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BAR MITZVAH BOY
by Samara Siskind

Cast of Characters

SAMUEL, thirteen, has just become a man

STACIE, twelve, just starting to like boys

Setting

A Bar Mitzvah reception.

Evening.

Acknowledgments

Bar Mitzvah Boy was first produced by City Theatre, Coral Gables Florida, March 2007.

For Ian

BAR MITZVAH BOY

by Samara Siskind

(Darkness. A sappy slow dance song plays faintly in the background. We hear an angry voice in the darkness, followed by a slap.)

STACIE. Hey!

(Lights rise on SAMUEL and STACIE facing each other on a dance floor. They are both dressed in fancy evening attire. SAMUEL clutches his sore face.)

SAMUEL. Oww! You hit me!

STACIE. Your hand was on my butt.

SAMUEL. My hand was nowhere near your butt!

STACIE. C'mon Samuel, your hand was totally touching my butt!

SAMUEL. 1— I wouldn't touch your butt with a ten foot pole. 2— Even if I did touch your butt, it's no reason to resort to physical violence.

STACIE. Well, if your hand goes anywhere near my butt again, I'm cutting it off.

SAMUEL. Oh that's nice. I'm sure they'll let you off on the popular "he touched my butt" defense. Now can we just finish this dance already, please? Everyone's watching.

(Beat. STACIE puts SAMUEL's right arm high up on her waist, and takes his left hand in hers. They dance, rather awkwardly.)

SAMUEL. My face is stinging. I can't believe you hit me. It better not leave a mark.

STACIE. I didn't hit you that hard. Don't be a wuss.

SAMUEL. Don't be a ruffian.

STACIE. Uh, ruffian?

SAMUEL. Savage, bully...barbarian.

STACIE. Oh you're so smart. This is a party, not Honors English.
(Beat.) God, how long is this song?

SAMUEL. It just started.

STACIE. I'm only dancing with you because my Mom made me.

SAMUEL. I'm only dancing with you for the photo op.

(SAMUEL smiles, posing for a photographer. Sound of a flash going off.)

STACIE. Just because it's your birthday, doesn't mean you're better than everyone else.

SAMUEL. It's not just my birthday, it's my *Bar Mitzvah*.

STACIE. So?

SAMUEL. So?! *(Proud:)* I am a man today.

STACIE. Yeah, right.

SAMUEL. I am!

STACIE. I see no man before me. I see a dork in a beanie.

SAMUEL. It's not a beanie. It's a yarmulke. A religious head covering.

STACIE. Yeah, that makes it cooler.

SAMUEL. I'll have you know, Bar Mitzvah literally translates to "son of commandment" and implies "responsible male."

STACIE. Big whoop.

SAMUEL. Did you hear me read from the Torah?

STACIE. Yeah, and I've got news for you...the Torah is a snore-ah.

SAMUEL. You weren't impressed?

STACIE. I was ready to hit the door-ah.

SAMUEL. Gee, thanks.

STACIE. On a scale of one to ten, I give it a four-ah.

SAMUEL. Okay, you didn't like it. I get it.

(Beat. They continue dancing. STACIE scopes out the dance floor. SAMUEL is annoyed.)

SAMUEL. Why did you even come? If you hate me so much.

STACIE. Hello? We've lived next door to each other since we were four Samuel. My whole family's here. We've had it marked on our calendar since August.

SAMUEL. You could've gotten out of it. You get out of everything else your parents want you to do.

STACIE. Well, maybe I didn't want to get out of it.

SAMUEL. *(Perking up:)* Really? Why?

STACIE. No reason.

SAMUEL. There's gotta be a reason. Tell me.

STACIE. Ow!! That's my foot!

SAMUEL. Why'd you want to come, huh? Say it.

STACIE. God Samuel, what's the big deal?

SAMUEL. C'mon Stacie, just give it up. Tell me.

STACIE. Okay, fine! You invited Kyle Fischer and Justin Flint.

(Beat. SAMUEL's spirits plummet once again.)

SAMUEL. I didn't invite them. Mom did. She's in the PTA with Mrs. Fischer and did Habitat for Humanity or something with Justin's mom.

STACIE. Do I look like I care? The point is they're here.

SAMUEL. So, what? You're dating them both?

STACIE. Samuel! Hello, I'm twelve.

SAMUEL. But you like them both.

STACIE. One of them likes me.

SAMUEL. Which one?

STACIE. I don't know.

SAMUEL. (*Confused:*) If you don't know which one likes you, how do you know if either of them like you?

STACIE. Jeez Samuel, you're like, clueless. (*Beat.*) One of them is my secret admirer.

SAMUEL. Your secret admirer.

STACIE. Valentine's Day was last week, and I got a dozen pink carnations in my locker.

SAMUEL. And you think one of those dorkwads did it?!

STACIE. When I found the flowers in my locker they were at the lockers across the hall...looking at me, smiling.

SAMUEL. Oh, and that's like, proof.

STACIE. Shut up.

SAMUEL. You shut up.

STACIE. At least I got something. What did you get for Valentine's Day? Let me guess, a big heart-shaped cookie your mom made you.

SAMUEL. You're so dumb. (*Beat.*) It was a Cupid.

STACIE. They're looking over here. Oh my god, I'm gonna die. I am so gonna die.

SAMUEL. 1—You're not gonna die. And 2—They're not looking at you, they're looking at my cousin Sharon. She's seventeen, and a 34 double D.

STACIE. Go ask them which one did it.

SAMUEL. Which one did what?

STACIE. Put the flowers in my locker.

SAMUEL. What?! No! No way!

STACIE. C'mon Samuel, please?!

SAMUEL. I'm not talking to those Neanderthals. Uh uh.

STACIE. Why not?

SAMUEL. Because 1—I'm not your messenger boy, and 2—I am enjoying my dance.

STACIE. 1—What is with the 1 and 2 everything? God. And 2—You're just jealous.

SAMUEL. Of who? Those guys? Please.

STACIE. YOUR HAND'S ON MY BUTT!!

SAMUEL. Sorry, it slipped!

STACIE. *(Breaking free.)* That's it Bar Mitzvah boy. Son of commandment or not, my Dad is gonna kick your ass!

SAMUEL. *(Holding on to her:)* Wait! Wait. Stacie, I'm sorry. Look, if you leave me up here by myself Mom is gonna make me dance with my little sister. It'll be more embarrassing than that life-size photo of me in the lobby. Please.

(A popular, upbeat song begins to play.)

STACIE. Fine, but only 'cause I like this song. *(Beat.)* Don't touch me.

(They dance without touching, more awkwardly than the slow dance.)

STACIE. You're a really bad dancer.

SAMUEL. I've taken dance lessons at Arthur Murray since October.

STACIE. You should get your money back.

SAMUEL. They never got to fast tempo.

STACIE. Seriously, you look like Milton Smidel when he had that epileptic seizure during Bio.

SAMUEL. Yeah, well, you're no Fergie either.

STACIE. I'm sure Kyle and Justin would disagree.

SAMUEL. Kyle and Justin are a few brain cells shy of being mentally retarded.

STACIE. Samuel!

SAMUEL. Haven't you heard the rumors? They like, still eat their boogers.

STACIE. Take it back!

SAMUEL. And they're in love with each other.

STACIE. They are not!

SAMUEL. Look, they're dancing together! See? *(Waving:)* Hi guys! You look super!

STACIE. *(Trying to cover his mouth:)* Samuel, ssshhh!

SAMUEL. Like they could even figure out your locker combination, yeah, as if. How would they even know pink carnations are your favorite flower?!

(Beat. STACIE stops dancing.)

STACIE. How did *you* know pink carnations were my favorite flower?

(A few beats. The song changes to another slow one. STACIE puts SAMUEL's hand on her waist. They start to slow dance again.)

STACIE. It was you, wasn't it? My secret admirer.

SAMUEL. No.

STACIE. Samuel.

SAMUEL. I mean, well...yeah. Kind of. *(Beat.)* Kyle and Justin saw me put them in there, hence the staring.

STACIE. Why?

SAMUEL. They thought they were trick flowers that were gonna squirt you in the face.

STACIE. No, I mean...why'd you do it?

SAMUEL. I dunno. It's kind of obvious don't you think?

STACIE. But we haven't...I've been so... *(Beat.)* I haven't been very nice to you.

SAMUEL. Yeah, true dat.

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FAILING THE IMPROV
by Werner Trieschmann

Cast of Characters

TY

WIN

LOUISE

Time

Present.

Place

An art room in the Delta Arts Center.

Setting

Spare. Perhaps there are a couple of long tables with art supplies and a few chairs.

Acknowledgements

Failing the Improv was first performed by The Vortex for the Quickies '99 ten-minute play festival in Albuquerque, New Mexico, June 4-20, 1999. The director was Roy Costley, with the following cast:

TY Tom Schuch
WIN..... Ninette S. Mordaunt
LOUISE..... Florence Tonissi

Failing the Improv had its World Premiere production by Moving Arts for Lust & Lunacy, the 1999 One-Act Festival in Los Angeles, California, Oct. 15-Nov. 21, 1999. The director was Melissa Marie Thomas, with the following cast:

TY John Duncan
WIN..... Julie Briggs
LOUISE..... Kristi Marie Jones

FAILING THE IMPROV

by Werner Trieschmann

(TY, WIN and LOUISE are standing around waiting for other students.)

TY. *(Looking at his watch:)* So I guess this is all of us. OK. Caroline told me yesterday we had 10 signed up for class.

WIN. Ceramics was full.

TY. Yeah. I really expected more.

WIN. This is the way it's been since God was in knickers. At the Delta Arts Center you gotta know somebody who knows somebody to get in ceramics.

TY. When I was doing this in Los Angeles, we had classes of 15, 20 people.

WIN. You don't like us. He doesn't like us.

LOUISE. Can I smoke in here?

WIN. *(To LOUISE:)* I guess we're bumpkins to him. *(To TY:)* I'll have you know that I don't live in a trailer. At least not since the tornado.

TY. Yeah.

WIN. Is that funny? I want to be funny. Like on TV.

TY. I wrote for TV. Everything on TV, including the shows, is not funny. It's more like Julius Caesar only with more knives.

WIN. I suppose I don't know anything.

TY. I'm sure that's not true. I guess we should get started. OK. My name is Ty. The education coordinator, Caroline, had to be convinced that a class in improvisation was worth putting on the schedule. Which is another reason why there needed to be more here. Well.

(LOUISE raises her hand.)

TY. I'm convinced that improvisation is as important as oil painting or crochet knitting or ceramics. I've had a lot of experience with improv in Los Angeles and I know that what I know can work here at the Delta Arts Center. Improvisation is about listening and paying attention and being in the moment.

WIN. She has her hand up.

TY. I see it. Yeah?

LOUISE. So can I smoke? I asked before.

TY. Yeah, why don't you wait until class is over? We're gonna be doing exercises here in a minute. Thanks.

WIN. Did you know that black boy that plays that nerdy guy? He's on that show, *Special Friends*. He is a hoot and a half.

TY. No. Didn't know him. OK. So remember improvisation is about listening. That's the most important thing.

WIN. Did you see that one episode where he's up in this hot air balloon? I saw that one when I was in the hospital.

TY. Yeah. *(Pause.)* The reason listening is so important is because you'll be doing scenes with a partner. Improvisation is very cruel in that way because you don't have anything else to lean on. No props or lights or anything. Just an empty stage and that other person. That's scary. And if you don't listen and the two people in the scene are off in their own world, then you will die on stage. Die.

WIN. I almost died in the hospital.

TY. *(Trying to move on:)* Yeah. So now how does your partner help?

LOUISE. *(To WIN:)* Me too.

WIN. I had triple pneumonia and the doctors thought I was a goner. I was ready to give up the ghost, but I saw my parrot Charlie in a vision and he said, "Win, don't go towards the light."

TY. OK. Let me get back on track here.

WIN. What was weird was he didn't talk in his parrot voice. He talked like that nerd in *Special Friends*. "Win, don't go towards the light!"

LOUISE. I was shot.

TY. OK. Yeah. Your partner helps you by saying yes instead of no. In many ways, it's a lot like life. Saying yes. That is the first and most important rule of improvisation. Really, that's all you need to know.

WIN. I paid 50 bucks. I hope that's not all.

TY. Well, no. But you have to train yourself to say yes. For some reason, your first instinct is to say no. And that first instinct can ruin the improv. I've seen it over and over. And it's weird, but really smart people, otherwise brilliant funny people, do not get this.

WIN. Then it ought to be a snap for us, right?

TY. No. It's an instinct I think. A defense mechanism that kicks in without us being aware of it. And that's what we have to get rid of. Let's start with an exercise. Let's stand in a straight line. Now I'm gonna point to somebody and they will say yes and their whole name. After I point to them I move towards their spot in the line. After they say yes and their whole name, they point to somebody else and move to their spot. Ready?

(TY points to LOUISE at the end of the line and starts to move toward her.)

LOUISE. What?

TY. *(Stopping:)* Say your name.

LOUISE. Why can't we smoke in here?

TY. Because. Say yes and then your name.

LOUISE. Yes and then your name.

TY. No. You need to say yes and your whole name. Louise followed by your middle and last name.

LOUISE. Why?

TY. It's part of the exercise.

WIN. Ty, I hate my middle name so I'm not gonna say it. I'll just say "hun-hun" instead.

LOUISE. Louise is my middle name.

TY. Yeah. OK. All we're trying to do is get you in the habit of saying yes. That's all. (*Going back to his original position:*) When I point to you, you say yes and your name. I take your place and then you point to somebody else and take their place. Louise point to me.

