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BANGING ANN COULTER
by Michael Elyanow

Cast of Characters

FIRST BANGER, a big guy, probably White

SECOND BANGER, a smaller guy, probably African-American

THIRD BANGER, a smaller woman, probably Asian-American

FOURTH BANGER, a bigger woman, probably with tattoos or piercings

ANN COULTER, a hideous-looking beast

The cast is all in their thirties. Preferably multi-cultural in terms of ethnicities, cuz that's how to roll.

Setting

The play takes place on an empty stage. Ability for projection of the footnotes is a necessity.

Production Notes

When reading this play, you will come across footnotes.^(A) As such, when a footnote is read, a corresponding projection appears on stage. In most instances when a footnote appears, the actors should take a beat in order to give the audience enough time to read the footnote—or, another actor can be assigned to read them aloud. It's up to the director to find out what rhythm works best. How the projection appears (i.e., on a pull-down screen like the ones used in classrooms...or a painted wall...or LCD projections) is up to the director and/or designers as well. Also note that the footnotes can be projected creatively (for example, in footnote #3, the director can choose to project half the sentence first, followed by a projection of the rest of the sentence next).

A) Like this.

BANGING ANN COULTER

by Michael Elyanow

(Empty stage—though a big poster of Ann Coulter in the background. might be nice. A projection reads: Banging Ann Coulter. 1st BANGER [a man] enters.)

FIRST BANGER. Man, what a day! I am exhausted! We just finished. Me and Ann. Ann Coulter.⁽¹⁾ Yes, the liberal-hating author of *Slander* and *Treason* and *If Democrats Had Any Brains They'd Be Republicans*. Yeah, the one who said that Jews need to be perfected.⁽²⁾ And that we need to physically intimidate John Walker Lindh—remember him?—in order to make liberals realize that they can be killed, too.⁽³⁾ Anyway, she's sleeping in the other room. Don't want to wake her. So. Shh.

(1ST BANGER rocks on his heels.⁽⁴⁾ Yawns.⁽⁵⁾)

Bet you wanna know how she was. Ann Coulter. Traaaain wreck. And tiring. So tiring! More tiring than having to get up at the crack of dawn to set up for her book signing at the Barnes & Noble which is where I'm assistant manager, which is where we met, which is where the bathroom is that we first started doing it in before she said *let's go some place quiet, I know of a theatre space nearby*. Now I'm not saying I'm an expert at sex. I mean, who here is?⁽⁶⁾

(2ND BANGER [also a man] starts crossing the stage. Stops.)

But the whole thing was just so...tragic. Sad, y'know? Just one of those awkward sexual encounters where you know the other per-

PROJECTIONS

1) The conservative syndicated columnist.

2) CNBC's *The Big Idea*
—10/08/07

3) *NY Observer*
—1/30/02

4) The playwright would like everyone to know that he is not a misogynist... even though he is gay. The playwright has a deep respect for all women. Except Ann Coulter.

5) *Banging Ann Coulter: A Play With Copious Footnotes.*

6) Third row, center seat: **NO**, you're not.

son's totally into you and having a great time but you're so completely un-into them and you feel so bad about it that you just keep banging away out of pity.

SECOND BANGER. Ann Coulter?

FIRST BANGER. Ann Coulter.

SECOND BANGER. Mm.

FIRST BANGER. You, too?

SECOND BANGER. Alas.

FIRST BANGER. How was she?

SECOND BANGER. I'm getting chairs. Banging Ann Coulter stories need chairs.

(2ND BANGER exits.⁽⁷⁾ 1ST BANGER smiles as 3RD BANGER [a woman] crosses.)

THIRD BANGER. What're you doing?

FIRST BANGER. Waiting for my friend to get chairs.

THIRD BANGER. What, did somebody bang Ann Coulter?

SECOND BANGER. *(Returning with chairs:)* I did.

THIRD BANGER. You, too?

(3RD BANGER catches a chair as it is thrown in from the wings. They sit.⁽⁸⁾)

THIRD BANGER. So...

FIRST BANGER. Tell us.

THIRD BANGER. Tell us everything.

