly, like an impatient child)*: Let me see, let me see, let me see.

*(DONNY gestures to the monitor. BOBBY gets up and leans over DONNY's shoulder, reading silently off the screen. He too whispers as he reads. When he gets to the end he nods and smiles.)*

BOBBY: Well, all right. The End. So, now what?

DONNY: I think I'll make a sandwich.

BOBBY: A sandwich?

DONNY: Yeah. PB and J.

BOBBY: Then what?

DONNY: I dunno, maybe take a nap, take a walk down to the beach, maybe check in on Facebook, or see what's on Netflix. I might even go for a swim.

BOBBY: Yeah, but don't you have some decisions to make?

DONNY: Yeah, I do. Blackberry or boysenberry jam.

BOBBY: Huh?

DONNY: On the sandwich. That's not a decision I make lightly. Y'see, certain jams can overwhelm the peanut butter and then it becomes a J and PB, which kinda upsets the balance. Not enough jam, and the bread becomes like a desiccant, absorbing the moisture from the peanut butter to the point that it sticks to the roof of your mouth and that makes it an unpleasant experience altogether. *(He smiles smugly at BOBBY.)*

BOBBY *(annoyed)*: You know what I mean. What are you going to do with the novel?

DONNY: Oh, that.

BOBBY: Yeah, that. The Great American Novel that you've been working on since I-don't-know-when, mainly because I'm the main character and I don't really get the concept of the passage of time outside of the confines of the story. Right now, I'm stuck on... (*Goes to look at the monitor.*) ... August 9, 2015, my wedding day, and Richard and I are heading off on our honeymoon. (*Looks around.*) This does not look like the honeymoon suite at the Vue Pointe Hotel. So, now what? Are you going to send it – me – off to your agent, whatshername, Barbara?

DONNY: No. She's retired. She's living in her mom's condo in Boca.

BOBBY: So, who replaced her?

DONNY: No one. I don't have an agent anymore.

BOBBY: Where do you send your stuff?

DONNY: What stuff?

BOBBY: Your writing! I know you gave up cranking out the trashy romance novels, but I know you've been doing other writing. I can hear it from my folder. It's like living in an apartment building: I've got neighbors and I hear them moving around.

DONNY: Oh, that. That was just me keeping busy with other things when I'm not with you.

BOBBY: Anything serious?

DONNY: No, you're my one and only.

BOBBY: Well, good. So, are you going to get a new agent now that you finally have something to show them?

DONNY (*shrugging*): Nah, probably not.

BOBBY: Why not?

DONNY: Because not all writing is meant to be published, Bobby.

(*DONNY starts to exit.*)

BOBBY: Hold it!

(*DONNY stops.*)

BOBBY (*cont'd*): So, after all these years, all this time... two computers, three houses, at least one girlfriend, and that's it? By the way, whatever happened to Anna?

DONNY: Yeah, pretty much. Oh, about Anna. After I moved out, she met a really nice guy named Luke. They got married and the baby's due in a couple of months. So, she got what she wanted and I got what I wanted. (*Starts to exit.*) I'd fix you a sandwich, but since you're a fictional character and a figment of my imagination, you don't eat much.

BOBBY: Wait! Come back here!

*(DONNY stops, then comes back.)*

BOBBY (*cont'd*): Let me get this straight. You just spent years writing a novel that comes out to almost nine hundred pages in single space 12 pitch, spilling your guts – actually, my guts – and for what? Just to send me back to sit in a drawer again?

DONNY: Single-space Palatino Linotype 12-pitch, to be precise. And yes.

*(DONNY starts to exit again.)*

BOBBY: Dammit, get back here!

DONNY: Look, you can come with me to the kitchen. It's not like you're on the holodeck of the Starship Enterprise and that you'll just disappear if you leave this room. You can follow me if you want. God knows you've been doing that forever.

*(DONNY exits, leaving BOBBY alone for a moment, then DONNY reenters.)*

DONNY (*cont'd*): I know you're disappointed. But writing is one thing, publishing is another. First, I have to find a publisher who will consider it. Then in the unlikely chance that they'll pick it up, they'll give it to an editor with a B.A. in English from some snooty college who will first hand it off to an intern to proofread it and fix the typos and punctuation. Then the editor will go through it like Sherman through Georgia and hand it back for re-writes, which I will either have to accept or forget about it. Then, miracle of miracles, it actually hits the presses. Then there's the book tours and signings and interviews, all to sell it, and then it ends up on Amazon for five bucks used. Oh, and let's not forget the reviews by those stuffy old bores who are out for revenge because their magnum opus got turned down by Scribner and Sons, so they projectile vomit all their pent-up grad school seminar bullshit about inner meaning and semiotics on to you. I'm the one that's gotta do all the work, but it's you that they're after. Is that what you want to go through?

BOBBY: So why did you do it?

DONNY: Because you made me.

BOBBY: I made you?

DONNY: Yes. I remember very distinctly the night you showed up. Anna and I were having dinner at this nice little place in Greenwich Village. We were celebrating our one-year anniversary of sharing the apartment and having decent jobs. I was about halfway through my dinner – chicken breast with broccoli and a side of rice – when I looked up and there you were, across the room, wearing that very same outfit and smiling at me. I looked at you, you smiled and nodded, and wham.

BOBBY: Wham?

DONNY: I knew everything about you. It was like an instant download. Your entire life history, from growing up, to going to boarding school, to summer camp in New Mexico, to meeting Richard, to Jill and Josh and Robby.... It was all there. And all I had to do was write it all down.

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# **Good Vibrations**

## **CHARACTERS:**

MIKE: Male, any ethnicity, 30's, average build; nerdish.

RON: Male, any ethnicity, 30's, good solid build; ex-jock.

## **PLACE and TIME:**

High school gym, 20<sup>th</sup> class reunion. Present day.

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*The scene is a high school gym set up for a 20<sup>th</sup> class reunion. This can be designated by a simple banner that reads "WELCOME CLASS OF [WHATEVER YEAR WAS 20 YEARS AGO]."*

*MIKE is standing onstage. He is in his late 30's, average-looking guy, perhaps a bit nerdy as designated by his clothes, but not stereotypical, and his shirt, tie, and pants are high-quality. He looks around, nodding and smiling at his fellow classmates, maybe lifting a hand to wave hello, but he doesn't mind standing by himself.*

*RON enters. He too is in his late 30's, well-built, still in good shape, well-dressed if a bit flashy, and he has the air of confidence that the former star athlete in high school has and still uses to win friends and sell cars. He too looks around, waves a silent hello, maybe indicates a high-five, winks broadly at someone. Then he sees MIKE and grins broadly. He strides over and puts out his hand in greeting.*

RON: Mike, old buddy! How the heck are ya? Haven't seen you in ages!

MIKE: Hey, Ron, good to see you too. How've you been?

RON: Great, never better. Wow, you look... well, you haven't changed. Still...

MIKE: Yeah, still look like the nerd.