(*LOUISE points to TY.*)

TY. Yes. Tyrone Shipp Maynard.

(*TY points to LOUISE and starts to move.*)

LOUISE. What?

TY. We're doing the exercise. Say yes and your name.

LOUISE. Louise Coldwater. Yes.

TY. Good. Now point to somebody else and move so I can take your place.

(*LOUISE points to TY.*)

WIN. I have no voice.

TY. Yeah. Louise point to Winifred.

(*LOUISE points to WIN.*)

WIN. Winifred hun-hun Adams. But all my friends call me Win!

TY. OK. You forgot to say yes.

WIN. No I didn't. You interrupted me. Yes.

TY. Yeah, OK. That really didn't work. Let's move on. To create a scene you need information. Each partner in the scene is responsible for giving the other person that information. We call them gifts. Let's say I was in a scene with Win. Let's say I were to say, Miss Weatherby, I asked you for those stock reports and I don't see them on my desk.

(*WIN doesn't respond.*)

Miss Weatherby, I asked for those stock reports and they aren't here.

WIN. Don't look at me.

TY. Miss Weatherby, I need those reports for the board meeting today.

WIN. Whatever floats your boat.

TY. Yeah, let's stop. Remember the first lesson about saying yes.

WIN. I want to be a game show host or a jockey or something besides a secretary. That's stupid.

TY. But you have to go with what your partner gives you. That may not be how you like it, but that's how it goes. I gave you a name, Miss Weatherby. I gave you an occupation, secretary. Those were gifts.

WIN. It sure as heck wasn't a Merry Christmas.

TY. Yeah. All right. There was a lot you could do. You could, for instance, say that you spilled coffee on the reports.

WIN. I don't drink coffee.

TY. That's just something you could say. An example.

WIN. That makes me a klutzy do-do bird. Besides, I am a secretary and I never spill coffee. Never ever.

TY. The idea is that you could say anything in response. OK? Why don't we have you be the one that starts the scene? I'll be your partner so you are in control. Let's do that. Remember, I need gifts. I need a name and a situation so the scene has somewhere to go.

WIN. Ty, how come you quit writing for TV and left Los Angeles?

TY. Win, we can talk about that later. Let's start the scene.

WIN. That is the scene. Your name is Ty and I'm asking why you quit TV and left Los Angeles.

TY. Yeah, OK, I get your point.

WIN. You have to say yes instead of no.

TY. This isn't improvisation. You're just asking personal questions.

WIN. No. We're doin' a scene. Improvin'. You have to answer.

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THE FORTUNE COOKIE
by Tuan Phan

Cast of Characters

LARRY, undergrad student, 20

JOHNNY, also an undergrad, slightly older looking

WOMAN, middle-aged

FOOTBALL PLAYER, a big, intimidating man, 20s or 30s

WAITRESS, a waitress, 20s

LONELY GAL, early 20s

LONELY GUY, early 20s

CUSTOMER, man or woman; if a man, can be played by the same actor who plays FOOTBALL PLAYER, sans football outfit.

THE FORTUNE COOKIE

by Tuan Phan

(A Chinese restaurant. Bare stage except for three small tables, the various chairs around them, and a bar on which rest several wine bottles and shot glasses. WOMAN is sitting at one side of the bar, drinking, staring off into space. At stage right is another table, where two college students are studying with calculus books and calculators. LARRY is the smaller of the two, and also seemingly more frantic. JOHNNY is taller and calmer, he seems to have this calculus stuff down. The center table is unoccupied. At the stage left table sits LONELY GUY, an obvious stereotype of a nerd—glasses, pocket protectors—and reading something, book or magazine.)

LARRY. How much time left, Johnny?

JOHNNY. *(Looking at watch:)* Thirty.

LARRY. You serious?

JOHNNY. Yup, thirty minutes 'til the big one.

LARRY. I'm not ready. I'm not ready.

(WAITRESS enters with cookies on a tray, and also the check.)

JOHNNY. Thanks.

WAITRESS. No problem. Enjoy.

(WAITRESS leaves. JOHNNY cracks his cookie, takes out fortune. Gives other cookie to LARRY.)

LARRY. No thanks.

JOHNNY. Could be a good one.

LARRY. I know. They're always good, always positive. That's the problem.

JOHNNY. So you don't read 'em 'cause they say good things?

LARRY. That and the fact that they're replicated and monotonous.

JOHNNY. I like the monotony.

LARRY. Just once I'd like a real fortune. One that says something unique, even wistful.

JOHNNY. You want a wistful fortune?

LARRY. Or at least a realistic one. A cookie that tells it like it is.

JOHNNY. Families come here, little kids are reading these things.

LARRY. I'm just saying, Johnny, there's a lot of untapped potential in these cookies. I'm not saying they have to be negative, just a little more realistic. For example, for that woman over there... *(Gestures to Woman:)* you could have a fortune that says, hey, look, I can see life sucks for you, that your husband thinks you're past your prime and your children dislike you, your marriage is on its last leg, your husband is having an affair with your best friend and you're drowning your sorrows in alcohol. But there're still the little things you could enjoy in life, the intangibles, you know?

JOHNNY. How are you gonna fit that into an inch long cookie?

LARRY. I don't know, maybe smaller fonts, or just use thinner paper. I'm telling you, Johnny. The fortunes we read now are just bland, but they don't have to be. They could be so much more.

JOHNNY. There's no need for improvement. Nobody takes these things seriously, anyway.

LARRY. Oh, people believe, Johnny. These cookies are pretty potent.

JOHNNY. Right.

LARRY. Listen. I saw this guy come in here once. He was big, six five or so, with arms thicker than my legs. Probably a linebacker or something.

(FOOTBALL PLAYER enters in football gear. This section is clearly part of Larry's hyperactive imagination/recollection, and so no other character should notice him entering. He sits down on the unoccupied table and takes out a book, Les Mis. He starts reading with a mean look of concentration. As LARRY describes each action, the FOOTBALL PLAYER will act them out in highly exaggerated fashion.)

So he's sitting there, enjoying his dinner, chewing down his Mongolian Beef like a madman. Then when he was done the waitress came up to him and gave him his check, and of course...a cookie.

(WAITRESS enters, she will now be part of the play within the play. She gives check and cookie to the player, then runs out in fear.)

Now the dude held this cookie between his thumb and forefinger and crushed it like a pea. He was scary, Johnny. I mean I saw him cracking this cookie and I felt my balls contracting, that's how scary he was. So then he took out this fortune, started reading, and then... You're not gonna believe this, Johnny. It was pretty unbelievable, pretty out there, man. I mean this guy was huge, a damn Moby Dick! Plus he had this mean look, you know? Then he starts reading it, and then his face got weird, like he just ate vinegar or something. Well, then his chest starts going up and down, up and down, real dramatic like. He starts shaking a little bit. His fingers grip the tablecloth real tight, like he was ready to yank it off. His shoulders start spazzing, his face gets scrunched up like a raisin, like a dried prune, like he just ate something really sour...and then...then... He just broke down. I mean he just *broke down* Johnny! Sobbing, crying, yelling. Finally, he just couldn't take it anymore and just got the hell outa there.

(FOOTBALL PLAYER runs offstage weeping.)

It was scary, man. I'm telling you, it was scary. And all this was even more strange to me because before, while he was waiting for his food, he was reading Les Mis. Les Mis for god's sake! And not a tear. Not a drop. But once he opened that cookie, Johnny, it was like a damn monsoon. It was horrifying, Johnny.

JOHNNY. You are so full of sh...

LARRY. Honest to God, I'm not lying.

JOHNNY. A linebacker reading Les Mis. That's real good.

LARRY. Okay, okay. You don't have to believe it. I mean, it takes some amount of intelligence to believe me. All I'm saying is, when Moby Dick reads a fortune and cries like a baby, I know that I'm gonna respect that, man.

JOHNNY. Mm hm. And what was in that fortune? If fortunes these days are all good, happy ones, how come he cried?

LARRY. That's what scares me, Johnny. It could have been anything, advice or those stupid lucky number things. He might have wanted something particular from this fortune and didn't get it, he might have just broken up with his girlfriend and the sentences touched a nerve, I don't know. The point is, he broke down. The fortune made him snap, Johnny...look, I can see that you don't believe me, so I'll tell you one more...

JOHNNY. No, no more case studies. We got about another 20 before...

LARRY. Just one more, Johnny. Look, you see that waitress over there, our waitress?

JOHNNY. Yeah, what about her?

LARRY. She's good, right? She's a good waitress?

JOHNNY. She's all right. She doesn't spill anything.

LARRY. Well, that's interesting, because just last month she was a horrible waitress. Her right leg, Johnny, was busted.

JOHNNY. Right.

LARRY. Swear to god. Her leg was lame. She damaged it playing sports. The doctors told her she'd probably never walk the same way again.

JOHNNY. And how would you know what the doctors said?

LARRY. I talk, you know, I ask questions. Maybe you should try it sometimes, talk to people. Anyway, there'd she be, bringing the customers in, showing them to their seats and just having a terrible time.

(WAITRESS enters, carrying cups of water and a wine bottle, dragging her right leg, showing a distinguished gentleman, CUSTOMER, to his seat. Same exaggerations here as in the previous example.)

I'm telling you I could tell the customers were terrified of her walk. They probably thought it was some kind of transferable bone disease or something. Plus she was getting really depressed from not being able to play field hockey. So...she started drinking. Oh boy did she drink. Turned into a big time alcoholic. Hangovers, slurred speech, the shakes, everything. And whenever she served alcohol, whenever she served the booze, her hands would just go crazy.

(WAITRESS goes to WOMAN with wine bottle. Tries to serve, but her hand shakes. WOMAN takes bottle finally as WAITRESS takes a menu and walks at snail like speed to CUSTOMER.)

She was slow...incredibly slow. She moved at half the velocity of a human being, Johnny, 'cause remember, she only had one good leg. Her service was so slow that people just got pissed off, left their food on the table and without paying. And of course, no tips.

(CUSTOMER exits. WAITRESS crumbles in his seat.)

So she's feeling pretty bad. But then...then what does she do, Johnny? What does she do?

JOHNNY. Gee. I don't know, she reads the fortunes?

LARRY. She reads the fortunes, Johnny. You gotta remember that she's surrounded every day of her life by these things. They're all around her. They exude that...fortune cookie scent. They're like a cocoon. Ever see that movie, Johnny, the Cocoon? About a bunch of these old people that start feeling young again because they touched these cocoons that were really aliens! Well, it was like that. So anyway, she's sitting there, reading 'em every day, and things start changing. Not right away, Johnny, not right off. Gradually. Week by week. Month by month. She starts drinking milk now instead of booze, 'cause, you know, it goes better with the cookies. She's getting strong bones, healthy skin, and a nice body. She's limping instead of dragging, then she's just hobbling slightly. And one day, one fine beautiful autumn day, Johnny, she's walking. She's right there walking like she's got two of the prettiest legs in town.

(CUSTOMER enters and WAITRESS serves him in exaggerated motions and in a constant near breakneck run.)

She's in great shape Johnny. Tells me she's jogging every morning now. Can you believe it? She can do a mile under five! Training for the Boston Marathon too. The customers love her. She's real fast. During the busy hours she's dodging traffic, zigzagging left and right all graceful like a...like a gazelle on speed! She's practically dancing her way to tips!

(WAITRESS ends by break-dancing, or chorus girl dancing her service. CUSTOMER looks for change, then finally decides to give her his wallet as tip. They smile at each other and exit jogging.)

JOHNNY. That's a fine story, Larry, a real fine one. I think I'll ask her to tell me more about it, 'cause it's such a fine story.

LARRY. I wouldn't do that. She's still scarred from the past, remember? Look, Johnny. These things are so stupid but they have such an impact. Imagine what'd happen if you put something real in them. It'd be outrageous!

JOHNNY. And you want to be the one to write these realistic fortunes?

LARRY. Sure, why not?

JOHNNY. You're going to college, you're paying a hundred thousand dollars or so, killing yourself with calculus, and your goal is to become a fortune cookie writer.

LARRY. Hey, you never know.

(LONELY GAL enters. Sits down at other side of the bar from WOMAN. LONELY GUY notices.)

Look, the thing is, I was meant to be a writer. My dad's a recovering alcoholic, my mom's manic depressive, which means that I definitely got genes to write.

JOHNNY. A regular Hemingway.

LARRY. Right. Now I tried poems, plays, stories, the usual bull, but I never could. Now it's not because I can't write. I can. It's just because I haven't found the right thing to write on. I can't just put my work on anything.

JOHNNY. And you think a one and a half inch long fortune paper's gonna do it?

LARRY. Yeah, why not?

JOHNNY. You think Tolstoy ever wrote fortunes?

LARRY. He didn't have access to the cookies, Johnny. And you just can't import cookies from China just like that. There's the wall, remember? Look. The point is, I can do it. But I'm not gonna be enough. There's gotta be a new profession, a whole new generation of us fortune cookie writers. Each restaurant would have one of us, observing the customers, writing them unique, individual fortunes. Fortunes that are realistic, unique and wistful.

JOHNNY. Do you have any idea how much it would cost the owners to hire writers for each cookie?

LARRY. No, but...

JOHNNY. You need someone who's able to look at and understand the customers in order to write an accurate fortune. They'll need an understanding of psychology, maybe a BA, or an MA in psych. So that's about thirty thousand in salary a year.

(JOHNNY uses calculator.)

LARRY. What're you doing?

JOHNNY. I'm seeing how much it'd cost the stores to hire one of your writers.

LARRY. Really, Johnny. You don't have to...