SECOND BANGER. Well.

7) "My only regret with Timothy McVeigh is he did not go to the *New York Times* building."

—*The New York Observer*,
08/26/02

8) *Banging Ann Coulter: A Play With Blah Blah Blah.*

FIRST & THIRD BANGER. Well?

SECOND BANGER. You know how it starts.

FIRST & THIRD BANGER. Mmm.

SECOND BANGER. You pick up Ann Coulter at a fundraiser.

FIRST BANGER. Or a book signing.

THIRD BANGER. Or a dyke bar.

SECOND BANGER. You make a little conversation.

FIRST BANGER. She says something suggestive.

SECOND BANGER. Next thing you know...

THIRD BANGER. Dido's blasting on the speakers and she's got you pinned up against the jukebox with her tongue down your throat, hiking your skirt up, telling you *just relax, baby, relax and let the jukebox lights heat up your sweet, sweet ass.*

SECOND BANGER. And then she yells, stop!

THIRD BANGER. Stop! Just like that.

SECOND BANGER. You say what?

THIRD BANGER. What is it, Ann?

FIRST BANGER. Ann Coulter.

SECOND BANGER. Is it upsetting you that, as you say, political debate is impossible in America because liberals are calling names while conservatives are trying to make arguments?⁽⁹⁾

FIRST BANGER. (*All turn to projections, then:*) No, she says. That's not it.

9) "Whore"

—on activist
Patricia Duff
(salon.com,
11/16/00)

"Retarded"

—on American
journalists
(*NY Observer*,
8/21/01)

"Gaudy white trash"

—on Tipper Gore
(*Washington
Times*,
08/07/00)

"Sneaky &
backstabbing"

—on Jimmy
Carter
(*Treason*, pg. 15)

"A deeply ridiculous
figure"

—on Gloria
Steinheim
(*Slander*, pg. 37)

"Sexy"

—on Dick Cheney
(*NY Observer*,
08/26/02)

SECOND BANGER. Is it because liberals really are, as you say, deceiving the American people with grotesque lies and misleading quotes taken out of context?⁽¹⁰⁾

FIRST BANGER. (*All turn to projection again, then:*) That's not it, either.

THIRD BANGER. Then what, Ann?

FIRST BANGER. What?

SECOND BANGER. And that's when she pulls back. Takes a deep breath. Looks you square in the eyes with tears forming in her own.

THIRD BANGER. You're thinking, this is it. Ann Coulter is finally going to be vulnerable. Human. She parts her lips as if to speak.

FIRST BANGER. You lean in. And Ann Coulter says:

ALL THREE. Eh, fuckit. Let's just bang.

(A hideous woman—equal parts human, witch, and swamp thing—enters.)

ANN COULTER. Okay, that is it! I've had enough!

ALL THREE. Ann Coulter!

ANN COULTER. This is insulting and most assuredly libelous. This— (*Points to her body.*) —isn't isn't even me! I work out. I eat right. I am a shapely, thin woman with gorgeous blonde tresses. Could the stage manager please show these folks a picture of me?⁽¹¹⁾ Ha, ha. Very funny. Seriously, show them the real me.⁽¹²⁾ Okay, you're just going to have to take my word on it. This isn't me. Not in ap-

10) "In the entire *New York Times* archives... there are 109 items using the phrase "far right wing..."

—*Slander*, pg. 15.

"...deadlocked at a game apiece... the Magic trailed deep into the fourth quarter. Then Nick Anderson hit a 3-pointer from the far right wing."

—Sportswriter Harvey Araton in *The New York Times*, 06/04/95

11) [a picture of an orangutan.]

12) [a picture of The Devil.]

pearance, and certainly not in the aforementioned sexual promiscuity.

FIRST BANGER. But aren't you the one who said *I go out every night, I meet a guy and have sex with him?*⁽¹³⁾

13) CNBC's *Rivera Live*
—06/07/00

ANN COULTER. No, that's not what I—

SECOND BANGER. Come on, you said it. "I have sex every night."

THIRD BANGER. Not just with guys.