RON: Aw, no, you look great. Lotsa guys our age turn into flabby old couch potatoes, but you look good.

MIKE: Well, I ride my bike a lot.

RON: Oh, that's great. (*Chuckles.*) Down to the comic book store?

MIKE (*grinning*): No, about thirty miles a day or so.

RON (*impressed*): Hey, that's... wow, that's a lot.

MIKE: Thanks. You look good, too.

RON (*false modesty*): Aw, yeah, thanks. Hit the gym every so often. (*Can't help bragging.*) Still benchin' about two-eighty-five. (*Feels his own biceps.*) Got the old guns up to eighteen inches. Yeah, tryin' to maintain.

MIKE: Yeah, I saw your pictures on Facebook, shirt off and everything.

*(A cell phone beeps and vibrates a text message alert. Both MIKE and RON pat their pockets, but ignore the phone.)*

RON: Well, y'know.... Uh, speaking of Facebook, I saw where you posted about your anniversary with your *friend*.

MIKE: Yeah, that was a couple of weeks ago. Joe and I were together for fifteen years.

RON: Uh huh. Looks like a nice guy.

MIKE: He was. He died a few years ago.

RON (*genuine*): Oh, I'm so sorry.

MIKE: Thank you. It means a lot coming from you.

RON: Yeah, I know I gave you some shit back in school, but...

MIKE: That's okay. That was then.

RON: Yeah. Um, I couldn't help noticing that you referred to him as your "husband."

MIKE: Yes.

RON: You guys were actually married?

*(Another cell phone alert and vibration. They ignore it.)*

MIKE: Well, no. We got together before it was legal, and by the time the Supreme Court ruled, we already had everything: we owned a house, two cars, joint banking, even a dog. Everything but the license. We didn't really need it. So, yeah, he was my husband.

RON: But he was a guy.

MIKE: Well, yeah. I mean, I'm gay. You knew that.

RON: Yeah, I did. But... y'see, Mike, marriage is between a man and a woman. I mean, that's the way it's always been. Now I like you and I respect you, but calling what you and ...

MIKE: Joe.

RON: Right, what you and Joe had... well, that's not what most folks consider to be normal.

*(Cell phone alert and vibration again, this time from RON.)*

MIKE: You need to get that?

RON: What? Oh, no, no, it's probably just my wife Mary, buggin' me about something. You know.

MIKE: Yeah. You didn't bring her?

RON: Nah, she's got some Junior League thing or something. So anyway, look, Mike, I just wanna say that... well, I don't know how you guys can go around and say you're married when... well, it's not like you're gonna have kids or anything.

MIKE (*indulgently, he's seen this all before*): I understand, Ron. You have kids?

RON (*proudly*): Two boys: Tom and Jerry. Both star athletes, too. Tom's built like Junior Mr. America, and Jerry, he's a hell of a figure skater. Got Olympic gold written all over him. (*Pulls out cell phone, scrolls through pictures, shows it to MIKE.*) There's Tom, posing for the local teenage bodybuilding contest. All oiled up and everything. And there's Jerry, doing a double axel.

MIKE: Wow, they're very... attractive.

RON: Thanks. So, y'see, I'm not sayin' that I'm Mr. Perfect. I mean, hell, everyone's got their problems and so does every marriage. But Mary and I and the boys... we're a normal family.

MIKE: And Joe and I weren't?

RON: Now, now, don't get your panties all in a bunch, Mike. It's just that... well, it's... not normal. You know what I'm talkin' about.

*(Another cell phone alert and vibration from RON. He puts it in his pocket.)*

**The play is not over. To find out how it ends, contact the playwright at [pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com](mailto:pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com).**

# Here's Your Sandwich

**CHARACTERS:**

JOEL: mid-thirties; a writer.  
LIZ: the same. Married to JOEL.

**PLACE and TIME:**

A writer's room. Present day.

**Here's Your Sandwich** was first staged in a reading at the World and Eye Art Center in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on March 16, 2013. The cast was as follows:

Joel.....William Roudebush  
Liz.....Terri Garber

Thanks to George Booth for The New Yorker cartoon that gave me the idea.

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*A small desk is center stage. A laptop computer, a pad of paper, and a pen or pencil is on top of the desk. There is an office chair, a wastebasket, and several wads of paper on the floor. There is a window off to one side, but it is not necessary to actually have a window unit on the set.*

*JOEL is seated at the desk. He is a nice-looking man in his thirties or so, dressed in a t-shirt and jeans. He is leaning back, his hands behind his head, his eyes closed, but he's not asleep. He is rocking back and forth. After a few moments he gently pounds his forehead with the heels of his hands, sits up, looks at the computer screen, and sighs heavily.*

JOEL: C'mon, c'mon, c'mon. Think. *(He glares at the screen as if he's daring it to reply.)* Do something. *(After a moment he gets up from the chair, paces around the room, then comes back to the computer, and glares at it again.)* Jesus, there is nothing more frustrating than a blinking cursor on a blank screen. *(He picks up a couple of wads of paper and tries to juggle them. He is unsuccessful, and he picks them up off the floor and flings them at the wastebasket.)* Damn, damn, DAMN. *(Back to pacing. Finally, he grabs the chair, turns it around, sits backwards on it and stares at the screen again.)* Okay, how about...Boy meets girl. Tries to get her to come home with him, but it turns out she's his long-lost ... what, sister? Nah, too redneck. Mother? Nah, too Oedipus. Sister who used to be his brother? Nah, too HBO After Dark, plus it's creepy. But creepy works, right? Hmm... not that well, no. *(Pause, then his face lights up with an idea.)* Okay. *(Starts to type.)* Park Bench. Guy reading. Homeless guy comes up to him and starts to tell him about his day. Goes into this long monologue...and that's The Zoo Story by Edward Albee. Damn! *(Gets up and goes over to the window.)* That cat's back. Look at that mangy little critter stalking that bird. Ha! Good luck, cat; the way you're stalking, the only way you're going to catch anything is if they fall over dead from laughing at the lame-ass way you stalk! Is that any way to pounce? Where's the bounce? Where's the bounce in your pounce? *(Sing-songy.)* Bounce in your pounce! Where's the bounce in your pounce? *(He starts bopping around the room, repeating this, sometimes reversing "pounce" and "bounce", until suddenly he notices that he is not alone. LIZ, his wife, is standing off to one side watching him with some amusement, although she has probably seen this before. LIZ is the same age as JOEL; attractive, dressed casually. She is holding a plate with a sandwich on it. JOEL immediately stops bopping, but without embarrassment points out the window.)* That cat from next door couldn't catch a dead bird.

LIZ: I know. That's why I feed it.

JOEL: You feed it?

LIZ: Yeah! Haven't you ever wondered why there are fifteen cans of 9-Lives in the cupboard?

JOEL: No, I just thought it was some weird diet you were on.

LIZ: Ha ha. So, I take it you've come up dry again.