JOHNNY. Thirty grand. And that's not all. They gotta be good to excellent writers, true artistes, if you want your wistful fortunes. MFA grads are okay, but they're not tested, so you gotta contract published authors, sign 'em up.

LARRY. Really, Johnny, is this necessary?

JOHNNY. That's another thirty grand to lure your writers from their comfortable teaching jobs or from contracts with their publishers. Add to that benefits, insurance, we're talking...eighty grand. Eighty divided by nine for nine months of work, that comes

out to... (*Calculates:*) Eight thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight dollars a month. Twenty-one working days a month, that's (*Calculates:*) four hundred and twenty-three dollars a day. The guy, and I'm using guy in the inclusive sense here, your writer can be male or female...

LARRY. That's good Johnny, because...

JOHNNY. The guy puts in eight hours of labor a day, that's 53 dollars an hour. How many cookies do you think he can do in an hour?

LARRY. Hard to say Johnny, I mean...

JOHNNY. He's gonna need time psychoanalyzing the customers, watch, observe and take a stab at their history. Time thinking about what he's gonna write, time for a first draft, a revision, another revision. He'll print it out, read it, feel, oh, a little dissatisfied, fix it up, and write a fourth and final draft. I'm giving him, and I'm being very generous here, but I'm giving him twenty minutes per fortune. That's three fortunes per hour, fifty three divided by three comes out to eighteen bucks. Eighteen bucks for one fortune.

LARRY. Wow. Eighteen bucks.

JOHNNY. That's one expensive cookie.

LARRY. But still, I think you're missing the point...

JOHNNY. And we're not even talking about the office space and the computer you'll need. The state of the art laser printers to print out your miniscule fonts.

LARRY. But Johnny...

JOHNNY. The lawsuits you'll get from people who lose their eyesight reading your miniscule fonts, the...

LARRY. But it's worth it! Eighteen bucks is nothing when you consider what it means, after so much bull, so much vaporous sugar-coated nonsense, to finally read one of my fortunes. To really read it, Johnny, because it's time, it's time for a new generation of fortune cookies. We're sick and tired of what we've got now. No more repetitions and calculations, time for the truth, my truth. Waitress, cookies for everyone, on me!

(WAITRESS enters, pirouettes her way to LARRY with a tray of cookies, and expertly places them on his hand, then exits on a hop.)

Time for a cookie, Johnny, a cookie with a message for the new millennium. No more propaganda for happiness, no more sweet messages with no meaning, no more lucky numbers. But yes, yes to a mere eighteen dollar cookie that addresses the problems of post-menopausal alcoholics out there. A real message, Johnny, a real fortune for the depressed and overweight!

(Crosses to WOMAN, gives her a cookie. WOMAN reads cookie, gazes up at him with a look of eternal gratefulness. He gives her his hand and she kisses it.)

WOMAN. Bless you!

(WOMAN exits, weeping in her happiness.)

LARRY. A cookie for the lonely ones, Johnny, the ones with their hearts broken.

(Hands LONELY GAL a cookie.)

And the ones too scared to ever try.

(Hands LONELY GUY cookie.)

Just imagine, imagine a cookie that says...

LONELY GUY. *(Reading the fortune, puzzled:)* Hey, you?

LARRY. *(Simultaneously:)* Hey, you! Yeah, you. You're scared of women right? Hell, you're scared of love! Well, you're right to be. Love sucks. It bites you in the ass. You might like her now...

(LONELY GUY looks at LONELY GAL, looks back at fortune.)

Yeah, her. I saw you looking at her. You like her, don't you? But you're scared, right? You're thinking, hey, what kinda girl would actually go for me, I'm a geek. What if she goes for me and breaks my heart? Even worse, what if I marry her but in a few years she'll turn into a wrinkled old crone and every morning she'll be whining: George, can I have some money? George, are you going out and drinking again, you're seventy-nine, for god's sake! Your heart, George, your heart! And you think, boy, I hope I do get a stroke soon. Hey, maybe it'll all turn out true. But you know what?

LONELY GUY. Uh...what?

LARRY. So what? That's right. So what if you marry her and get disappointed, so what if you might never marry her? So what if you two go out, fall in love, and a few days later she runs over your heart like a Mack truck over an insect and the rest of your life you're a hollow shell of your old self? The seconds are ticking, man, the time is now! You'll never be. You'll never be... How old are you, twenty-one?

LONELY GUY. Yeah, wow. That's ama...

LARRY. You'll never be twenty-one again. Look at her!

(LONELY GUY timidly looks. LONELY GAL looks back. LONELY GUY quickly looks back down at fortune.)

LOOK at her for **GOD'S SAKE!**

(LONELY GUY stares.)

Nice, eh?

LONELY GUY. Yeah.

LARRY. Did you get a whiff of that perfume as she went by?

LONELY GUY. Uh huh.

LARRY. That's something, eh?

LONELY GUY. Yeah.

LARRY. And those legs. Man.

LONELY GUY. Uh huh.

LARRY. Mm, mm, MM... Well, what are you sitting around for? You're never gonna have this chance, this one chance. You'll never be the same stud ever again. This is your time, man! Your moment! Get up!

(LONELY GUY gets up, quickly sits down.)

NOW! GET UP YOU IDIOT! Yes! You! Get up! Get up and go to her!

LONELY GUY. I will!...I am!

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**HERITAGE, HER-I-TAGE,
AND HAIR-I-TAGE**

by Adrienne Dawes

Cast of Characters

REBEKAH, age sixteen

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1

NAP PATROL OFFICER #2

VOICE ON WALKIE-TALKIE

Acknowledgements

Heritage, Her-i-tage, and Hair-i-tage was first produced as part of the *Silences We Sing* production at Sarah Lawrence College (Bronxville, New York) in February 2003. The cast and designers were as follows:

REBEKAH Autumn Brown

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1 Desi Shelton

NAP PATROL OFFICER #2 Kewanta Greer

Sound design Nehemiah Lockett

Costume design Libby Pokel

Light design Jason Wells

“My hair is a symbol of my identity. My hair is my pride. My hair is—an answer? I didn’t even know what the questions were but something told me that if I let my hair go long enough it would answer some questions for me that I needed to know, even though I hadn’t articulated them yet.”

—Tatsu Yamato, *What Are You?*

Thanks to Cassandra Medley, Christine Farrell and the Harold exercise, Enrico D. Wey, and most importantly, to the many families that have created me.

HERITAGE, HER-I-TAGE, AND HAIR-I-TAGE

by Adrienne Dawes

(REBEKAH, sixteen, confronts herself in the mirror. Mounds of bobby pins, barrettes, rubber bands, a variety of creams, oils, combs, brushes and spray bottles litter the floor. REBEKAH attacks her mass of thick curls, running a huge comb through it awkwardly. Large clumps of curls fall around her. REBEKAH snatches them disgustedly.)

REBEKAH. Eww...nasty.

(REBEKAH throws the clumps away, and returns to the mirror. She waters her hair down with a spray bottle of moisturizer, then coughs loudly from the fumes. Determined, she dips her fingers into a huge jar of curl activator and glops it onto her scalp. Large puddles of golden glop fall around her. She begins to lose her patience as she tries to mold her goopy, damp hair into a ponytail.)

REBEKAH. *(On the verge of tears:)* Maybe I should just cut it all off!—

(As REBEKAH reaches for a pair of scissors, loud sirens flare. NAP PATROL OFFICER #1 enters stage left, dressed in a police uniform, her pressed hair greased and molded in an intricate bun on the top of her hair. Various Black hair supplies hang from her belt like weapons. NAP PATROL OFFICER #1 points a hair dryer at REBEKAH menacingly.)

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. Giiiiirrrrl—I know you did not just say you wanted to cut your hair!!

REBEKAH. *(Bewildered:)* Who are you?

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. *(Holding out a badge:)* Nap Patrol Officer Shateequa Williams, Division 8, District 21. How many times a week do you wash your hair?

(She carefully confiscates the scissors from REBEKAH.)

REBEKAH. Two, three times? Sometimes four if I have volleyball practice—

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. What in God's name are you trying to do to yourself? Didn't your mama teach you nothing about yo hair?

REBEKAH. *(Quietly:)* Uh, well...no. We're learning how...

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. Didn't nobody in your family ever learn to take care of they hair?

REBEKAH. *(Hesitantly:)* Well, my mom is white and—

(NAP PATROL OFFICER #1 falls over in disbelief.)

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. Oh Giiiiirrrrrrrllll!!! *(Into walkie-talkie:)* Jamilla? We've got ourselves a 911 sit-u-ation here—I need some backup pronto—girlfriend needs a relaxer and some pink lotion ASAP!

NAP PATROL OFFICER #2. *(Offstage, on walkie-talkie:)* Why can't her mama do her hair like everybody else's?

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. 'Cuz her mama's white!

(NAP PATROL OFFICER #1 looks at REBEKAH sympathetically.)

Bring some copies of Ebony for her too—the girl looks like she don't know nothing 'bout her heritage!

NAP PATROL OFFICER #2. Copy that.

REBEKAH. Officer, I know about—

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. *(Cuts her off:)* Yeah, yeah, let me look at this hair...

(She motions for REBEKAH to sit. NAP PATROL OFFICER #1 takes a huge clump of REBEKAH's hair in her hands, looking at each strand in amazement.)

Just as I suspected... Your hair ain't never been relaxed or pressed before!

REBEKAH. The chemicals are disgusting and the heat will just make my hair frizzle—my mom told me that—

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. Your *mama* don't know nothin' about Black hair! And apparently your daddy isn't around enough to make sure his child ain't cutting off a perfectly good head of hair!

(Sirens blare then cut off. NAP PATROL OFFICER #2 rushes on-stage, dressed in an identical uniform, her hair long, luxurious, and straight. She carries a box filled with beauty supplies and Ebony magazines which she dumps in REBEKAH's lap.)

NAP PATROL OFFICER #2. *(To OFFICER #1, ignoring REBEKAH:)* I came as fast as I could—some idiot threw his cigarette and it hit some poor brother's head and sweet Jesus, it was all flames and fire and chaos! I had to perform an emergency geri curl revival!

(She hands a pair of latex gloves to NAP PATROL OFFICER #1, then puts on a pair herself, moving to REBEKAH.)

Okay—let's have a look.

(The OFFICERS pick through her hair roughly; REBEKAH winces.)

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. *(In amazement:)* Raw hair—never had nothin' done to it. Feel how soft it is—and thick!

(She roughly pulls REBEKAH's hair. REBEKAH winces in pain.)

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. Look, no dandruff, or nothing!

NAP PATROL OFFICER #2. *(To REBEKAH:)* Sweetie, how old are you?

REBEKAH. Sixteen.

NAP PATROL OFFICER #2. *(Astonished:)* Sixteen?! You never once thought in all those years to straighten your hair??

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. Her “mama” told her the chemicals were too harsh for her!

(They shake their heads and tsk in disapproval. NAP PATROL OFFICER #1 begins to straighten REBEKAH's hair.)

NAP PATROL OFFICER #2. Please! Your white mama told you nothing but lies. No chemical is too harsh—you just gotta grin and bear it, like the rest of us. 'Sides it only burns if you scratch your scalp... *(Suddenly suspicious:)* Have you been scratching your scalp?

(The OFFICERS exchange a look. They crowd next to REBEKAH, waiting expectantly.)

REBEKAH. Well, it gets itchy—

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1 and #2. *(Cackling loudly, overlapping:)* Oh giiirl—it's gonna burn! It's gonna burn, it's gonna burn like hell!

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. *(Laughing:)* You'll be all right, though, and you'll know for the next time—

REBEKAH. *(Incredulously:)* The next time?!

NAP PATROL OFFICER #2. *(Matter-of-factly:)* You gotta keep straightening the hair or it'll all break off and—

REBEKAH. *(Horried:)* What?!

NAP PATROL OFFICER #2. Oh but it'll look so good girl, it'll look pretty just like mine—look at it.

(NAP PATROL OFFICER #2 flips her greasy, straightened hair over her shoulder and offers a strand for REBEKAH to inspect as she smiles at herself in the mirror.)

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. You see that? You'll look so pretty with hair like that—especially since yours is so long. All Jamilla has is a weave, her natural hair is only one inch long all around—

NAP PATROL OFFICER #2. Now why did you have to go and tell her that?!

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. Well, it's true! *(Aside, to REBEKAH:)* She looks like a sick porcupine without her weave—

NAP PATROL OFFICER #2. Oh shut up, you're the one who had those ugly-ass braids in for like five years—your hair line's receding too—gonna be bald before you're forty!

(The OFFICERS stand on either side of REBEKAH, ready to fight. REBEKAH has to push them apart.)

REBEKAH. Wait, wait, back to the part where my hair breaks off. How often do I have to get this done?

NAP PATROL OFFICER #2. *(At OFFICER #1:)* Only every six weeks—if you wanna keep it looking *good*.

(NAP PATROL OFFICER #1 scowls. She walks over to REBEKAH again and looks at her hair.)

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. *(Back at OFFICER #2:)* Mmhm—relaxer's starting to take. It'll look so nice—especially since yours is *au naturale!* *(Beat, to REBEKAH:)* 'Bout time you started looking like the rest of us!

(Suddenly, NAP PATROL OFFICER #2's walkie-talkie beeps loudly.)

VOICE ON WALKIE-TALKIE. *(Offstage:)* Jamilla—we got a messy Weave Disaster spread across the Beautifully Black salon about two blocks from you! We need backup hair extensions, pronto! The beautician passed out from hairspray fumes and some of the women are about to leave the building without they weaves!

NAP PATROL OFFICER #2. *(Into walkie-talkie:)* I'm on it. *(To the others:)* I gotta go—See you around Shateequa—you too, girl. You take good care of that hair of yours!