ANN COULTER. No, I—

THIRD BANGER. Cuz we banged, Ann Coulter, we banged.

ANN COULTER. I was speaking hypothetically about morality in the Clinton era. My full quote was *Let's say I go out every night, I meet a guy and have sex with him. Good for me. I'm not married.* See? I was saying that as a single girl it's my right to go out and have sex every night. It was meant to be ironic.

ALL THREE. Ohhh...

ANN COULTER. You liberals have no sense of humor.⁽¹⁴⁾ Okay, that is it! Whoever's writing this piece clearly has it in for me.⁽¹⁵⁾ (*Reads projection.*) Please! People are more turned off by your smug and not particularly funny agenda to make me look like a hypocrite than if I actually were a hypocrite.⁽¹⁶⁾

14) [the picture of The Devil.]

15) **hyp•o•crite** (*noun*): a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue.

(4TH BANGER [*another woman*] enters carrying a chair.)

16) Agenda? **WHAT AGENDA?!**

FORTH BANGER. Man, what a night! I am exhausted!

THIRD BANGER. Point well taken, Ann Coulter.

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

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A BLOOMING OF IVY
by Garry Williams

Cast of Characters

IVY TAYLOR

GEORGE THOMAS

Acknowledgments

A Blooming of Ivy was produced in the 2003 Ensemble Studio Theatre Marathon in New York City. It was directed by Richmond Hoxie, with the following cast:

IVY.....Phyllis Somerville
GEORGE.....James Rebhorn

Dedicated to Harold and Nelle Everitt, the original George and Ivy.

A BLOOMING OF IVY

by Garry Williams

(Lights up.)

(The kitchen of an old but well-kept farmhouse.)

(The back door opens and in steps IVY TAYLOR, a fit, earthy woman in her late-50s. She wears a tractor cap, one-piece coveralls and knee-high rubber work boots. She takes off the hat and hangs it on a peg, then turns around in the doorway and uses the baseplate to pry off the boots. Without even bending over, she has them off and placed side by side on a small rug. Then she unzips the coveralls and easily steps out of them. They go on a peg next to the hat. All this is done with the ease of endless repetition.)

(Now in soft jeans and cotton work shirt, shoeless, she pads to the sink. Grabbing a cup and filling it with water, she punches the microwave buttons and starts the cup heating. This is all done in one smooth motion, could indeed be done in her sleep.)

(While she waits for the cup to heat, we see her face in repose. She has been a beautiful woman in her day, and her day is not yet done. She has the peaceful beauty of so many farm women, but hers is a bit more weathered, a few more days of sun and wind than most.)

(Then the phone rings.)

IVY. Hello? Hi, Heather, I was just gonna call you! Yeah, I have the coffee going now. How's that grandbaby of mine? He does? Well, put him on! *(She brightens.)* Hi, Jake, how are you today? Uh-huh. Well, tell Big Bunny Grandma says hi. You what? You went poopie in your potty! What a big guy you are, Grandma's so proud of you! Okay, Jakie, I love you. Bye-bye, I love you.

(Her voice catches ever so slightly. She keeps her bright smile, but dabs quickly at a tear in her eye.)

Hi. Did he really use the potty? Wow. Where does the time go? You guys should come for a visit, you really should. Mike wouldn't mind you two coming for a week or so, would he? It's springtime, Heather, Jake would just love it back here right now. Everything's

blooming and it's getting so warm and pretty. Well, I'm plowing and planting, but he's old enough to go on the tractor with me. Why don't you come back for a week. Just think about it.

(There's a momentary pause.)

Heather? Oh, damn, hang on a minute, it's that call waiting Suzy got for me. I think I'm supposed to push the button. If we get cut off, I'll call you back.

(She pushes the hang-up button.)

Hello? Hi, Suze. Listen, can I call you back, I've got Heather on some other line somewhere. You okay? Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Well, you know, when you date a guy like that... I'm not gonna lecture you, sweetie, but I told you last time, the man's an ass. Well, I know, but when you date an ass, don't think it's a news flash every time he acts like one. Okay. I love you, honey. I'll call you tonight.