JOEL: Well, I almost wrote a Pulitzer Prize winner until I realized someone else already wrote it.

LIZ: What was it this time?

JOEL: The Zoo Story.

LIZ: I've never liked Albee's stuff. Too angry. Did he win the Pulitzer for that?

JOEL: I don't know. I don't care. I know I didn't.

LIZ: So, when do you think you'll come up with something?

JOEL: Liz, if I knew that, I wouldn't be dancing around singing about bounce in your pounce, now would I? And until I come up with something, I'm not going anywhere. So, unless you have an idea, (*He gestures at the computer.*) it's gonna be a while.

LIZ: Okay. How about this. It's the story of a writer who sits in his spare bedroom staring at his computer screen trying to come up with a brilliant idea for a play or a novel or a short story that is going to make him the toast of Broadway or whatever. Meanwhile his wife sits downstairs wondering about the strange sounds she hears coming from behind the closed door until she gets so pent up that she turns into a nympho-killer-lesbo-whore and takes out a 7-11 with her gang of hard-ass biker chicks. (*Puts plate on table.*) Here's your sandwich.

JOEL: Okay, but that's a little too Lifetime TV Movie of the Week starring Stockard Channing. Can you do Markie Post?

LIZ: I'm going back downstairs. I need to find some more batteries. (*She turns to go.*)

JOEL: Wait! Stick around. I need you for my muse!

LIZ: Your what?

JOEL: My muse. Something to inspire me. Something to get the creative juices flowing. (*JOEL goes to her and brings her back to the room.*)

LIZ (*sighing*): Okay, what are you trying to do?

JOEL: I need to write a short play – no more than ten minutes – that will make a lasting impression on the audience and convince them that I am, well, if not brilliant, at least pretty good.

LIZ: In ten minutes?

JOEL: You don't think I can do it?

LIZ: Ten minutes isn't a very long time. It takes me longer than that to cook rice.

JOEL: Are you kidding? Ten minutes is an eternity. On television they get people to buy beer, new cars, and refinance a mortgage in thirty seconds. Ten minutes is half an episode of a sit-com. According to Shakespeare, Henry the Fifth won the battle of Agincourt in ten minutes.

LIZ: Well, the French helped. They surrendered in five; the rest was just watching the credits roll. Look, aren't you supposed to write about what you know?

JOEL: Rule Number One.

LIZ: Well, then, why don't you write about a writer with writer's block who's desperately trying to come up with something to write about? You know about that.

JOEL: Who the hell would want to see a play about a writer who can't write?

**The play is not over. To find out how it ends, contact the playwright at [pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com](mailto:pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com).**

# How About Them Dodgers

## **CHARACTERS:**

MICKEY: Twenties, somewhat scruffy.

MARIE: Forties, dressed nicely but not fancy.

OFFICER SETH: Twenties, wearing a policeman's uniform.

## **PLACE and TIME:**

A park bench in suburban Miami. Day.

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*The scene is a park in suburban Miami, Florida, daytime, perhaps late afternoon. There is a park bench center.*

*At rise, MICKEY is sitting on one end of the bench. He is in his twenties, dressed somewhat scruffily in ragged jeans, scuffed boots, an old and worn t-shirt with a Disney character on it, a baseball cap, and sunglasses. Next to him is a worn army surplus knapsack. He tries to look casual, but we can tell from his furtive glancing around and his occasional fidgets that he's a bit nervous. To offset this, he might be humming or softly whistling as he waits. After a moment, MARIE enters. She is in her forties, nicely dressed but not fancy; perhaps what a teacher might wear. She is wearing sunglasses and carrying a large tote-like purse. She crosses in front of MICKEY, glancing at him, then goes on, stopping only when she is almost off-stage. She stops, glances back, then casually goes back to the bench and sits on the other end of the bench. She sets the purse on the bench and takes off her sunglasses. MICKEY shoots her a glance. Beat; nobody moves. Then MICKEY looks around again. When he's sure they're alone, he clears his throat.*

MICKEY (*softly*): How about them Dodgers.

(*MARIE looks at him sharply but does not reply.*)

MICKEY (*still soft but firmly*): How about them Dodgers.

MARIE (*sotto voce*): I heard you the first time.

MICKEY (*teeth gritted*): How about them Dodgers.

MARIE: All right. (*Beat.*) Let's go Mets. (*To herself.*) This is ridiculous.

MICKEY: I don't make the rules. Did you bring it?

(*MARIE nods, indicates her purse.*)

MICKEY: All right, let's see it.

MARIE: You first.

(*Mild Mexican standoff, then MICKEY opens his knapsack and pulls out an opaque plastic bag with a square shape in it. He holds it up for MARIE to see. She nods, then reaches into her purse and pulls out an envelope.*)

MICKEY: Is it –

MARIE: It's the best I can do.

(*MICKEY snorts, puts the bag back and pulls out another and shows it to MARIE.*)

MICKEY: Then this is the best I can do.

(*Another standoff, then they trade packages. MICKEY ditches the envelope in the knapsack. MARIE opens the bag and pulls out a paperback book.*)

MARIE (*sadly*): *To Kill a Mockingbird*? But I wanted *Rubyfruit Jungle*.

MICKEY: Hey, you want the good stuff, it's gonna cost ya.

MARIE: We were up against the football pep squad. They sell pizza.

MICKEY: Hey, not my problem.

*(MICKEY starts to get up.)*

MARIE: Wait. *(She digs in her purse.)* How about.... *(Pulls out another envelope.)* I've got two tickets to *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* burning a hole in my purse.

MICKEY: Meh.

MARIE: It got banned in Duval County, but they're doing it at a private school in Coral Gables.

MICKEY: Why'd they ban it?

MARIE: It's got a gay couple in it.

MICKEY *(shushing her)*: Don't say that.

MARIE *(whispering)*: Right. Sorry. *(Beat.)* So, do we have a deal?

MICKEY: Not wild about musicals.

MARIE: So... fence them.

MICKEY: Nah. High school plays are a drag on the market. Everyone fences them. I still got stuck for three tickets for that all-boys boarding school drag production of *The Women in Key West*.

*(MARIE audibly pouts.)*

MICKEY: Okay, okay, I'll see what I can do.

MARIE: Good. In return for...?

*(MICKEY sighs, then pulls another plastic bag out of his knapsack.)*

MICKEY: Here's *Catcher in the Rye*. But you owe me.

*(They trade packages, and MARIE puts the bag in her purse while MICKEY does the same with the envelope.)*

MARIE: If you can't fence it, you should go see it. My niece is in it.

MICKEY *(dryly)*: Isn't that special. So, look, if we're done here...

*(MICKEY picks up his knapsack and is about to get up, but as he does, OFFICER SETH enters. He is a young man, fully outfitted in a police uniform with a utility belt, holster, and a small go-bag. MICKEY settles back and nods as the officer passes by. OFFICER SETH nods at MICKEY, touches his hat to MARIE.)*

OFFICER SETH: Afternoon, folks.