(NAP PATROL OFFICER #2 runs offstage. Sirens blare then fade into the distance. NAP PATROL OFFICER #1 paces behind REBEKAH, swinging her hair dryer. REBEKAH sits, reading the magazine and twitching.)

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. *(Smiling widely:)* How you doin' girl?

REBEKAH. Uh...okay.

(NAP PATROL OFFICER #1 notices the page REBEKAH is reading.)

NAP PATROL OFFICER #1. That's Maya Angelou on that page there. She's a writer.

REBEKAH. *(Dully:)* Yes I know who Maya Angelou is—

(Suddenly REBEKAH turns bright red.)

(Screaming:) FIRE!! FIRE!! MY SCALP IS ON FIRE!

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HOW WE TALK IN SOUTH BOSTON

by David Lindsay-Abaire

Cast of Characters

NORMAN: the Father, in his fifties, has a strong Boston accent

MARY: the Mother, in her fifties, has a strong Boston accent

MARTY: the Son, in his twenties, has a strong Boston accent

BARBARA: the Daughter, in her twenties, has a strong Boston accent

MARLON: an African-American man, in his twenties, does not have an accent

PING: an Asian-American man, in his twenties, does not have an accent

FRANKIE: a Native American man, in his fifties, does not have an accent

Partial (Pah-Shel) Boston Glossary

Bill Buckner: Red Sox first baseman in the '86 World Series

a bum ticka: a bad heart

Brigham's: an ice cream store chain in Boston

Harry Frazee: owner of the Red Sox in 1919

Judge Garrity: a prominent figure in Boston politics, instrumental in bringing forced busing to Boston's predominately segregated inner-city neighborhoods in the 1970s

goahjis: gorgeous

Hoodsies: small pre-packaged cups of ice cream

jimmies: chocolate sprinkles put on ice cream

kah keez: car keys

Bob Kraft: current owner of the New England Patriots

pahlah: parlor, a livingroom

Roxbury: a neighborhood in Boston, a primarily African-American community

Southie: South Boston, a neighborhood in Boston, a primarily Irish Catholic community

Stah Mahket: Star Market, a supermarket chain in Boston

spuckies: submarine sandwiches, also called grinders (grindas)

Accent Note

Practically everything in this play is written out phonetically, so anyone with a passing familiarity with a Boston accent should be able to figure out what's being said if it's not in the glossary list.

HOW WE TALK IN SOUTH BOSTON

by David Lindsay-Abaire

(Lights up on a livingroom [parlor] in a blue collar home in South Boston. MARY is making a latch-hook rug, when her husband NORMAN enters with a car door. His arm is lodged inside it.)

NORMAN. Muthah-ra-Gawd, look at dis. My ahm's cot in da kah dewah.

MARY. Doan bring dat hunka gahbitch into my pahlah, Nawman. Take it back outside and diddle inda gudda.

NORMAN. I ain't diddlin. My ahm's cot.

MARY. Get owda heah. Ya ahm's cot? *(Calls downstairs:)* Hey Mahdy, ya fathah's ahm's cot in the kah dewah. Cawl da fiah depahtment. Tell 'em to get ovah heah befoah he gets dubbaya-dee-foddy on my latch hook rug.

NORMAN. Dat's a nice rug yuh makin'.

MARY. Yuh like it? Thea havin' a time down at the VFW Post in Mahch, a bazah, like an ahts and craffs faih, an I dough I could sell my rugs.

NORMAN. Dat's a great idear, Meery.

(MARTY enters.)

MARTY. Yuh cawllin' me?

MARY. Yeah, wheah da frig whiryah?

MARTY. I coodin' heah ya. I was downsteahs ina cella.

MARY. Dis frickin' chowdah-head got his ahm cot in da kah dewah.

MARTY. How'd he get his ahm cot in the kah dewah?

NORMAN. I was fixin' da windah 'cause it was hahd to open, so I took da dewah apaht and was fiddlin' aroun' and my ahm got cot.

MARTY. Dat's wicket pissa. Whadda looza.

NORMAN. Get me owda heah. I gotta watch da Sox at fowah.

MARTY. I bet yaw cot in duh lockin' mechanism. I'll go get yaw kah keez.

(MARTY exits.)

NORMAN. D'jew buy me some beah, Meery? You know Hahvey and Kevin McCahthy ah comin' ova to watch da game.

MARY. Sully's not comin'?

NORMAN. Nah, Sully went to da dawg track with Fitzzy an Beah-zo.

MARY. Okay. I went to Stah Mahket on Sadaday inny-ways. I bought beah and a pahty platta foah yis. I can cook up some budded con on da cob. An' I got some sub rolls so you can make spuckies.

NORMAN. D'jew get any tawnic? Cause Hahvey don't drink no mowah.

MARY. Yeah I got two big bosses a' Pepsi. The three leetah kind. And a box of hoodsies foah afta.

NORMAN. Aw, we should still have Hoodsies left ova from lass Saint Paddy's Day.

MARY. Dose was hahd and freeza burnt. I trew 'em in da barrel. I didn't get no jimmys dough. You want me to run upta Brigham's?

(BARBARA, their daughter, enters.)

BARBARA. Ma, Dad, I have some wicket good news.

MARY. Bahbra. Ya fathah's ahm's cot in a kah dewah.

BARBARA. Whadda looza! Wanna heah my good news now?

(MARTY enters.)

MARTY. I gut da kah keez.

(Holds up car keys.)

BARBARA. Ma, Dad, Mahty, I'm gettin married!

MARTY. No suh!

BARBARA. Ya-huh!

MARTY. No suh!

BARBARA. Ya-huh!

MARY. Oh my gawd, my dodda's gettin' meerried!

NORMAN. You know I got a bum ticka! I'm havin' a hahd attack heah! Gimme a hug!

(Hugs her, but the car door makes it awkward.)

BARBARA. Ahhh! Ya hit me wit da kah dewah, ya looza!

NORMAN. Sorry.

MARY. Wait a minute, Bahbra, who-ah-ya marion?

BARBARA. His name is Mahlin.

NORMAN. We don't know no Mahlins.

MARY. Shuwah we do. Mahlin Perkins. Da animal guy.

NORMAN. How come we neva herda dis Mahlin ya marion?

BARBARA. 'Cause I was afraid ya wooden likem.

NORMAN. Why wooden we likem?

BARBARA. He likes da Yankees.

(There's a long, uncomfortable pause.)

MARTY. Ya love 'em, Bahb?

BARBARA. Moah than my haht can beah.

MARTY. Den I ken accep' em, liddle sista.

BARBARA. Danks, Mahty. Ma?

MARY. I neva liked baseball. I doan kayah.

BARBARA. Dad?

(NORMAN spits in her face.)

BARBARA. Ya spit in my eye, ya looza!

NORMAN. You know about da curse, Bahb?!

BARBARA. Yeah, but ya ain't gotta spit at me.

NORMAN. In nine-teen-nine-teen, Babe Root was a Red Sox playah, an den Harry Frazee solt 'em to da Yankees, and da rest is history. Eva since den, my team has been cursed. In eighdy yeahs, we hahven won a Whirl Series. Shuwah, deer ah udda teams wit worse reckids, but nobiddy loses in such haht-breakin' ways. An' above all da teams in da leagues, da Yankees have been ah ahch enemies. Damn dat Harry Frazee. And damn all dose Yankees. Fenway Pahk shoul da house dat Root built. And now, my ony dodda is gonna tell me she's marion a Yankee fan?

BARBARA. But I love 'em.

MARY. Da haht is a mysterious oahgan, Nawman. Dat I know.

NORMAN. So doan I! I know dat too, Meery!

BARBARA. Please, Daddy...

NORMAN. Awww, jeez. Alright. But nobiddy mention dat dis kid's a Yankee fan. Especially to Kevin McCahthy.

BARBARA. Oh dank you, Daddy!

(Hugs him, but the car door gets in the way.)

Ahhhh, dat damn kah dewah!

MARTY. I gut da kah keez!

(Tries to unlock the car door.)

MARLON. *(Offstage:)* Knock-knock. Anyone home?

BARBARA. In heah, honey! Dat's Mahlin. He was pahkin' da kah. Everyone be nice.

(MARLON enters. He's a black man.)

MARLON. Hello. I'm Marlon. I was parking the car by the bar on the far corner.

BARBARA. Dozen he tock funny?

(They just stare at him, blankly.)

I just tolt 'em you was a Yankee fan.

MARLON. Oh yeah? Sorry. I hope you don't hold it against me. Least I'm not a Mets fan. I was rooting for you guys in '86. Too bad about that Billy Buckner thing. Gimpy little ground ball down the first base line. Right between Buckner's feet. World Series riding on that simple grounder. You must've been angry as heck. Kinda funny though, right?

NORMAN. Funny?

MARY. Yoah black. Yourah black man.

MARLON. Yes, I know.

NORMAN. This is a black man, Bahbra.

BARBARA. Isn't he goahjis?

NORMAN. A black man who likes da Yankees and tinks Bucknuh is funny.

(Spits in MARLON's face.)

MARLON. Eww. He spit at me.

MARY. Calm ya livva, Nawman.

NORMAN. Mahty, goto da stowah and get me a regulah coffee.

MARY. Anna cahtin a milk. Deah's money in my pockabook.

MARTY. I wanna stay.

NORMAN. We gotta talk to ya sistah.

MARTY. I'm gay.

MARY. What?

MARTY. I'm gay. Since youah so mad anyways and spittin on evrybidy, I might as well tell yuhs.

NORMAN. Eura queeah, Mahty?

MARTY. Yeah, I'm queeah.

BARBARA. I knew he was queeah!

MARLON. What's a quee-ahh?

NORMAN. My own son is a fudge-packer.

(Spits at MARTY.)

MARTY. Ick, a loogy.

MARY. My heaht is breakin'.

MARLON. I support you, Marty. Be proud of your feelings.

NORMAN. Hey, da nigga's tellin' da queeah to be proud. Not in dis neightahood, Sambo. Take it to da liberals ova da River at Hahvahd. Dale tellya to mahch in da parade ahm in ahm. Fuggin' out-sidas.

BARBARA. Daddy...

MARY. He doan mean nuttin by it. He was mugged by a black guy once.

MARTY. A *gay* black guy?

MARY. Shut up, Mahtty. Ya fathuh's upset.

NORMAN. You kids doe know about history. Dat's ya problem right deah.

BARBARA. I'm marion Mahlin whetha yis like it oah not.

NORMAN. Yaw ancestas came ova cuzza da famines in Iyaland in da eighteen fifties. An you tink dose uppity Brahmin wannid 'em heah in Boston? No. Nobody wannid a buncha imergrent Micks. So we found a liddle slice a land ona watah and made it ahrown. The Irish were discriminated against foh all dose yeahs, an now deah gonna tell us weah racist foah protectin' duh ony place dat's ahrown. Fuck dat.

MARLON. I can't understand a word he's saying.

NORMAN. Yuh stay wit yuh own kind. Dat's how God wants it.

(An ASIAN MAN enters.)

ASIAN MAN. I couldn't help overhearing the argument. I guess it's okay to come out now.

MARTY. Mom, Dad, this is Ping, my luva. He's been livin' inda basement wit me for tree months.

PING. It's a pleasure to meet you. Arm's caught in the car door, huh?

NORMAN. Whaddahell is goin' on heah? Did I raise yous kids to be freaks? Fuggin League a Nations in dis house! Dis ain't Greenwich Village, Mahty!

MARY. It's dat tollarinse ting they been tocking about on da TV. Duh kids musta been watchin' da TV.

NORMAN. No tollarinse in dis house. Dis is Southie! We doan tolerate nobody heah! Not da niggas, not da japs, not da chinks oah da spics, oah da fags, nobody! Day all wanna take us ova. Duh fohced bussin was da first step. Friggin Judge Garrity can suck my dick! Den da queeahs in da Saint Paddy's Parade! An remembuh when dat Hebe Bob Kraft tried to put the Pats Stadium in my back yahd?! I don't tink so, Jew-Boy! We chased his Yiddish ass owda heah! I shoulda known he was no good, trying to move dat Jacksonville game so it wooden conflict wit Yom Kippa, whadeva da fuck dat is!

PING. I've never heard someone be so blatantly prejudiced.

BARBARA. Ain't he funny?

NORMAN. I ain't prejudiced!

BARBARA. See what I mean? Daddy, youah hilairy-us!

NORMAN. Don't laugh at me, Bahb!

MARLON. He's almost as funny as Bill Buckner!

NORMAN. Get outta my house!

MARY. You do look funny, Nawman! Ya face all red, ya ahm cot inda kah dewah!

(They're all laughing at him now. He's so angry he can barely speak.)

MARTY. Hey, Dad, live and let live, okay?

MARY. Nawman, I neva toldja I'ma Poahtha-Rican Lesbian!

(Shrieks with laughter.)

NORMAN. Go fuck yissel! Alla yis!

(Sudden pain in his chest.)

Ah! My haht! I hope yis ah happy! Alls I wanted was to watch duh Sox at fowah.

(Falls to the ground in pain.)

MARY. Ah you okay, Nawman?

PING. I'm a doctor. I can help.

NORMAN. No fuggin way! Meery, call an American doctor. I doan need dis queeah gook puttin' his chinky hands on me.

(Tries to spit, but dribbles on himself.)

MARTY. Dad, he can help.

NORMAN. I doan need no help! I'm fine da way I am!

MARLON. Get him to my car. We'll drive him to City Hospital.

NORMAN. Youah not bringin' me to dat nigga hospital in Roxbury!