(She tentatively pushes the button again.)

Heather? Well, whatayaknow, it works. Oh, Suzy got it for me. It drives her nuts how much I'm on the phone.

(We hear the sound of a car driving up in the driveway. IVY pulls the kitchen curtain back and peers out.)

(Into phone:) Well. George Thomas just drove up, I wonder what he wants. Oh, he's doing all right, I guess. Kind of keeping to himself. Probably wants to go together on some seed or something. Okay, I'll call you later. Give Jakie a big squeeze for me, okay? And think about coming. Love you.

(She hangs up the phone, goes to the microwave and pulls out her cup. She then fills another and starts it heating.)

(A knock on the back door. IVY runs a hand quickly through her hair and opens the door to reveal GEORGE THOMAS, a farmer about her own age. He is dressed casually enough—jeans and a work-shirt—but has a neat, almost ironed look to him. He's a handsome man, a distinguished gray cast to his hair, with the ruddy complexion of a man who's lived most of his life outdoors. He smiles almost sheepishly at her.)

GEORGE. Ivy. How you doin'?

IVY. Fine, George, just fine. Come on in, I've got a cup of coffee going for you.

GEORGE. Saw me comin', did you?

IVY. Sure did.

GEORGE. This isn't a bad time?

IVY. Not at all. Come on in.

(He walks in rather awkwardly, almost as if afraid he'll knock something over. IVY goes to the microwave, pulls out GEORGE's cup.)

IVY. So, what's on your mind, George?

GEORGE. *(A small chuckle:)* You never did waste much time getting down to business.

(She brings over the cups and jar of coffee and sits at the kitchen table.)

IVY. What kind of business you got in mind? Wanta go in on some seed?

GEORGE. Not exactly, Ivy.

(He still stands awkwardly.)

IVY. Well, whatever it is, you can talk about it sitting down, can't you?

GEORGE. About as easy, I guess.

(He pulls out a chair and sits. There is a long silence while IVY waits for him to speak his piece. He can only look at the table, tracing small figures on the shiny surface.)

IVY. George?

GEORGE. Hell, Ivy, I guess I can't even say it.

IVY. Say what?

GEORGE. This.

(And he leans quickly into a kiss. It's a fervent one that brings them both to their feet, GEORGE in passion, IVY in complete and total surprise. In rising, she knocks her chair loudly to the floor. BLAM!)

(This breaks the moment. IVY pulls her face back and looks at him in breathless surprise.)

IVY. *(Almost a whisper:)* George...what the...?

GEORGE. *(At the same time:)* Ivy, I...

(And the phone rings. IVY lets loose a bloodcurdling scream, scaring GEORGE halfway across the room. He grabs his chest.)

GEORGE. Holy cow, Ivy!

IVY. It's the, uh...the phone.

GEORGE. Yeah, I guessed that.

(IVY reaches for the phone.)

IVY. Hello? *(A big fake smile:)* Hi, Heather, what a surprise!

(GEORGE starts to skulk to the door, but IVY waves him back.)

It's Heather, my oldest.

(GEORGE nods.)

You'll never guess who's here, honey. George Thomas. Uh-huh. Well, he came over here on some...business.

(GEORGE finally just puts his head down and starts for the door again. IVY gestures to him, but he keeps on going.)

Heather, I'm gonna have to call you back.

(She plops the phone in its cradle.)

George Thomas...

(He freezes in the doorway, not turning to face her.)

What was that?

(He remains motionless.)

George, I'm going to be running into you on the street for the rest of our lives. Now, what was that?

GEORGE. *(Turning:)* The stupidest thing I ever did.

IVY. Then, why'd you do it?

(GEORGE tries to get something out, but it's not coming. Finally--)

GEORGE. Can we sit down?

IVY. I don't know how good an idea that is.

(GEORGE stands there awkwardly.)

GEORGE. It's...it's something I've wanted to do since we were fifteen years old.

(This takes a second for her to digest.)

IVY. We'd better sit down.