MICKEY (*muttering*): Officer.

MARIE (*politely*): Good afternoon, officer.

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# Just An Old-Fashioned Love Song

## **CHARACTERS:**

BANJO CLOCK: Precise most of the time. Somewhat shy and deferential but can be provoked.

LOVE SEAT: Antique; comforting and motherly.

GRAND PIANO: Overbearing, arrogant, and very offended if contradicted.

**PLACE and TIME:** An estate sale at an old home.

Written for the Desert Playwrights' Retreat 2024 Bake-off.

## **PROMPTS:**

1. Using the adjectives inspired by the three objects in your home, create three characters.
2. An unsatisfying ending.
3. A piece of literature/story for very young children.

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*The lights come up on the drawing room of a stately old house. It is in the process of going through an estate sale, so there are the elements of moving such as cardboard boxes and packing paper scattered about.*

*At rise we see three pieces of furniture awaiting the sale. A 1930's Seth Thomas banjo clock, an 1860's style Victorian love seat, and a 1929 Mason & Hamlin grand piano. None of them are in perfect condition; each has signs of wear and use. The clock is running, but the ticking is slightly syncopated as if the pendulum is out of balance. When it speaks, it often does so in rhythm with the ticking. The love seat shows signs of wear: the fabric is thin or frayed, and the pillows are stained and old. The piano is scratched, the keys yellowed, the music rack empty.*

BANJO CLOCK: Oh, dear, oh dear.

LOVE SEAT: What's wrong, dear?

BANJO CLOCK: I just know I'll end up in a shop. A consignment shop. Next to old records of singers no one has ever heard of. Even when they were famous. Or old "modern" furniture made of plastic or Naugahyde that... that ... that doesn't belong anywhere.

LOVE SEAT (*comforting*): I'm sure you're wrong, dear. Perhaps you'll go to a nice home with high ceilings and be placed in the front hall where everyone can see you and count on you to show them the passage of time.

BANJO CLOCK: I truly hope so. I've been a part of this family for so long. But now that they're leaving, the children gone, Mary Poppins no longer around to reset me when I went too fast – or too slow – what will become of me? I watched them come and go, come and go, come and go...

GRAND PIANO: Such a fuss! At least you're easy to move. I, on the other hand, require great care and strong men to move me. And who knows where I will end up? Another house, completely ignored, and treated as just another piece of furniture, destined to be unplayed; nothing but a repository for old photos of people long gone and forgotten? No one to play my soaring notes, Chopin etudes, or even those (*shuddering*) "modern" pieces like ragtime or songs by that young upstart Gershwin. Oh, to play Beethoven's "Für Elise" just once more, or even "Clair de Lune." Instead, though to be nothing but a showpiece, or worse, pounded on by obnoxious brats who think "Chopsticks" is music. At least the noise you make, Banjo Clock, is useful, if not always timely.

BANJO CLOCK: Noise? Noise? Noise? Is that what you call my chiming?

GRAND PIANO: Well, it certainly isn't music. And to call it "chiming" is truly too kind. More like clanging.

BANJO CLOCK: Oh yeah, oh yeah? Look who's talking with the G-flat above Middle C that sounds like two notes fighting it out and neither winning.

GRAND PIANO: At least I can play more than one. You're named for a primitive five-stringed instrument better suited for a jug band than a concert hall. So, if that particular note is so unpleasant to your tender sensibilities, at least I have eighty-seven others to choose from.

BANJO CLOCK: Most of which need tuning as well, as well. So there, so there.

*(GRAND PIANO is about to speak, but LOVE SEAT interrupts.)*

LOVE SEAT: Now, now, don't let's quarrel. I was here before all of you. We are all part of the family here. So let us remember the good times. Banjo Clock, I remember when you came to us. You were a Christmas present for Mrs. Banks. Mr. Banks brought you in and put you right here, on my cushions, and I got to hold you. Oh, you were in a lovely box, and you were unwrapped, all the children gathered around, their eyes wide at your polished wood and shining brass, your lovely ship's painting over the pendulum box. *(Sigh.)* And then they took you and placed you in the hall by the front door so that the first thing anyone saw when they came in the house was your smiling face. Don't you remember?

BANJO CLOCK: I do, I do.

LOVE SEAT: And you, Grand Piano. I remember when you arrived, a wedding present for Mrs. Banks, so large and strong, your dark wood gleaming in the sunlight streaming through the curtains. The tuner took great pains to make sure you sounded perfect.

GRAND PIANO: I remember. He had a delicate touch. But it's been so long, I fear I may never sound like that again.

LOVE SEAT: And there you were, so proud to provide the music when Mr. and Mrs. Banks were married in this very room. I was where he shyly got down on one knee and proposed, and she wept tears of joy, and then I held Jane and Michael when they arrived... Oh, such lovely memories.

BANJO CLOCK: And I was there to tell them when to go to bed, to bed, each stroke of eight o'clock meant one more step up the stairs under the watchful eye of Mary Poppins...

GRAND PIANO: Well, yes, I do remember those times. I was the center of attention for many family gatherings singing the old songs. Some of them even on pitch.

LOVE SEAT: But at least they tried. You could have helped.

GRAND PIANO: Play off-key just to make them sound better? Never!

BANJO CLOCK: Well, now you do it without even trying.

GRAND PIANO: Why, you mechanical noisemaker! Your only saving grace is that there isn't a little bird that pops out of your head.

BANJO CLOCK: Noisemaker? Try using your soft pedal, if it still works.

LOVE SEAT: Now, now, be still. This may be the last time we're together. You don't want to leave on a sour note, either of you.

BANJO CLOCK: Why, why, what have you heard?

LOVE SEAT: Nothing. But I've been through this before many times. First as a wedding present myself, then shared with the family through the generations, moved time and again to different homes and rooms. But now... This may be the last time. I need new upholstery. My frame is beginning to crack, my springs aren't what they used to be. Face it; we're all past our prime.

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# **Matthew Weaver, Marry Me**

## **CHARACTERS:**

PHILIP: A playwright in his mid-to-late 60's

MATTHEW: A playwright about to turn 40.

## **PLACE and TIME:**

A coffee shop. September 2020.

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*The scene is a coffee shop; maybe a Starbucks, maybe just your average coffee shop somewhere. A coffee-shop table with two chairs is all that's needed.*

*At rise, PHILIP and MATTHEW are seated at the table, coffee cups in front of them.*

PHILIP: Thanks for coming.

MATTHEW: Oh, yeah, happy to do it. (*Looks around.*) How did you do it? I mean, I'm in Spokane, and you're in Miami. I've heard of Face Time and Zoom meetings, but this...

PHILIP: We're both playwrights. We can make the scene happen anywhere we want.

MATTHEW: Well, that's true.

PHILIP: And I've read at least one of your plays that takes place in a coffee shop, and I wrote one too, so I thought, hey, what the heck. Common ground. In fact, that's the name of this place: "Common Grounds." Clever name for a coffee shop, right?