BARBARA. But it's da closest, Daddy.

NORMAN. New England Medical is closa! I doan need yis help... I'm fine widout yis...

(He crawls to the exit, the car door dragging.)

MARY. Youah bein' very stubbin.

NORMAN. I doan needa tolerate nobidy...

(He collapses.)

Ahhhh...

(He dies.)

MARY. Muthah-ra-Gawd, he's dead.

BARBARA. My fathah is dead.

MARY. He wasn't really youah fathah anyways. Kids, I'd like you to meet Frankie Grey Hawk.

**PAGES HAVE BEEN CUT FROM THIS SCENE.
THE PLAY CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE.**

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MISS KENTUCKY
by Allison Williams

Cast of Characters

SHAYLEEN, 19, a pageant contestant

JEAN, late 30s, her mother

Place

An alley behind the Louisville Gardens Convention Center.

Time

Now.

Production Notes

A note on costumes: If Jean's suit is not pink, please change the color mentioned on page 7 accordingly.

For my mother, the beauty queen

MISS KENTUCKY

by Allison Williams

(An alley behind a convention center. A shut door, with a sign, "DO NOT PROP THIS DOOR." SHAYLEEN, 19, sits on an upturned bucket. She wears a glamorous evening gown, elaborate hair and makeup, a banner across her chest with "Miss Hazard" written on it, and one high-heeled shoe. JEAN, late 30s, stands a few feet away, holding the other shoe. She wears a light pink mother-of-the-bride type suit and carries a large purse.)

JEAN. You just had to have a cigarette. Couldn't wait one more hour—

SHAYLEEN. Stop it.

JEAN. —just couldn't take it, had to have your little nic fit, couldn't wait, oh, no—

SHAYLEEN. Mama.

JEAN. —told me you quit smoking. Told me you had to go to the little girls' room. Told me you'd just be one little minute—

SHAYLEEN. Mama!

JEAN. But you lied about quittin' and you lied about where you were goin' and you lied about how long you were gonna take—what else have you lied to me about, Shayleen?

SHAYLEEN. Cut it out!

JEAN. They are starting the interview in there.

SHAYLEEN. I know.

JEAN. Interview is your best area. Interview is forty percent. Interview is where—

SHAYLEEN. I know! I know!

JEAN. —you run rings around all those girls with the designer gowns and the three-thousand dollar noses and the personal trainers and the—and the—

SHAYLEEN. And the great voices. And the thick hair.

JEAN. This was gonna be it, honey. All the way to Atlantic City. All the way to fifty thousand dollars scholarship package and personal appearance fees and—

SHAYLEEN. And Meals on Wheels? Don't forget Meals on Wheels.

JEAN. I thought we changed your platform. You told me you put down Autism Awareness.

SHAYLEEN. Lexington told me one of the judges has a shut-in mother. So I put down Meals on Wheels.

JEAN. You believed Lexington?

SHAYLEEN. Hey, Meals on Wheels won me Hazard.

JEAN. Honey, in Hazard the average age is mummy. Of course it won you Hazard, you had three dirty old man judges imaginin' you comin' to their door with a turkey plate.

SHAYLEEN. Well, it ain't like it matters now.

JEAN. You know it hurts me when you do that.

SHAYLEEN. Sticks and stones.

JEAN. Why'd you do it, honey? Why'd you come out here? Why'd you pick the only locked door in the whole goddamn convention center to set outside of for a smoke break? My God, sometimes I think they have the right idea at nationals, give every contestant a chaperone, never let them alone for a minute.

SHAYLEEN. I hear they pee with the door open.

JEAN. That is just vulgar.

SHAYLEEN. Ashland was there last year, her sister's Misty Tompkins.

JEAN. Well, she had no call to repeat that. D'ya think the judges'll favor her because her sister won last year?

SHAYLEEN. Bowling Green thinks it hurts her. Thinks they won't want to give it to the same family.

JEAN. Well, that's one out of the way. *(Realizes:)* And you're two out of the way, so I guess that's one more step on the path for Bowling Green! Goddamn.

SHAYLEEN. You took the shoe out of the door.

JEAN. What was I supposed to do, just leave it there?

SHAYLEEN. I propped the door open so I could get back in. Any damn fool could see that I propped the door open. Any damn fool could see that I was leavin' the door open so that I could get back in, that when you go out a door marked "fire exit, locks when closed," you prop the goddamn door open so you can get back in time for the interview!

JEAN. I wasn't gonna leave your ninety-five dollar shoe jammed in the door, Shayleen, getting all crumpled and scuffed up after I spent all morning with the shoe polish and the beeswax, I wasn't gonna leave it in the door!

SHAYLEEN. Then I guess it's your fault I'm locked out here. What's the capital of Panama, Miss Hazard? What do you think the president should do about the economy, Miss Hazard? Why is your platform so important to the people of Kentucky, Miss Hazard? We can have our own little interview right out here.

JEAN. There's got to be something we can do.

SHAYLEEN. There's a gate at one end and a brick wall at the other. You saw it and I saw it.

JEAN. Who puts a gate at the end of a fire exit?!

SHAYLEEN. Louisville Gardens does.

JEAN. That has got to be against the fire code.

SHAYLEEN. Why don't you call up the fire marshal and tell him?

JEAN. Don't get smart with me, young lady.

(JEAN takes off her jacket and pulls a pair of nail scissors out of her purse. She starts to cut the jacket.)

SHAYLEEN. *(Horried:)* Mama, what are you doing?

(SHAYLEEN makes a grab for the scissors, JEAN pulls away.)

Mama, no! You stop that!

JEAN. I'm gonna wrap the pieces around the barbed wire on top of that gate. Then I'm gonna climb over and go 'round front and let you back in. You can tell them what happened and maybe they'll let you interview. Thirty-five girls, they're prob'ly still listening to Ashland babbling about Inner City Enrichment Programs.

SHAYLEEN. Mama, you can't cut up that jacket. That's your pageant suit.

JEAN. You got a better idea?

SHAYLEEN. Mama, I bought you that suit! With the gift certificate from Little Miss Prestonsburg! You promised you'd wear it all the way to Atlantic City! When I was nine years old, you promised!

JEAN. Come on, Shayleen, you're a big girl now.

SHAYLEEN. Mama, I can't win Miss Kentucky if you're not wearing your pageant suit.

JEAN. You can't win Miss Kentucky out here in the alley, honey.

(JEAN prepares to cut.)

SHAYLEEN. Don't you dare!

(SHAYLEEN makes a grab for the jacket and scissors. There is a brief scuffle. JEAN tries to pull away.)

SHAYLEEN. Ow!

(SHAYLEEN backs away, holding her arm. JEAN drops the jacket and starts toward her.)

JEAN. Oh my God! Honey, are you all right? Honey, you're bleeding! Hold your arm away from your dress! Let me see your arm.

SHAYLEEN. Hold it right there! You pick up that jacket!

JEAN. Don't be silly, honey, let me see your arm—

SHAYLEEN. Pick up that jacket! That is a shell pink Miss Clara suit and if you get dirt on that jacket it will be ruined!

(JEAN moves towards SHAYLEEN. SHAYLEEN holds out her bleeding arm.)

You take one more step and I'm gonna bleed all over this dress!
Now pick up that jacket!

JEAN. *(Doing as she says:)* Fine, fine. I'm picking up the jacket. I'm folding it up. I'm setting it...I'm setting it on this bucket?

(SHAYLEEN, still holding out her arm, shakes her head.)

I'm taking some Kleenex out of my purse, and I'm setting the jacket on the Kleenex. Now, may I please see your arm?

(SHAYLEEN comes to JEAN. JEAN takes medical supplies out of her purse and cleans SHAYLEEN's arm.)

Ok, now this is the hydrogen peroxide, and you know it stings a little, so shut your eyes tight. Mama's gonna be as quick as she can.

SHAYLEEN. *(Very small:)* Ow.

JEAN. *(Blows on SHAYLEEN's arm.)* Almost done. Now you hold this gauze pad real tight for five minutes, and you won't even need a band-aid. I've got some Dermablend in my purse, no-one'll even notice.

SHAYLEEN. You talk like I'm still going to be in the pageant.

JEAN. Don't you ever give up. We're gonna figure out how to get out of this alley, we're gonna get you back into the convention center, you're gonna waltz through that interview and you're gonna leave here Miss Kentucky. Tomorrow morning, you're gonna have a great story to tell the paper.

SHAYLEEN. "Teen Queen Sidelined by Nicotine."

JEAN. Least your sense of humor's back. Judges love that.

SHAYLEEN. Judges love a lot of things, Mama. A lot of things I'm not.

JEAN. You are so. You win pageants all the time!

SHAYLEEN. Not underneath.

JEAN. You're smart, and you have a beautiful walk, "like ice-skating" they told you once, and you have a lovely smile—

SHAYLEEN. I don't!

JEAN. Shayleen!

SHAYLEEN. I don't have a beautiful smile!

JEAN. You do, too. You have all those pretty white teeth and your mouth opens wide—

SHAYLEEN. I have a little tiny smile. Three thousand dollars of orthodontics and five months of bleach and "smile big, Shayleen!" have a beautiful smile. But it isn't my smile. My smile's a lot smaller and crooked and yellower and I never knew there was anything wrong with it until you got me into pageants.

JEAN. Now don't you pull that poor-me-my-mama-drives-me crap with me, Shayleen Virginia! You know damn good and well you begged me to be in Little Miss Prestonsburg and I told you no until you went and got your Granny to sign the permission form! First I knew about it was "Mama, I need a dress"! Now there are a lot of pushy pageant mothers on the other side of that door, but I never was that kind of vulture and yes I helped you as much as I could, but you were workin' every step of the way and don't you forget it. I never forced you, I never pushed you, I never thank God bought you new eyes or a new nose or new titties and I never said you couldn't quit any time you damn well pleased.

(Long pause. SHAYLEEN comes over to JEAN, gets her to sit on the jacket on the bucket, starts to sit on the ground, notices her dress, sits awkwardly on JEAN's lap.)

SHAYLEEN. I'm sorry, Mama.

JEAN. It's all right.

SHAYLEEN. I didn't mean it.

JEAN. You always were my little drama queen.

SHAYLEEN. Am I still?

JEAN. Yes, you are still.

SHAYLEEN. Mama?

JEAN. Yes, honey?

SHAYLEEN. Mama, I—I came out here on purpose. I stuck my shoe in the door and I thought maybe—I thought maybe someone would see the sign and take it out.

JEAN. Why on earth...

SHAYLEEN. I don't wanna go out there, Mama.

JEAN. Why not, honey?

SHAYLEEN. I'm not gonna win this one. There's girls out there with sponsors.

JEAN. You got a sponsor.

SHAYLEEN. Sponsors that aren't transmission shops.

JEAN. You know you're just as good as any one of those girls.

SHAYLEEN. I am on the inside, but not on the outside.

JEAN. You are just as pretty—

SHAYLEEN. Just as pretty when we're comin' out of the shower with our hair in a cap, but not like this. They put on those dresses and those banners and their helpers and their tape and shine up their teeth just like me, but there's somethin' else they're putting on. Somethin' hard. I don't mean they're mean, exactly, 'cause they're all real friendly and nice, and they really mean it, but they're meaning it as hard as they can. It's like this force field of nice-ness that's stickin' out about three feet from their body.

(Pause.)

I guess that sounds pretty silly.

JEAN. Their mommas are like that, too.

SHAYLEEN. I was back there in the wings, and all those force fields were all around me, bashin' into each other, crowdin' me out, and I had to get away or I was just going to scream, and I came out here, and I realized, this was the first time I have breathed like a normal person in years. The first time I'm not busy being all nice to

everyone to keep the reputation of the title. I mean—have I been carryin' around one of those force fields with me?

JEAN. Oh, honey.

SHAYLEEN. Sittin' on that bucket, I realized I'm about sick of underprivileged children and shut-in seniors and autism awareness. I want...I want to go to the mall. And I wanna buy a pair of washed-out denim jeans and a t-shirt without a collar and I wanna wear red nylon underwear.

JEAN. Shayleen!

SHAYLEEN. Okay, maybe not that part. But don't you see, Mama? I want to be selfish!

JEAN. I do see.

(JEAN laughs softly.)

SHAYLEEN. What's funny?

JEAN. I thought you were gonna be mad at me for the whole reign of Miss Kentucky.

SHAYLEEN. It was an accident, Mama.

(JEAN laughs.)

Oh my God. Did you—you didn't. Tell me you didn't take that shoe out of the door on purpose.

JEAN. Left my cell phone in the car, too.

(SHAYLEEN is struck dumb.)

I'm glad you and I saw it on the same night, honey.

SHAYLEEN. You knew I wanted to quit?

JEAN. I had an idea.

SHAYLEEN. But Miss Kentucky—Atlantic City—you worked so hard!

JEAN. And I knew you wouldn't wanna to let me down. But there is no way I'm gonna be one of them force-field mommas.

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SNAP
by **Daryl Watson**

Cast of Characters

COACH LATRELL

CLARENCE

MARCUS

SUSAN

WAYNE

Acknowledgments

Snap premiered on behalf of Real TheatreWorks at the Battle of the Bards, New York on February 25th, 2005. The competition was hosted at Crobar by Partial Comfort Productions. The play was directed by Jenny Koons, and the cast was as follows:

COACH LATRELL Malcolm Barrett
CLARENCE Robert Barrett
MARCUS Brian Hastert
SUSAN Mayteana Morales
WAYNE "THE MOUTH TRAIN"
EVANS Nyambi Nyambi

This play is dedicated to Malcolm, Shamis, Jackie, Chad, Karla and Leah

SNAP

by Daryl Watson

Scene 1

(The entire stage is dark.)