(They start to sit. GEORGE bobs up and down a bit, trying to be a gentleman and let IVY sit first. But IVY, quite aware of what happened last time they sat, is doing a good deal of bobbing herself. It makes for a pretty embarrassing moment until--)

(The phone rings.)

(And IVY screams again.)

(GEORGE bolts from his chair, once again clutching his chest.)

GEORGE. Holy Toledo, Ivy! You do that every time the phone rings?

IVY. *(Pointing:)* You. Sit.

(She goes to the phone.)

Hello? *(Through her teeth:)* Hello, Heather. Yes, I'm talking business. Yes, I'll call you when I'm done.

(She hangs up, looks intently at GEORGE.)

You've wanted to do that since we were fifteen?

(GEORGE nods.)

But you were with Madeline since we were fifteen.

GEORGE. That's why I never did it.

IVY. But all these years. And I never even knew.

GEORGE. I never wanted you to know, Ivy. I was in love with Maddie.

IVY. I know that, George.

GEORGE. I'm *still* in love with her.

IVY. I know that, too.

GEORGE. I miss her so bad. Sometimes I think I'm gonna bust right open, I miss her so bad.

(IVY now has the courage to go sit by him. She even reaches a hand out to pat one of his.)

IVY. I know.

GEORGE. Does it get any easier with time?

(IVY has to think a moment.)

IVY. Yeah, it does. It softens, sort of. There's still that empty place inside you, but the edges aren't so sharp. You can move without it jabbing into you. You know what I mean?

GEORGE. Not yet, I guess.

IVY. You will.

(She gives his hand one more pat. Then he stands as if to walk off this mood.)

GEORGE. Ivy, how have you stayed single all these years?

IVY. Oh, I don't know. The girls were still home. And I had the farming. That kept me pretty busy.

GEORGE. I'm not talking about *busy*.

IVY. You're not?

GEORGE. No. Hell, *I've* been busy. I'm talking... 'bout...

IVY. What?

GEORGE. Didn't you ever, you know, want a man?

IVY. Oh, that. I guess I just didn't think about it much.

GEORGE. How could you not think about it? I mean, after all those years of makin' love two or three times a day, how do you just quit thinking about it?

IVY. Two or three times a day?

GEORGE. Okay, so you and John were maybe more, but still...

IVY. Two or three times a day?

GEORGE. What? Is that a lot or a little? What?

IVY. Two or three times a *day*?

GEORGE. Well, she liked morning and I liked night, so what could we do?

IVY. What's wrong with afternoon?

GEORGE. Oh, we both liked afternoon.

(IVY chews on this a second, greatly amused.)

IVY. No wonder you two were late for everything! I just figured she was a slow dresser.

GEORGE. No, she never had that problem.

IVY. I can see why! Enough practice, you can get quick at anything.

GEORGE. But how'd you do it? It's been twenty years John's been gone.

(A look of wonder passes briefly across her face.)

IVY. My God, it has, hasn't it.

(She stands and walks slowly to the window.)

Twenty years this spring. He'd be sixty now, isn't that odd? I can't even picture him sixty.

GEORGE. I can't picture *me* sixty.

IVY. *(With a smile:)* Oh, but you've done it well, George. He wouldn't have done it well. It would have made him mad to be sixty. He'da thought it unfair somehow.

(She cocks her head toward the front yard.)

I had to make him plant those pines out there, so they'd make a windbreak someday. He looked at me like I was crazy and said, "They won't be big enough to do any good for twenty years." It

was like he couldn't imagine twenty years passing. Well, it's passed, I guess, and damned if I don't have a windbreak out there. Sometimes I think he died just so he wouldn't have to get old. Sometimes I think I'm a little mad about that.

(There is a long silence while she stares out at the pine trees and her memories. GEORGE walks slowly up behind her and places two tentative hands on her shoulders. She tenses for a moment, then seems to relax into the touch.)

GEORGE. For the last year, I've woken up every morning mad. Mad that my Madeline is gone. Mad that I'm alone. Hell, mad that the paper is fifteen minutes later than it used to be. But today I woke up and looked around and I realized—hey, I'm not mad anymore, why aren't I mad? And I couldn't figure it out for a minute. Then I heard it, and I knew why.