MATTHEW: Well, yeah, that is clever.

PHILIP: And I decided it's time we finally met. We've been friends on Facebook, and we've swapped plays through NPX, and... well, here we are.

MATTHEW: Yeah, here we are. So, how's it going?

PHILIP: Good, good.

*(Awkward pause.)*

MATTHEW: So, yeah. Um...

PHILIP: Look, there's something I've been wanting to ask you.

MATTHEW: Sure.

PHILIP: I know this is our first face-to-face meeting and all, but I really think I've gotten to know you through your writing. I mean, it's really powerful, and while I know you have this jaunty and self-deprecating sense of humor and you can bat out twenty plays in the time it takes me to set up a template, I really feel a connection.

MATTHEW: Well, gee, thanks. I like your stuff, too.

PHILIP: And I really think you get my writing. I mean, all those nice recommendations on NPX... that's great. You make me feel like I'm... well, a good writer.

MATTHEW: Well, sure! I mean, yeah, you are.

PHILIP: I think we really could click if we got together.

MATTHEW: Write something together? Sure. I've never really collaborated with someone, but... yeah, I'll give it a shot. What did you have in mind?

PHILIP: Marry me.

MATTHEW: That's the title? Okay, I think a romantic comedy would be fun.

PHILIP: Well, I don't know if it would be a comedy, but I think it would work. So, marry me.

MATTHEW (*slowly getting it*): Wait, you mean like... get married? You and me?

PHILIP: Yes.

MATTHEW: But... I'm straight.

PHILIP: Nobody's perfect.

MATTHEW: You stole that line from "Some Like It Hot."

PHILIP: Wanna call a cop?

MATTHEW: What I mean is, we could never be... y'know... intimate.

PHILIP: So? That's not all there is to being married.

MATTHEW: Look, I'm flattered, but, c'mon, get real.

PHILIP: Well, you're the one who says he wants to marry Jessica Alba on his Facebook page. Talk about getting real.

MATTHEW: I was just kidding. Hopeful, but –

PHILIP: Think about it. It makes perfect sense. We're both writers. We both have the same kind of sense of humor. We like the same kind of things: movies, books, TV shows. I'm sure we'd get along. We're both Virgos: You're September nineteenth, I'm the sixteenth. As for the sex, if you get desperate, I'll get you a subscription to Penthouse Forum and a bottle of baby oil.

MATTHEW: Thanks, but like I said, I'm in Spokane. You're in Miami. Three thousand miles apart.

PHILIP: Three-thousand and twenty-two miles, to be exact. City to city.

MATTHEW: Okay, see? We couldn't live together.

PHILIP: What, you wouldn't want to live in a nice suburban ranch in Miami with a nice canal out back and quiet streets? Okay, so there are a few peacocks, and I'm pretty sure you don't speak a lot of Spanish, but hey, you'll adapt. Or I can spend time in Spokane. Just not in the winter. I don't do cold.

MATTHEW: But what about work?

PHILIP: That's the best part. You're a freelancer. You can work from anywhere as long as there's Wi-Fi.

MATTHEW: But –

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# **The Melatonin Miners**

## **CHARACTERS:**

STEVE: Average guy, any age.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN: German composer (1770-1827)

CARL REINER: American producer, director, actor (1922-2020)

W.C. FIELDS: American comedian (1880-1946)

## **PLACE and TIME:**

Steve's bedroom, early Christmas morning.

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*The scene is a bedroom with a bed and a bedside table center stage. There is a bedside lamp on the table, a clock radio, a cell phone, and a pill bottle. The rest of the stage is empty.*

*At rise, the stage is mostly dark; faint light is coming in from somewhere. We see someone asleep in the bed. This is STEVE. He snores softly. After a moment, LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN enters. He is dressed in casual early 19<sup>th</sup> century clothing. He stands at the end of the bed watching Steve sleep, then sits on the end of the bed. NOTE: Beethoven's dialogue in italics is in German. Translations are in parentheses.*

BEETHOVEN: *Hey, wach auf.* (Hey, wake up.)

*(STEVE stirs but doesn't sit up.)*

BEETHOVEN: *Komm schon, wach auf!* (Come on, wake up!)

STEVE *(sleepy)*: What...?

BEETHOVEN: *Guten Morgen, Schlafmütze! Frohe Weihnachten!* (Good morning, sleepyhead! Merry Christmas!)

*(STEVE slowly sits up, blinking.)*

STEVE: Who... what?

BEETHOVEN: *Sprechen Sie lauter. Du weißt, dass ich taub bin.* (Speak up. You know I'm deaf.)

STEVE: I don't understand.

BEETHOVEN: *Ach. Verwenden Sie den Google Übersetzer auf Ihrem Telefon.* (Ach. Use Google Translate on your phone.)

STEVE: Huh?

*(BEETHOVEN snorts, points to the cell phone. STEVE follows his lead and picks up the phone.)*

BEETHOVEN *(in English with thick German accent)*: Translate von Google!

STEVE: Oh, yeah.

*(STEVE picks up the phone, punches an icon.)*

STEVE: Okay, how's that?

BEETHOVEN *(in very slightly German-accented English)*: Speak up. You know I'm deaf.

STEVE *(loudly)*: Oh, sorry. How's that?

BEETHOVEN: Just kidding. When you're dead, everything resets. I can hear you just fine.

STEVE: Okay...

BEETHOVEN: What I said back there: Good morning, sleepyhead! Merry Christmas!

STEVE: Uh, yeah.... Excuse me...but who are you?

BEETHOVEN: What, you don't recognize me?

STEVE: No... not really.

BEETHOVEN (*snorts*): Huh. Okay, this'll help. (*Hums the first four notes of his Fifth Symphony.*) Da-da-da-dum. (*Repeats them, but a third lower.*) Da-da-da-dum... (*Looks expectantly at STEVE.*) Eh?

STEVE: You're Ludwig van Beethoven?

BEETHOVEN: You got it. You can call me Louis. Or Louie. Or Lou. Whatever.

STEVE: Okay, um, Lou. What are you doing here?

BEETHOVEN: Don't ask me. You're the one who dreamed me up.

STEVE: What time is it?

BEETHOVEN: What am I, a cuckoo clock? Where I am now, time has no meaning. (*Points to clock radio.*) There. Look at that thing.

STEVE (*blinking at clock*): Four forty-three. (*Sighs.*) Wow.

BEETHOVEN: A little too much schnapps?

STEVE: No, just *eine kleine Nachtmusik*.

BEETHOVEN (*chuckles*): That's the other guy. That little smartass Wolfie.

STEVE: Well, not that piece exactly. A bunch of us were singing Christmas carols. You know... "Hark the Herald Angels Sing..."

BEETHOVEN: Ha! Felix Mendelssohn. Ach. So, you got a little *fershnickered* (drunk), eh?

STEVE: That's a Yiddish word.