COACH LATRELL. ATTENTION!

(Lights up on a gymnasium. CLARENCE, MARCUS and SUSAN are standing in a row, facing forward. COACH LATRELL paces back and forth.)

COACH LATRELL. You know what I see in front of me today?

(A beat.)

I ain't talking to myself, muthafuckas! I said, do you know what I see in front of me today!?

ALL. No, sir!

COACH LATRELL. I see bacteria! I see maggot freshman! I see cutlets of dog shit in the early stages of decomposition! That's what I see. Do you agree?

ALL. Yes, sir!

(LATRELL stops in front of CLARENCE, who is an extremely tall boy.)

COACH LATRELL. What's your name?

CLARENCE. Clarence?

COACH LATRELL. You a tall muthafucka, ain't you? If you did a back flip, you'd kick God in the mouth!

(Everyone laughs.)

COACH LATRELL. The hell y'all laughing at? You think this is funny? You think y'all don't have weaknesses? The first rule in playing the dozens is everybody's got a weakness! *(To MARCUS:)* What's your name?

(MARCUS opens his mouth wide to reveal crooked teeth.)

MARCUS. Marcus.

COACH LATRELL. GODDAMN! Need you an orthodontist! Can't tell if you're smiling at me or flashing gang signs! Close your mouth before you get somebody shot. I can just see you now, walking down the street: "Yo, what's up, fellas— POP! POP! POP! POP!" (*To SUSAN:*) What's your name, Princess?

SUSAN. S-S-S-Susan.

COACH LATRELL. The hell's wrong with you? You challenged or something?

SUSAN. I-I-I have a st-stu-stutt-

COACH LATRELL. A what!?

SUSAN. A stu-stu-stu-stutter. I have a stu-stutter.

COACH LATRELL. You ain't lyin', jack!

SUSAN. I have a stutter, and...

COACH LATRELL. And WHAT?

SUSAN. ...I'd a-a-a-ap-appreciate it if you di-di-di-didn't use that as an excuse to ab-b-b-b-b-buse me.

COACH LATRELL. Oh. Okay. Well, if you'd like, we can all take out our notebooks and do some journaling instead. You know? Like, really get down on paper everything you're feeling. Would you like that?

SUSAN. Y-y-yes.

COACH LATRELL. Yeah? You'd like to do you some intense journaling?

SUSAN. Yes. V-v-very much—

COACH LATRELL. TOO DAMN BAD, STUTTERING SALLY...

SUSAN. S-S-Susan.

COACH LATRELL. On your belly, maggots! All of you! Push-ups now! And count every one off with, "Yo' daddy so dumb." Don't just stand there! Do it.

(Everyone drops down and starts doing push-ups, saying, "Yo, daddy's so dumb.")

COACH LATRELL. That's right! Welcome to the Clarence Thomas High School Dozens Team! You think this is abuse? You ain't seen nothing yet! Why you stopping, Marcus?

MARCUS. *(Breathing heavily:)* It's my asthma, sir!

COACH LATRELL. Asthma?

MARCUS. I can't breathe so good.

COACH LATRELL. Okay... so help me out here. Where's the part of this conversation that has shit to do with me and what I'm doing?

MARCUS. I can't bre—

COACH LATRELL. Because asthma don't sound like a Coach Antoine Latrell problem. It sounds like a Marcus problem. Something wrong with your DNA. Take it up with yo' mama, 'cause that don't got shit to do with me!

SUSAN. Coach, come on, he c-c-can't b-b-brea...

COACH LATRELL. Is there a CD player skipping around here?

SUSAN. N-n-n...

COACH LATRELL. Or are you actually trying to communicate with me?

SUSAN. F-f-f-f-f-f-f-f-fuck you!

(A beat.)

COACH LATRELL. Say that again.

SUSAN. F-f-f-fuck you! Skinny-ass m-m-m-m-m-m-muthafucka!

COACH LATRELL. Alright, everybody. Practice is over for today.

(Everyone gets up to leave.)

COACH LATRELL. Not you, Susan!

(CLARENCE and MARCUS exit. A beat.)

COACH LATRELL. Well done.

SUSAN. Wh-wh-wh-wh-

COACH LATRELL. DON'T! Don't! Just stop! Damn! I'll explain. You learned the second rule of playing the dozens. No matter what, when somebody throws a snap at you, you throw one right back. You got potential. Now... there's a freshman exhibition tournament next week. And you're going to be in it.

Scene 2

(SUSAN is jumping rope. COACH LATRELL is watching over her.)

COACH LATRELL. *(Singing:)* I don't know what I've been told!

SUSAN. *(Singing:)* I don't know what I've been told!

COACH LATRELL. Yo' underwear is ten years old!

SUSAN. Yo' underwear is ten years old!

COACH LATRELL. Yo' breath is bad, yo' booty stank!

SUSAN. Yo' breath is bad, yo' booty stank!

COACH LATRELL. That ass is like a septic tank!

SUSAN. That ass is like a septic tank!

COACH LATRELL. Sound off!

SUSAN. Fuck you!

COACH LATRELL. Sound off!

SUSAN. Three, four!

COACH LATRELL. Sound off! Fuck you!

SUSAN. And yo' fucking family too!

COACH LATRELL. Drop the jump rope!

(SUSAN drops it.)

COACH LATRELL. Now give me a snap!

SUSAN. You're skinny and st-st-stupid! And you got lint in your hair!

COACH LATRELL. No, no, no, no! We've been at this for days! This is not about just insulting me! When you play the dozens, you gotta make that person ashamed for being alive, for having the family that he has, for the car he drives, for the fucking toothpaste he uses! You gotta find where he's weakest, focus on that and keep hitting him there and don't let up until he falls to pieces! You gotta be quick! Gotta be on the ball! Don't forget the motto: "We don't fight with our fists; we fight with our *wits*."

SUSAN. I hear you. I hear you.

COACH LATRELL. You heard me, but you not listening to me. Girl, your sister so skinny, people in Somalia send *her* food! SNAP! That's the dozens! Now come on! The exhibition's tomorrow!

SUSAN. I—

COACH LATRELL. Your sister so buck toothed, she could kiss a man and comb his moustache at the same time.

SUSAN. I-I-I-

COACH LATRELL. Your brother so poor, he got married just for the rice!

SUSAN. I can't!

COACH LATRELL. Why not?

SUSAN. Are you d-d-d-deaf? I g-g-got this st-st-stutter! I'm gonna g-g-get eaten alive out th-th-there!

COACH LATRELL. You didn't stutter when you were singing with the jump rope!

SUSAN. Singing's the only thing I'm g-g-good at! I don't even want to b-b-be here! My d-d-dad used to play on the d-d-dozens team b-b-back when he was in high school, and he just wants me to f-f-f-follow in his f-f-f-footsteps and my mama-

COACH LATRELL. Yeah, yeah, yeah, but, um, back to what I was talking about, you gotta find your rhythm, Susan. I can't help you

do that. Only you can do it. And you gotta do it by tomorrow. Or you're going to lose.

Scene 3

(The exhibition. Two microphones lie in the center of the floor. SUSAN and COACH LATRELL are in one corner. Her opponent, WAYNE "THE MOUTH TRAIN" EVANS is trying to rally the audience.)

COACH LATRELL. Now just remember everything I told you.

SUSAN. You told me I was going to lose.

COACH LATRELL. Well, remember the part where I said I believed in you?

SUSAN. No.

COACH LATRELL. Well, I believe in you and—

WAYNE. *(To the crowd:)* Wazzup, muthafuckas! Wayne "The Mouth Train" Evans is in the house! Y'all ready to get this party started? Yo, I'm gonna tear this scrub apart!

(He grabs a microphone.)

WAYNE. Come on over and get your medicine, baby! I promise you won't feel a thing.

COACH LATRELL. Grab your mike and show him who's boss. You can do it.

(SUSAN picks up her mike. A bell rings. They start circling each other.)

WAYNE. *(To SUSAN:)* Yeah. Yeah. Where you at? Huh? Where you at? You ain't nothing. Yo, check this out: Your house is so small, I put a key in the lock and broke a window! OHHH!

(SUSAN speechless.)

WAYNE. What's the matter? Where you at? Look at that poofy-ass hair! Hair so damn nappy, you gotta take Tylenol every time you comb it! OOOOOOH!

SUSAN. Y-y-your d-d-d-daddy...

WAYNE. Oh, what the fuck is this shit? You got me battling a girl who stutters? Yo, your mouth is so big, you could eat a banana sideways.

(A bell rings; end of Round 1. SUSAN walks over to COACH LATRELL.)

COACH LATRELL. What the fuck are you doing out there? He's taking your ass to the floor like 409!

SUSAN. Ooh, th-that's a g-g-g-good one. Can I u-u-use that?

COACH LATRELL. No, you cannot use that! Why are you just standing there? Why don't you say something?

SUSAN. I don't got anything to say.

COACH LATRELL. Everybody got something to say! Look at that goofy-ass muthafucka! He's a clown! You could tear him apart.

SUSAN. He's b-b-b-etter than m-m-me.

COACH LATRELL. He's quicker than you. You just gotta slow him down. Remember: place your strengths against his weaknesses. What are your strengths?

SUSAN. I d-d-don't know! I can sing. That's it.

COACH LATRELL. I didn't know you sang.

SUSAN. I t-t-told you y-y-yesterday!

COACH LATRELL. Girl, you stutter half the damn time as it is. *God* don't even know what you're saying!

(The bell rings. WAYNE runs into the center of the ring and grabs his mike.)

WAYNE. Let's get this over with.

(SUSAN enters and picks up her mike. They circle each other.)

WAYNE. Yo, your sister's so flat, she had to tattoo "front" on her chest!

SUSAN. You-you-you-

WAYNE. What's up, girl? I can't tell if you're trying to talk to me or beat box! OOOH!!!

(SUSAN tries to speak but is too overwhelmed.)

WAYNE. Yo, your sister's so ugly, she was a stunt double for *The Predator*! Ooooh! And as for yo' mama? Yo' mama—

SUSAN. *(Singing:)*

No!

Don't you say nothing 'bout my mama!

(Everyone goes dead quiet.)

SUSAN. *(Singing:)*

No!

Don't you say nothing 'bout my mama!

No, no, no, no!

Don't you say nothing 'bout my mama!

*'Cause then I'm going to have to
start talking 'bout yours.*

(COACH LATRELL starts snapping.)

SUSAN. *(Singing:)*

*'Cause your mama's so fat
and that's no lie!*

*It takes two trains and a bus
just to get on her good side.*

A big-booty butt

Mountain hips wide as hell

Her underwear is

double double double double XL

And to top it all off

She's as dumb as a stool

She thought Boyz II Men

was a day-care school!

She's dumb and she's fat, dumb and fat

Yo' mama's dumb and she's fat.

WAYNE. Your ma—

SUSAN. Your mama's so fat she eats wheat *thicks*!

WAYNE. You—

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THREE GUYS AND A BRENDA
by Adam Bock

Cast of Characters

BOB, a man, played by a woman

JOE, a man, played by a woman

RANDALL, a man, played by a woman

BRENDA, a woman, played by a woman

Setting

At work.

Acknowledgments

Three Guys and a Brenda received its world premiere at Actors Theatre of Louisville's 30th Anniversary Humana Festival of New American Plays on April 1st and 2nd of 2006. Made possible by a generous grant from The Humana Festival, and presented by special arrangement with William Morris Agency, LLC. This play was directed by Steven Rahe with the following cast and staff:

JOE..... Suzanna Hay
BOBKeira Keeley
RANDALL Cheryl Lynn Bowers
BRENDA Sarah Augusta

Scenic Designer..... Paul Owen
Costume Designers John P. White
Stacy Squires
Lighting Designer..... Paul Werner
Sound Designer Benjamin Marcum
Properties Designer..... Mark Walston
Stage Manager Debra Anne Gasper
Assistant Stage Manager Heather Fields
Assistant Stage Manager Paul Mills Holmes
Dramaturg..... Julie Felise Dubiner

This play was developed with the support of the 24 Hour Plays.

All production groups performing this play are required to include the following credits on the title page of every program:

Three Guys and a Brenda received its World Premiere in the 2006 Humana Festival of New American Plays at the Actors Theatre of Louisville.

THREE GUYS AND A BRENDA

by Adam Bock

(Before this, BOB, JOE and RANDALL were watching TV waiting for their shift to start.

Now: BOB and JOE are onstage. They are crying.

RANDALL walks across stage, crying. Exits.

BOB and JOE continue to cry.

RANDALL walks onstage. He is still crying. He has a roll of toilet tissue. He hands out tissue. They are all crying.

BRENDA walks across stage. They try not to/don't cry when she is onstage. She exits.

They cry again. Deep breaths.

They sniff. They sniff. They sniff.

BRENDA enters.)

BRENDA. You guys are on second shift right?

JOE. Yeah Brenda.

BOB. Yeah that's right.

BRENDA. Joe, then when your shift starts, then you and Bob are going to show Randall what to do with the new machine, ok?

JOE. Ok.

BRENDA. Ok?

BOB. Yeah ok.

JOE. Ok sure.

BRENDA. Ok then.

(Exits.)

JOE. *(Deep breath, doesn't cry:)* Fucking animal nature shows.

BOB. I know.

JOE. They get me every time.

RANDALL. She's so beautiful.

JOE. She is.

BOB. She is Randall.

JOE. Yes she is.

RANDALL. Isn't she Bob? She's beautiful!

BOB. She is Randall.

RANDALL. I have to tell her she's beautiful.

BOB. I don't know Randall.

JOE. I don't know.

BOB. What do you think Joe?

JOE. I don't know about that Bob.

BOB. Yeah me neither I don't know either.

JOE. Might not be appropriate. In the work environment.

BOB. Right.

JOE. Right?

BOB. In the work environment.

JOE. This being work.

BOB. Right.

RANDALL. I have to.

BOB. Well if you have to, you have to.

JOE. That's right.

BOB. If you have to, you have to.

JOE. Right.

BOB. Right.

JOE. But I don't think you're going to.

BOB. Nope.

JOE. Right?

BOB. Nope!

RANDALL. I have to.

BOB. Joe here might.

JOE. That's something I might tell her.

BOB. Right. Joe might.

JOE. I might. I might say something to her like

BOB. Like

JOE. "You're beautiful!"

BOB. Right!

JOE. But I don't know whether you'd say something like that.

RANDALL. I am too. I am too going to say something like that to her!

JOE. Well.

BOB. Well.

JOE. Well ok then.

RANDALL. Because I think she's beautiful.

BOB. Well.

JOE. Ok then.

RANDALL. And I'm going to say it.

BOB. Ok then.

JOE. Ok.

(RANDALL *exits.*)

JOE. Think he's going to tell her?

BOB. Nope.

JOE. I'm not watching any more of those nature shows. They're too sad.

BOB. Yeah I know. Me neither.

JOE. They're too fucking sad. They make me sad.

RANDALL. *(To audience:)* Thing that's hard about being a guy? You always have to tell the girl "Hey you're great" or "Hey I think you're great" or "You're great" or "You're great" and "Would you maybe want to go out?" and that's hard. Plus it's hard to have to shave all the time. That's hard too.

JOE. *(To audience:)* Plus it's hard to pick a good deodorant.

RANDALL. *(To audience:)* Yeah that's hard too.

JOE. *(To audience:)* Plus guys? Plus we have to carry everything.

RANDALL. *(To audience:)* Right.

JOE. *(To audience:)* Especially heavy things. Like sofas.

RANDALL. *(To audience:)* Yeah that's hard.

BOB. *(To audience:)* Plus

JOE. *(To audience:)* Plus you have to drive all the time.

RANDALL. *(To audience:)* Yeah. And that.

BOB. *(To audience:)* Plus

JOE. *(To audience:)* You have to drive on really long trips, to the beach, to visit your family, and then back from the beach. And if a tire blows you have to take it off, you have to put the spare on. Plus you have to pay.

RANDALL. *(To audience:)* For everything.

BOB. *(To audience:)* Plus

JOE. *(To audience:)* Plus sometimes you don't understand something and that can make you feel stupid and so you have to pretend you understand it. That can be hard. *(Pause.)*

BOB. Yeah.

RANDALL. Yeah. *(Pause.)*

JOE. *(To audience:)* That can be hard. *(Pause.)*

RANDALL. *(To audience:)* Mostly it's hard though saying "I think you're great" and "Would you maybe like to go out" and then you have to wait and find out what the answer is. That's hard.

(BRENDA enters.)

RANDALL. Um. Brenda?

BRENDA. Give me a second.

(BRENDA exits.)

RANDALL. Guys. Don't bust my chops.

JOE. I didn't say anything.

RANDALL. Don't bust my chops.

(BRENDA enters.)

RANDALL. Hey Brenda?

BRENDA. I said just give me a.

(She exits. JOE, BOB and RANDALL stand.)

RANDALL looks at JOE and BOB.

BRENDA enters.)

BRENDA. Yeah ok?

RANDALL. Oh yeah so. Um.

BRENDA. Yeah?

RANDALL. Guys?

JOE. Oh yeah.

BOB. What?

JOE. Ok. Come on.

BOB. What?

JOE. Bob come on.

BOB. Oh yeah yeah ok!

JOE. Ok!

BOB. Ok.

(They exit.)

RANDALL. Yeah so Brenda?

BRENDA. Yeah ok?

RANDALL. So.

BRENDA. I have work Randall.

RANDALL. Um.

BRENDA. Yeah ok so, what?

RANDALL. Um.

BRENDA. I have work.

(Turns to exit.)

RANDALL. I think you're beautiful.

BRENDA. What?

RANDALL. Um.

BRENDA. That's not funny.

RANDALL. What?

BRENDA. That's not funny.

RANDALL. I'm not being funny.

BRENDA. That's mean. That pisses me off. That really truly pisses me off.

RANDALL. No I do.

BRENDA. I have a lot of work. And you're pissing me off.

RANDALL. No I do. I think you're beautiful. I think you're beautiful like a. Like something beautiful. Like the sun in the sky. Like a lake. Like the sunshine on a lake in the early evening right before

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WHO'S A GOOD BOY?
by Anthony Wood

Cast of Characters

REX, a private detective Golden Retriever

SASHA, a rich Poodle debutante

NIPPER, a mongrel with his ear to the ground

MITZIE, a Greyhound who's been run around the block a few too many times

RALPH, a prize-winning Bulldog

Place

A dog show.

WHO'S A GOOD BOY?

by Anthony Wood

(Lights up as noir-ish music plays. There are two chairs onstage. REX stands center stage.)

NARRATION. It was a day like any other. The sun rises, the birds sing, you pee on a tree, roll in some fetid manure and get on with your routine. Dig up a bone, chase a car, bury a bone, take a nap. That's what I thought I was in for that fateful morning. But it's a dog eat dog world out there. The trick is figuring out that age-old question: which dog are you?

(REX lifts his leg as if to mark the area.)

My name's Rex, I'm a Golden Retriever.

(Music swells.)

On the morning of July 17th my master took me to the New Highland Kennel Club Dog Show. Now don't get me wrong. I'm not one of those high falutin', bath a week, silky breeder babies who chase after blue ribbons like they're prime New York Strip Steak. I don't play that game. I guess the old master just wanted me to see how the other half scratched. I had just finished licking my scrotum when she walked into my kennel and into my life.

(Enter SASHA. She seems flustered and upset.)

SASHA. Are you Rex?

REX. Maybe I am.

SASHA. Do you find lost things?

REX. Maybe I do.

SASHA. Can you help me?

REX. Maybe I can.

SASHA. You're full of a lot of "maybes."

REX. I'm full of a lot of things, baby. Nothing a good worming wouldn't clear up.

(He approaches her. They circle one another sniffing each other's butts.)

NARRATION. After sniffing her butt I told her to "sit."

(He commands. She sits.)

She seemed okay. A little high strung, but hey, what Poodle isn't. Her name was Sasha, although officially it was "Heavenly Sasha of the Milky Way." Show dogs...go figure.

SASHA. I need you to help me find something. It's valuable...very valuable.

REX. And what is this "valuable thing"?

SASHA. It's a ball.

(REX sits upright, alert. His head darts around.)

REX. Ball? Where? Where's the ball? Where's the ball? Where?

SASHA. It's not here. I told you it's missing.

(REX sits back, a bit embarrassed.)

REX. Right...sorry.

SASHA. That's okay...I do it, too.

REX. Can you describe this ball?

SASHA. Well, it was a yellow-green color. It was soft on the outside and kind of fuzzy.

REX. Uh-huh.

SASHA. It bounced pretty high. It was soaked with slobber and old rainwater.

REX. Uh-huh.

SASHA. The fuzzy cover was torn back. I bit into it as best I could. *(Getting agitated:)* I had a feeling something was inside of that damn thing, something important. I just needed more time to get at it.

REX. When was the last time you saw the ball?

SASHA. Yesterday. I was playing our favorite game with my master. He throws the ball, I go get it. He throws it again, I go get it. He throws it, I go get it. He throws it, I go get it. He throws it, I get it.

REX. Uh-huh. And if he threw it again?

SASHA. *(Shrugging:)* I guess I'd probably go get it. But then this last time he threw it, I chased all over the yard, but I couldn't find it, couldn't even smell it. *(Thoughtful pause.)* At least I *think* he threw it.

REX. I'm sure he did. They always throw it.

SASHA. Can you help me?

REX. No problem, sweetheart. I'll have your fuzzy ball back before you can roll over.

SASHA. *(Standing:)* I knew you could help me, Rex. They said you were the best.

REX. That's why I get the all-meat biscuits, baby.

(Light change. SASHA exits.)

NARRATION. "A yellow-green fuzzy ball that bounces." Doesn't sound too common. Should be easy to sniff out. I went to my first and best resource, a cock-eyed little mongrel named Nipper. When he wasn't digging holes or humping the nearest leg, Nipper was in on all that was of interest to the K-9 crowd. If Nipper didn't know it, it wasn't worth knowing.

(Enter NIPPER. He is a bit cock-eyed and dim. REX approaches him. They touch noses. They put up their hands like they're going to shake, but it looks more like that "give me your paw" trick. NIPPER then circles around REX and starts humping him from behind.)

REX. Okay, Nipper, that's enough, huh?

(NIPPER stands off to the side, agitated.)

NIPPER. Sorry, Rex.

REX. Your masters been keeping you away from the folded laundry, huh?

NIPPER. Hey...hey, hey, don't get down on my masters, okay? They're the best. They take good care of me. They feed me, they wash me, they had my balls cut off...you know. A guy could have it worse.

REX. Maybe. I need to know what you know about a lost little item.

NIPPER. What kind of item?

REX. A ball.

NIPPER. (*Alert:*) Really? Where? Where is it? Where is it?

REX. Calm down. I told you it was lost. Now what can you tell me?

NIPPER. Hmm, let's see. Was it a fuzzy ball? Yellow-green with a torn cover?

REX. That's the one. Have you seen it?

NIPPER. Maybe...maybe not.

REX. All right, Nips. What's your angle?

NIPPER. Angle? What angle?

REX. You want me to grease your paw before you cough up the info. So...what do you want?

NIPPER. Okay, first I want some beef snacks, real liver, not that all-cereal stuff. And chewy, too. Yeah, real chewy.

REX. You got it.

NIPPER. And I want some good wet dung to roll in. Stinky. Not like that dried out crap you got for me last time. That stuff was a week old, it was almost white. It was like rollin' on hand grenades.

REX. I'll see what I can do.

(NIPPER looks around nervously.)

NIPPER. Yeah, okay, I seen that ball. It rolled by here yesterday. If I wasn't chained to the wash line I would'a grabbed it myself.

REX. So where is it now?

NIPPER. Last I seen, it went down the sidewalk...by Mitzie's place.

(Music. NIPPER exits. MITZIE enters. She is worn out and forlorn.)

NARRATION. Mitzie...there's a name I hadn't heard in sixty-three dog years. Mitzie was a racing Greyhound. When I first met her she'd just retired. Let me tell you, when they say those Greyhounds move fast, they ain't just throwin' you a bone. One sniff of my anal sacks and she was on me like stink on old panties. If it wasn't for her bald-headed neighbor and his bucket of cold water, we'd still be hooked up right now.

(REX approaches MITZIE.)

REX. Hello, Mitzie.

MITZIE. Well, well...Rex the Wonder Dog. I always knew someday you'd come trottin' back into my kennel.

REX. You look good.

MITZIE. I look tired...worn out...past my prime. I was the fastest thing on four paws at Dairyland... Now look at me. I'm old...gray...hip dysplasia... One good wind comes up and I'm gonna be blown into the street and under a recycling truck.

(A pause.)

So...what do you want?

REX. You know what I want. I want the ball.

MITZIE. *(Alert:)* Ball? There's a ball? What ball?

REX. The yellow-green, fuzzy, slobber-soaked ball that came rolling by here yesterday. And don't tell me you didn't see it.

MITZIE. So...you workin' for that dressed up bimbo Poodle, huh? You sad, pathetic little Schnauzer. And to think I wanted to have your puppies.

(REX steps up and slaps her on the nose with a rolled up newspaper. She whines.)

REX. Look at you, all hopped up on Liv-A-Snaps and wet Alpo. You probably couldn't track a skunk in your own garage. So don't

go callin' me pathetic, Lassie. You're so out of it I wouldn't bet on you if you were racing against road kill.

MITZIE. You always were a sweet talker. You seem to be going to an awful lot of trouble just to find a measly, yellow-green ball.

REX. You know where it is, or don't you?

MITZIE. I got a better idea, Sparky. Why don't you go ask Sir Ralph?

(Music. Exit MITZIE. Enter RALPH.)

NARRATION. Sir Ralph... Or, "Sir Ralph Waldo Emmer-Happy, Hero of Green Gable Farms" as the jet setting show people called him. A champion Bulldog five years running. This bag of hair had enough winning ribbons to re-paper the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. He's been washed, fluffed, blow-dried, and combed at every major kennel club show in the country. And this drooler's got an ego as big as the all outdoors. He waddles around on his well manicured, Kentucky bluegrass lawn like his shit doesn't stink. Well let me tell you, I've been all up and down his sidewalk...it does.

RALPH. Oh goodness me, look what the cat dragged in.

REX. Spare me the witticisms, wrinkles. Where is it?

RALPH. Whatever do you mean?

REX. I want the ball.

RALPH. *(Alert:)* Ball? I don't see a ball. Who said anything about a ball?

REX. It's the missing, yellow-green fuzzy ball, and I want it. Now you hand it over, Percy, before I turn you into a throw rug!

RALPH. *(Laughing:)* You poor, misguided cur. Look around you. I live in the great, wide lap of Doggy Heaven. I am a champion. I have a fenced in yard, heated kennel, and every chew toy imaginable. I have rubber balls, plastic balls, wooden balls, chew-safe Frisbees, latex bones, rawhide bones, pig ears, squeaky toys, and a Mister Buddy-Bear. What would I want with some torn, worn out

old piece of rubber fuzz? You're beginning to bore me Rex. Ta-ta, and don't squirt the hydrant on your way out.