BEETHOVEN: Well, Mendelssohn was Jewish, you know. In fact, a lot of your Christmas songs were written by sons of Israel. "White Christmas," Irving Berlin. "The Christmas Song," the one about chestnuts roasting on an open fire... Robert Wells and Mel Tormé. Lots of them, especially the ones that have nothing to do with the birth of Jesus. All about the celebration but nothing about religion. What you call "politically correct." So, did you get *Scheißgesichtig*? Or, as you might say, shit-faced?

STEVE: No, just a couple of glasses of wine. Came home, watched a little TV, went to bed, and....

(*CARL REINER enters. He is wearing 1960's California casual.*)

REINER: And here we are.

STEVE: Hey, you're...

REINER: I know who I am.

STEVE: Alan Brady!

REINER: Oh, hell, you were watching that episode, huh?

STEVE: Yeah! The Dick Van Dyke Show. "The Alan Brady Show Presents."

REINER: Yeah, that one. No plot, just everyone sings and dances while I dress up like Santa Claus and watch. December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1963. Boring. I didn't even get on-screen credit. (*Beat.*) It's me! Carl Reiner! Producer! Director! Screenwriter! Father of Rob! The Meathead. Both of us bald as a frog.

BEETHOVEN: And Jewish.

REINER: What of it?

BEETHOVEN: Nothing! It was Wagner who wrote all that Nazi noise. Just saying that you too did the Christmas schtick.

REINER: It's what they wanted. And you can't get much more goyim than Dick Van Dyke and Mary Tyler Moore.

STEVE: Why are you here?

REINER: How should I know? I was told it was going to be Richard Belzer, but he's still filling out paperwork.

STEVE: Paperwork?

REINER: Just because it's the afterlife doesn't mean it's not a bureaucracy. Didn't you see "Defending Your Life"?

STEVE: You made that?

REINER: Wish I had. No, that was Albert Brooks. Nice kid. (*Beat.*) So...?

STEVE: Well, I don't know.

REINER (*exasperated*): What is this, your version of "A Christmas Carol"? You're shy one ghost. (*To BEETHOVEN.*) You're the ghost of Christmas Past by default.

BEETHOVEN: Ach, that Dickens fellow, always coming up with those funny names: Uriah Heep. Ebenezer Scrooge...

(*W.C. FIELDS enters. He is dressed in his iconic costume from the 1940 film "My Little Chickadee": tall stovepipe hat, formal collar and tie, striped pants. He is carrying an umbrella.*)

FIELDS: Ah, yes, Mr. Dickens did have a propensity for uncommon cognomens, but nothing compared to Cuthbert J. Twillie or Egbert Sousé (*pronounced "Soo-say."*) (*To STEVE.*) Arise! It is time to hide the egg and gurgitate a cup of mocha java.

**The play is not over. To find out how it ends, contact the playwright at [pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com](mailto:pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com).**



## **Short Cut in a Cemetery**

### **CHARACTERS:**

JOE: Well-built, mid-twenties.

CAROL: Mid-twenties.

### **PLACE and TIME:**

A cemetery, late one night.

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*Scene: A cemetery late at night. JOE, a well-built young man in jeans and a t-shirt, enters, followed by CAROL, wearing a button-down shirt and slacks.*

JOE: Okay, this is it.

CAROL: Why here?

JOE: Well, it's dark, there's no one around, and the ground is soft... Should be great for a romantic evening.

CAROL: In a cemetery? I have such doubts.

JOE: We won't be disturbed.

CAROL: That's for sure.

JOE: Wait, don't tell me that you're afraid of ...

CAROL: No! Ghosts and goblins and spirits... that's all superstition. It's just that...

JOE: It's creepy? Heightens the experience... the thrill.

CAROL: Well...

JOE: Aw, c'mon, you said you've been wanting to get intimate ... or, as you put it, take the top off the cookie jar.

CAROL (*small laugh*): Well, yeah...

(*CAROL goes to JOE and kisses him.*)

JOE: Oh, that's nice.

(*CAROL puts her hands on JOE and starts to pull his shirt off. With his very willing help, she gets it off.*)

CAROL: Oh, nice... I like muscles...

JOE (*very much getting into it*): Hmm.

(*CAROL unbuckles his belt, then pushes down his pants, revealing everything.*)

CAROL: Oh, that's beautiful.

JOE: Yeah, you've definitely got my attention. Now your turn.

(*CAROL teasingly unbuttons her shirt.*)

CAROL: Close your eyes...

(*JOE does.*)

CAROL: Good... now, let me get comfortable.

**The play is not over. To find out how it ends, contact the playwright at [pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com](mailto:pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com).**

# Stop Laughing Without Me

## **CHARACTERS:**

SID: A producer.

CLAUDE: A playwright.

## **PLACE and TIME:**

The producer's office. Present day.

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*An office. A conference table with chairs. A stack of scripts is on the table. At rise, SID is seated at the table with one of the scripts open in front of him. CLAUDE enters.*

CLAUDE: Mr. Green?

SID (*rising*): Hello! Come in. Have a seat.

*(They shake hands and SID gestures to a chair, and they sit.)*

SID (*cont'd*): Thank you for coming in, Claude – may I call you Claude?

CLAUDE: That's me.

SID: I'm so happy to meet you. I wanted to tell you in person how happy we are to be able to produce your play. It's just... well, I just want you to know how much everyone on the literary committee was so impressed with it that we knew it was perfect for us.

CLAUDE: Thank you so much. I'm flattered. Really. I'm so glad that it's what you were looking for. So many theatres these days are –

SID: I know! And your play... well...

*(SID turns a few pages in the script.)*

SID (*cont'd*): I have to tell you that when I read your synopsis, I was a little bit worried.

CLAUDE: In what way?

SID: Well, the subject matter, for one thing. It's a very touchy subject these days.

CLAUDE: But that's why I wrote it. To make people aware of how things truly are, and –

SID: Oh, I know, and I agree one hundred percent. These things must be done delicately, to coin a phrase. But you handled it so well.

CLAUDE: Well, thank you. I'm glad you understand.

SID: I do.

*(SID looks at the script, reading to himself, perhaps saying some of the lines to himself. He grins. He turns a page, and his grin widens to a smile, then after reading a few more lines and perhaps turning a page, he chuckles.)*

SID: Oh, this is great.

CLAUDE: I'm sorry, what?

*(SID continues to read. As he does the chuckles come more frequently. Meanwhile, CLAUDE is beginning to look concerned. As SID's chuckles become outright laughter, CLAUDE goes from concerned to worried and then to outright distressed.)*

CLAUDE: What... what's so funny?

*(SID nods at CLAUDE, pointing at the script, but continues to laugh, finally, after turning another page and reading another line, bursts out into outright knee-slapping guffaws. Now CLAUDE is nearly panic-stricken.)*

CLAUDE: Mr. Green! What are you laughing at?

*(SID finally calms down with the occasional chuckle leaking out. He controls himself.)*

SID *(gasping for breath)*: I'm sorry, Claude, but I couldn't control myself. You've written some of the funniest dialogue and set-ups I've ever read, and trust me, I've read a lot. They say comedy is hard, but you've got it by the bucketful here. It's classic.

CLAUDE: But... I didn't mean it to be. There's nothing funny at all about what I'm writing about. This is a serious – deadly serious – topic that everyone needs to be aware of, and you're laughing at it.

SID: That's what makes your play such a great piece. Don't you get it? Some of the greatest plays in history – plays that changed the way we look at the world – were comedies. The Greeks, Shakespeare, Chekhov, Shaw: they all wrote comedies. They knew it worked. And look at someone like Neil Simon. Yeah, we all yucked it up, but the humor just made it easier to write about the human condition and our relationships. Hell, there are those who think Harold Pinter was writing comedy. *(He chuckles.)* Now there was a writer who knew how to wait for a laugh.

*(Beat.)*

CLAUDE: I don't get it.

SID: Really?

CLAUDE: No, I don't.

SID: Okay.... Well, look, Claude, if we do this play, it's going to sell out as soon as word gets out how funny it is. People these days are dying to laugh again, and wow, this will do it.

CLAUDE: But I don't want them laughing at it. I want them to be angry, outraged, pissed off, ready to take action against the injustice and cruelty of it all.

SID: And they will be. And then the curtain will come down, and they'll go out to the lobby, toss the program in the recycle, grab an Uber and get on with their life. They won't remember that they were lectured about injustice and cruelty by a bunch of actors making scale. But if you made them laugh – that they'll remember. They may even tell their friends what made them laugh. And their friends may come see the play, and they'll laugh, and maybe – just maybe – they'll remember what you were telling them among all the laughter. *(Beat.)* “Comedy is simply a funny way of being serious.” You know who said that?

CLAUDE: Neil Simon?

SID: Peter Ustinov, one of the greatest actors of all time. I saw him once on stage in King Lear. Not exactly your idea of a knee-slapper, right?

CLAUDE: No, it's a classic example of the patriarchy crushing the life out of women.

**The play is not over. To find out how it ends, contact the playwright at [pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com](mailto:pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com).**

# **‘Til Dough Do Us Part**

## **CHARACTERS:**

JOEL: Twenties.

PAUL: Joel’s fiancé. Same age.

MIKE: Joel’s ex. Same age.

## **PLACE and TIME:**

A coffee shop not unlike your local Starbucks. March 17, 2020.

Written for the Quarantine Bakeoff play series, March 2020.

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*The set is a coffee shop, not unlike your local Starbucks. The chairs and tables are stacked up against the back wall. Stage Right is the door into the shop. Stage Left is the counter area with a register, and behind it is the coffee makers and other accoutrements of selling fancy coffees and drinks.*

*At rise, it is early morning. The shop is dark; the only light on the scene is light from off Stage Right that suggest a streetlight throwing light in through the windows. There is silence, then two shadowy figures, JOEL and PAUL, enter from Stage Right and approach the door. Indistinct whispering, then the sound of someone pulling on the locked door. It rattles, but it does not open. Another pull, more rattling.*

JOEL: Shit.

PAUL: What time is it?

JOEL: Five after six. They're supposed to be open.

*(JOEL presses his face against the door. Then he knocks loudly on the door.)*

JOEL: Hey! I know you're in there! C'mon, open up!

*(Off Stage Left a flashlight beam shines on stage.)*

MIKE *(off)*: Hold your goddam horses! I'll be right there!

*(Noises off Stage Left of someone banging around, hitting pots or something.)*

MIKE *(off)*: Ow! Shit piss fuck!

*(MIKE enters from Stage Left, hobbling, holding his knee. He is wearing a baker's apron covered with flour, and latex gloves. He puts the flashlight on the counter, then goes to a wall switch and turns on the store lights. They come up, revealing the empty store. He goes to the door and looks to see who it is. His shoulders sag.)*

MIKE: You have got to be kidding me.

*(MIKE unlocks the door. JOEL starts to push it open, but MIKE pushes it closed again.)*

MIKE: Wait! Wait until I get at least twelve feet away, okay? Store rules.

JOEL: Okay, sorry.

*(MIKE crosses to the counter, then waves JOEL and PAUL in. They are wearing jackets.)*

MIKE *(in barista mode)*: What can I get for you?

JOEL: Very funny. Nice to see you, Mike.

MIKE: You too, Joel. Been a while.

MIKE: Yeah. *(To PAUL.)* Hi, I'm Mike.

*(PAUL steps forward, offering his hand, and MIKE waves him off.)*

PAUL: Oh, right. *(Waves back.)* Hi, I'm Paul. Nice to meet you.

MIKE: Yeah, nice to meet you, too. Heard a lot about you.

PAUL: Oh, yeah?

MIKE: Well, at least on Facebook. You like cats.

PAUL: Uh, yeah, I do.

MIKE: That's nice. *(To JOEL.)* So, what do you need? I paid you back the deposit, I signed off on the lease, I even gave you back that yellow polo shirt that you told me made me look like a well-muscled frat boy.

JOEL: No, we're good on all that. Um... *(Looks around the shop.)* So, how come all the tables and chairs are over there? You guys refinishing the floor or something?

MIKE: No, company policy while the quarantine is in effect. We're strictly on a to-go basis. They even shut off the free wi-fi. And to top it off, the circuit breaker in the back room flipped for some reason and it's gonna take the coffee a few minutes to brew up. So, if you don't mind waiting...

JOEL: No, we – I didn't come in for coffee.

MIKE: Yeah, I didn't think so.

JOEL: I came for my ring.

*(Long uncomfortable beat.)*

PAUL: Hey, it's not that big a deal.

*(JOEL and MIKE look at PAUL, who subsides.)*

MIKE: I was kinda wondering when you'd want it back.

JOEL: Yeah. Y'see, Paul and I are getting married.

MIKE *(genuinely happy)*: Well, that's great. I'm really happy for you.

JOEL: Thank you.

PAUL: Wow, that's great.

MIKE: What, you thought I'd be upset or something?

PAUL: Well, yeah. I mean, you guys were together for so long...

MIKE: Water under the bridge. I'm the one who blew it. Didn't really pay attention, y'know, didn't keep the spark going. I guess I just thought he'd always be... y'know, there. That life would just go on without disruption... Then one day, kinda outta nowhere, what was everyday normal isn't so normal anymore and ... the old ways just don't work. Next thing you know, there's this distance between us, like we're afraid to touch each other or even talk about it. *(Beat.)* Oh, hell, listen to me, carrying on.

JOEL: That's okay. It was good while it lasted.

MIKE: It was, wasn't it?

*(They look at each other, smiling, remembering the good times.)*

PAUL: Uh, guys...

MIKE: Oh. Yeah, right. The ring. *(He pulls off his gloves and tries to pull off the ring. It won't budge.)* Shit. *(Keeps trying.)* It's really on there. Must've put on a little water weight or something. *(MIKE is really struggling with it.)*

PAUL: Here, let me...