(REX grabs RALPH menacingly.)

REX. Now you listen to me and listen good, Mr. Slobbers. If I don't see you come up with a yellow-green, bouncy, half-torn ball in five seconds, I'm gonna—

(SASHA enters.)

SASHA. —Going to do what, Rex?

(REX and RALPH step back, stunned.)

REX. Sasha...

(She pulls out the tennis ball from behind her back.)

SASHA. Is this what you're looking for?

REX. Holy moly, the ball! You had it the whole time. I was lookin' all over high heaven for it.

SASHA. *(She laughs.)* I know.

REX. But why, baby? Why make me run around town, chasin' my tail if I didn't have to?

(SASHA laughs again and walks downstage center, facing the audience.)

SASHA. Because I can.

REX. I don't get it.

SASHA. I've spent the last three years chasing this ball...or a ball just like it. Up and down the yard, mile after mile after mile. Day after endless day. Then, one morning, after the ninety-third throw, I suddenly realized something...

(She holds the ball up over her head. RALPH and REX stare at it, transfixed.)

...The ball is power.

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YES, MAMET
by Matt Casarino

Cast of Characters

ANDREW DAVIS, a playwright

WILLIAM ROBERTS, his partner

REGINALD KEMP, the Vice President of the theater company

ALLISON, Mr. Kemp's secretary

Setting

An office in the theater of the Streetlight Players, a small, professional theatre company. Desk, chairs, maybe a sofa. Preferably the door to the office is in an upstage wall.

Acknowledgements

Yes, Mamet was first produced by the City Theater Company (Tom Shade, Artistic Director) of Wilmington, Delaware in July, 2001. The cast was as follows:

WILLIAMGeorge Tietze
ANDREW Jon Cooper
REGINALDJermaine Evans
ALLISON.....Jeannine Maguire

Directed by Kerry McElrone.

Yes, Mamet debuted Off-Off-Broadway at the 9th Annual New York 15-Minute Play Festival (American Globe Theatre, New York City) in April, 2003. The cast was as follows:

WILLIAM.....George Tietze
ANDREW.....James Kassees
REGINALD..... Jerry Ross
ALLISON Nancy Neufang-Stopyra

Directed by Jeff Williams. Produced by the Turnip Theatre (Gail Winar, producer).

For Jeff Williams

YES, MAMET

by Matt Casarino

(Sitting on the chairs are ANDREW and WILLIAM, playwright partners. They're excited, but talk in macho, rhythmic tones.)

ANDREW. Mamet.

WILLIAM. Yes.

ANDREW. Mamet.

WILLIAM. David Mamet.

ANDREW. David Fucking Mamet.

WILLIAM. This is beautiful!

ANDREW. Fucking amazing.

WILLIAM. We are ready. We. Are. So. Ready.

ANDREW. We'll kill them.

WILLIAM. *Slay* them.

ANDREW. This is the best.

WILLIAM. Ours is the best.

ANDREW. We are...the best.

(A beat or two.)

WILLIAM. Mamet!

ANDREW. Fucking Mamet.

WILLIAM. This is unbelievable.

ANDREW. I can't believe it.

WILLIAM. Can you believe it?

ANDREW. It's amazing.

WILLIAM. Can you believe it?

ANDREW. Amazing.

WILLIAM. Can you?

ANDREW. Unbelievable.

WILLIAM. Amazing.

ANDREW. And we earned it.

WILLIAM. Unbelievable.

ANDREW. We deserve it.

WILLIAM. We have a gift.

ANDREW. You have a gift.

WILLIAM. You have a gift.

ANDREW. You. Have. A. *Fucking*. Gift.

WILLIAM. The gift is ours.

ANDREW. It's our gift.

WILLIAM. We have a power.

ANDREW. We have a gift.

WILLIAM. The power of...

ANDREW. It starts with a spark.

WILLIAM. The power of...

ANDREW. A *manly* spark.

WILLIAM. The power of...

ANDREW. And grows to a flame!

WILLIAM. Yes!

ANDREW. A flame of passion!

WILLIAM. Yes!

ANDREW. *Manly* passion!

(Brief pause, while the two look at each other, stunned. And then...)

WILLIAM. GET THAT DOWN!

(ANDREW quickly whips a small notebook from his coat pocket and scribbles furiously. WILLIAM watches, mouthing the words “manly passion” as ANDREW writes them down. He finishes, and puts the notebook back in his pocket. The two men beam at each other, more exuberant than ever.)

WILLIAM. Mamet.

ANDREW. YES.

WILLIAM. David Mamet will see this.

ANDREW. Yes.

WILLIAM. Mamet will read us.

ANDREW. Mamet will love us.

WILLIAM. We are good, right?

ANDREW. We are good!

WILLIAM. I mean...

ANDREW. We are good!

WILLIAM. I mean...

ANDREW. The best!

WILLIAM. He'll like us?

ANDREW. He'll love us!

WILLIAM. Fucking David Mamet!

ANDREW. David Fucking Mamet!

(ALLISON enters, followed by REGINALD, an African-American man.)

ALLISON. Hi guys. Sorry to keep you waiting.

ANDREW. Hel-lo.

WILLIAM. *(To REGINALD:)* Mamet?

ALLISON. Um, guys, this is Reginald Kemp, the Vice President of the Streetlight Players. Mr. Kemp, this is Andrew Davis and William Roberts, authors of “Loki and 105th Street.”

REGINALD. Pleased to meet you gentlemen.

(They shake hands.)

Please, have a seat.

(ANDREW and WILLIAM sit down, but are too excited to relax. ALLISON gives them an uneasy smile, and exits.)

As you two probably know, the Streetlight Players puts on an original play festival every year. This year, we are privileged to have esteemed writer and director David Mamet among our judges.

ANDREW. Mamet!

WILLIAM. David Mamet!

ANDREW. Mamet!

WILLIAM. David Mamet!

REGINALD. *(After a beat:)* Yes. Well, as Vice President, one of my jobs is to evaluate all the submitted works. Since it is often difficult to choose which ones to produce, I like to meet with the authors before making a decision. So.

(He sits, puts on reading glasses, gets adjusted.)

Your play is called “Loki and 105th Street.”

ANDREW. Yes.

REGINALD. Why?

ANDREW. Why?

REGINALD. Why is it called “Loki and 105th Street?” As I recall, there’s no character named Loki, nor is any street mentioned in the play. So why did you call it “Loki and 105th Street?”

WILLIAM. Loki...is a god.

ANDREW. A Norse god.

WILLIAM. An evil god.

ANDREW. The god of mischief.

WILLIAM. The evil Norse god of mischief.

REGINALD. I see. So by evoking the name “Loki,” you wish to stress the concept that the gods are manipulating the characters with malicious intent? That despite our best plans, we are at the mercy of a malevolent deus ex machina?

(WILLIAM and ANDREW consult for a moment. After a few beats, WILLIAM is ready with an answer.)

WILLIAM. Yes.

REGINALD. Interesting.

(The boys smile at each other.)

Well. It’s...quite a play. Near as I can tell, it’s about a college professor, who is conned and blackmailed by his student, who is running a failing real estate company, which employs another con man who is trying to steal a rare coin while producing a movie about a jail-break. Is that about right?

(The boys nod and smile with false modesty.)

Like I said. Quite a play. So tell me, gentlemen. What inspired you to create this epic?

(The boys briefly consult, and tacitly decide ANDREW should be the spokesman. He rises. He pauses. He paces like a trial lawyer. He takes a deep breath and turns to REGINALD.)

ANDREW. I had a vision.

WILLIAM. We had a vision.

ANDREW. A vision...of a story.

WILLIAM. A story about struggle.

ANDREW. About men. About people.

WILLIAM. About people in crisis.

ANDREW. People in need of direction.

WILLIAM. I saw some people...

ANDREW. Schemers, dreamers, men who need plans...

WILLIAM. ...and then I...

ANDREW. ...men with hearts, men with souls...

WILLIAM. ...and then I...

ANDREW. Men! Who have passion...

WILLIAM. ...and then I...

ANDREW. *Manly* passion...

REGINALD. Wait just a minute, Mr. Davis. I think your friend is trying to say something. And then you what, Mr. Roberts?

(WILLIAM is stunned. He shakes his head, confused.)

REGINALD. And then you what?

WILLIAM. And then I...what?

REGINALD. Come on, son. Then you what?

WILLIAM. And then I?

REGINALD. And then you?

WILLIAM. *(After a beat:)* Mamet?

(ANDREW approves of this response, and pumps his fist and maybe even mouths the word "yes.")

REGINALD. Ah ha. *(Leans in:)* I think I see what's going on here. Gentlemen, it's quite clear you are both excited at the prospect of Mr. Mamet potentially viewing your play. Unfortunately, I think the anticipation has gotten the better of you. I'm afraid you two have been Mametized.

WILLIAM. Mamet-Ized?

REGINALD. Yes. Mametized. The con artists, the repetition, the lack of substantial roles for women, the swearing...you've overloaded on your hero's work so much that you can only communicate in cheap imitations of David Mamet.

ANDREW. Mamet!

WILLIAM. Fucking Mamet!

ANDREW. Fucking David Mamet!!

WILLIAM. David Fucking Mamet!!

ANDREW. *David Mamet!! Fucking!!*

REGINALD. Guys...

WILLIAM. *(Correcting ANDREW:)* Fucking David Fucking Mamet.

REGINALD. Gentlemen, please—

(There is a knock on the door.)

Come in.

(ALLISON pokes her head in the door.)

Yes, Allison?

ALLISON. Mr. Kemp...

REGINALD. Yes?

ALLISON. Is everything okay?

REGINALD. Yes, everything's fine.

ALLISON. Would you...?

(She motions to the boys with her head.)

REGINALD. Would I what?

ALLISON. Do you want me...to...

REGINALD. What is it, Allison?

ALLISON. *(Loudly:)* Would you like me to call security?

REGINALD. No. No thank you, Allison. That won't be necessary. I've...seen this sort of thing before. Thank you.

ALLISON. Sorry to interrupt.

(She leaves.)

WILLIAM. She's pretty.

ANDREW. She's okay.

WILLIAM. She has something.

ANDREW. She's okay, though.

WILLIAM. But she has something.

ANDREW. She has something.

WILLIAM. She's fucking pretty, though.

ANDREW. She fucking has something.

(They nod in agreement.)

(Beat, as they both look at REGINALD.)

REGINALD. You know, I can't help noticing that in both your script and real life, you two swear a lot.

ANDREW. Yes!

WILLIAM. Swearing!

ANDREW. Shit!

WILLIAM. Cocksucker!

REGINALD. Yes. But you see, Mr. Mamet's characters don't swear so much in his recent work. Sometimes they don't swear at all.

WILLIAM. *(After a beat:)* Cocksucker?

REGINALD. No.

(The boys are confused.)

See, Mr. Mamet discovered that swearing is often a superficial way of conveying character. As he grew as an artist, he became more sparing in his use of profanity, understanding that its value as a tool for shock is diminished when characters use it simply to maintain a cadence. He...

(REGINALD notices that he has completely lost WILLIAM and ANDREW. He sighs deeply.)

Shit.

WILLIAM. Shit!

ANDREW. Mamet!

WILLIAM. Hel-LO!

REGINALD. Right. Now look... (*Flipping through the script:*) ...here's another example...this Lester character. Now Lester is the only African-American in the play, and seems to be a pretty shady person...

WILLIAM. Lester is...

ANDREW. ...Lester is a con man.

WILLIAM. A con *artist*.

ANDREW. A storyteller.

WILLIAM. A storytelling artist.

ANDREW. A black Garrison Keillor.

REGINALD. Look, guys...every time Lester appears, the other characters start using the N-word, and I have to tell you I find that offensive. Mamet's characters may sometimes be racist, but that racism usually conceals deeper wounds. Secondly, Lester is a walking stereotype. He wears a leather hat, he talks in dialect—

(REGINALD flips a few pages.)

—he even drives a Cadillac. Gentlemen, while Mr. Mamet does sometimes utilize stereotypes, it's never in such a thoughtless and gratuitous manner. And finally (*Leaning in:*) —there's no such thing as "a black Garrison Keillor." That's like saying "a straight Harvey Fierstein."

(REGINALD leans back, takes a breath. As he does this, ANDREW opens his briefcase. During REGINALD's next lines, ANDREW produces a metronome from his case and sets it on REGINALD's desk.)

Look, while I appreciate that we must all draw from our influences, I think you need more focus, more originality. Maybe this experience will...

(ANDREW starts the metronome.)

...maybe...what the hell is that?

(ANDREW's and WILLIAM's next few lines are spoken in deliberate rhythm.)

ANDREW. A metronome.

WILLIAM. For rhythm.

ANDREW. For cadence.

WILLIAM. For feeling the beat.

REGINALD. Gentlemen...

ANDREW. The flow, the feeling...

WILLIAM. The passion!

REGINALD. Guys...

ANDREW. The flame!

WILLIAM. Cock-sucker!!

REGINALD. TURN THAT THING OFF!!

(He lunges and stops the metronome.)

God...

ANDREW. *(Helpfully:)* Dammit?

REGINALD. *(Screaming:)* SHUT UP! Will you two just shut the hell up for one minute!

ALLISON. *(Bursting through the door:)* Mr. Kemp! Mr. Kemp, are you all right?

ANDREW. *(To ALLISON:)* You. Are. Pretty.

ALLISON. *(Back at him:)* I. Have. Mace.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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