MIKE *(flash of anger)*: No, I can do it!

PAUL *(backing away)*: Okay, okay already.

*(MIKE spots a bottle of hand sanitizer on the counter. Goes to it and squirts some on hands, starts rubbing it in.)*

MIKE: Well, finally this shit's good for something.

PAUL: Do it for at least twenty seconds.

MIKE: I know. And sing a song or something. Like the national anthem.

JOEL: Or recite a poem.

MIKE: I sing like a hinge and I don't know any poems.

JOEL: Sure, you do. "T'was brillig, and the slithy toves..."

MIKE: Ohmygod. The Jabberwocky. I forgot all about that.

JOEL *(chanting, almost singing)*: T'was brillig, and the slithy toves.

MIKE *(chanting along)*: Did gyre and gimbel in the wabe.

JOEL: All mimsy were the borogoves

MIKE: And the mome raths outgrabe!

*(They both laugh uproariously.)*

PAUL *(bursting in)*: Beware the Jabberwock, my son! The jaws that bite, the claws that catch! Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun the frumious Bandersnatch!

*(MIKE and JOEL stop laughing and look at PAUL.)*

PAUL: Oh. Sorry.

MIKE: No, it's okay. *(Pulls off the ring.)* Oh, look. *(Hands it to JOEL.)* Best wishes.

JOEL: Thanks.

MIKE: When's the wedding?

JOEL: Actually, we're on our way to Key West now. Just a quiet ceremony on the shore and then off on a cruise.

MIKE: Well, that's great. And the cruise is still going on even with the...

JOEL: Yeah, they said they've sterilized the ship from stem to stern and sanitized all the cabin boys.

MIKE: You kids have a great time.

*(PAUL's cell phone rings. He answers it.)*

PAUL: Hello? Yes, this is he. What? You're kidding! No, we can't rebook! This is our wedding trip! What? Well, shit! *(Hangs up, panic-stricken.)* The airline cancelled the flight! They can't rebook us until this whole thing is over!

JOEL: Holy shit! Now what do we do?

MIKE: That's terrible, but you'll just have to put off the wedding for a few ... weeks.... Months?

JOEL: No, we can't! The license is only good until tonight. Then we'd have to start all over again.

PAUL: The mortgage is in both our names. The bank was gonna give it to us based on the fact that we were going to be married. Now it's all fucked up. *(Turns furiously to JOEL.)* Why the fuck did you wait so long to get the tickets? We could have done this back in January before all of this shit happened, but NO! You had to wait until just the right time, you said, when it was gonna be cheaper!

MIKE: Hey, don't take it out on him! That stupid virus isn't his fault.

JOEL: No, he's right. I was waiting.

MIKE: Until the prices went down?

JOEL: No. Until I could get the ring back.

MIKE: Shit, you could have done that any time. I would have given it back without a fight.

JOEL: Yeah. That's what I was afraid of.

MIKE: What, that I wouldn't put up a fight?

JOEL: Yeah.

MIKE: Why?

JOEL: Because that would have meant that it still meant something to you. That we still... That I still...

PAUL: Oh, shit.

MIKE: No, not to worry. It's all right. I gave him the ring back. We're done.

PAUL: Is it? Are you really done?

JOEL: Yes, Paul. We are.

MIKE: I said I gave him the ring back.

PAUL: Yeah, I know, but...

JOEL: Don't worry. I love you.

MIKE: What Joel and I had was one thing. You guys have something else. I mean, it's always different with someone new; you figure things out, you get to know them, know their ways.

PAUL: Yeah. You find things out. Like how they like their coffee: two sugars and one ice cube.

MIKE: He still does that?

PAUL: Oh, yeah, every morning.

MIKE (*chuckling*): And sugar on his rice.

PAUL: I know! Who does that?

MIKE: He does! Oh, and does he still make that little squeaky giggle when he... when you guys are... y'know... done?

PAUL: Ohmygod. Yes!

**The play is not over. To find out how it ends, contact the playwright at [pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com](mailto:pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com).**

# **Under the August Moon**

## **CHARACTERS:**

SAM: A spirit. Been here a while.

DOUG: A spirit, newly arrived.

## **PLACE and TIME:**

Somewhere eternal.

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*An empty space. Soft lighting comes up on SAM and DOUG.*

SAM: Welcome home, Doug.

DOUG: So, this is it. Death.

SAM: Yeah. Not exactly what you expected, is it?

DOUG: No. I thought it would be...

SAM: Different.

DOUG: Yeah.

SAM: Different than life?

DOUG: Yeah.

SAM: Just another plane.

DOUG: So, we are...

SAM: No more bodies. No more physicality. Just our thoughts. For eternity.

DOUG: How long have you been here?

SAM: I don't know. A while, I guess. But it doesn't matter anymore. Time is irrelevant. That fucking Einstein was right.

DOUG: So now what?

SAM: Well, we can pick up where we left off.

DOUG: Huh?

SAM: You and me. That summer.

DOUG: You mean...

SAM: Yeah. Except without all that sweating and humping and freaking out about not having a condom. Just being together.

DOUG: Yeah, I don't know.

SAM: Why not? No one cares anymore. You're not defined by your genitals now... especially since you were cremated. They're ashes. So, what's the problem?

DOUG: I just never thought about being in love with a man. I mean, Janey...

SAM: Til death us do part, cowboy. You're free.

DOUG: Still...



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# Viral Love

## CHARACTERS:

PERSON A: Any age, any gender, any ethnicity

PERSON B: Any age, any gender, any ethnicity

## PLACE:

A bare stage.

Written for the Coronavirus One-Minute Play Festival, February 2020.

**Viral Love** was first produced by Fantasy Theatre Factory of Miami, Florida, on May 15, 2020, as part of the Short & Sweet: Let's Play Festival. It was directed by Cassidy Sandler with the following cast:

PERSON A.....Jesse Castellanos  
PERSON B.....Noah Levine

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*A bare stage. PERSONS A and B enter from opposite sides, meet center stage but stand about twelve feet apart.*

PERSON A: I had a great time tonight.

PERSON B: Oh, me too. That dinner was fantastic.

PERSON A: Well, next time I'll make sure Grub Hub gets the order right. Sorry about the anchovies.

PERSON B: Oh, I didn't mind. I picked them off and fed them to my cat. And the movie was great. Thank you for sharing it with me, and your Netflix password. I had no idea Adam Sandler could be funny. Or act.

PERSON A: I know. Um, look, we've been on some great dates. I've really liked being on them with you.

PERSON B: Me too.

PERSON A: So... do you think we're ready to take the next step?

PERSON B: You mean...?

PERSON A: Yeah. I mean, when a relationship gets this far... maybe it's time to...

PERSON B: Oh, there are so many things to consider. That's a real commitment, and not without ... danger.

PERSON A: I understand. But I want you to know how much you mean to me. And I want to share myself with you. I really do need to show you how much...

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