IVY. What'd you hear?

GEORGE. Your tractor.

IVY. *(Turning with a smile:)* My tractor?

GEORGE. Yeah. I could hear it through the window. I rolled over and looked out and there you were, up on that tractor in your coveralls and cap...and my God you were beautiful.

IVY. *(Laughing:)* Oh, yeah, I've seen that outfit in Vogue a million times.

GEORGE. I don't care about Vogue, Ivy. I care about you. I've cared about you as long as I can remember.

(There is a long moment.)

IVY. George, I...

GEORGE. *(Putting his finger to her lips:)* Don't tell me somethin' now, Ivy, somethin' made up and nervous, somethin' surprised and on the spot. You don't have to tell me somethin' right now. I guess I just came over to thank you for bein' on your tractor this first morning of spring.

(He starts to go, then turns.)

And if you...should ever want to see how pretty your farm looks

from my bedroom window in the morning...

(He shrugs, smiles and turns to go.)

IVY. *(Quietly:)* George...?

(He turns back to her.)

I can't let you leave thinking that's a possibility.

GEORGE. Why isn't it?

IVY. I'm almost sixty myself, George. I've been a widow twenty years. I'm much too set in my ways to get married.

GEORGE. Who's talking marriage?

(She gives a surprised laugh.)

IVY. George Thomas!

GEORGE. What? Hell, Ivy, I'd marry you tomorrow if I thought you'd do it. But I know you better than that.

IVY. *(Greatly amused:)* You talking about an *affair*? You came over here to ask me to have an affair with you?

GEORGE. If that's what you want to call it, well, yeah, I guess that's what I came over here to ask you.

(IVY throws her head back and guffaws. GEORGE can't help but smile.)

Why is that so funny?

IVY. *(Still laughing:)* I don't know. I don't have the slightest idea, George! Oh, Lordy!

(And now she's really going at it. She's nearly doubled over with it. GEORGE, far from insulted, is enjoying her laughter immensely.)

GEORGE. Well, damn, Ivy, let's just start now.

(And he makes a move to unbutton his shirt, knowing full well the impact it will have. Sure enough, she howls out a new burst. GEORGE stands there shaking his head, a warm, loving smile on his face.)

GEORGE. *(Quietly:)* What a woman you are.

(Slowly IVY gets herself together. She finds a Kleenex and sits, dabbing at her eyes. She finally finds her voice.)

IVY. Me and my tractor cap, we turned you on, huh?

(GEORGE looks at her a long moment, serious now.)

GEORGE. It's what's under the cap, Ivy. The things you're capable of. John died so, by God, you learned to farm the place. Raised your girls. Kept it all together. Made it look easy.

IVY. Hardly that.

GEORGE. So maybe it's time you did something for yourself.

IVY. Like go to bed with you?

GEORGE. Why not? We'd be good together.

IVY. George, if you're just looking for...

GEORGE. I've had offers.

(IVY blinks a moment on that one.)

IVY. You have?

GEORGE. *(Laughing:)* Sure.

IVY. Who?

GEORGE. Ivy...

IVY. *(Thinks a moment:)* I bet it was Sarah Hodges. She's always wiggling around, hanging on every word you say. You don't have to tell me, but I know it was her. I've seen the way she watches you.

(She waits a moment, but GEORGE is mum.)

Or Phoebe Masters. Yeah, Phoebe Masters. I bet it was Phoebe Masters and her little fancy jogging suits. You don't have to tell me, but I bet it was Phoebe Masters.

(GEORGE just grins warmly at her.)

Yep. Her or Sarah, one or the other. *(Then quickly:)* Did you say "offer" or "offerzz"?

(She rolls her eyes.)

God, listen to me, you'd think I was jealous or something.

(Still he smiles.)

George, you could have a...you know, with any number of women in this town, why do you want dusty old me in my coveralls and tractor cap?

GEORGE. Because you're *you*, Ivy. Because you can wear those things and still be you.

IVY. But I'm...I'm a widowed old farmer, George!

GEORGE. What am I?

(This question hangs heavy in the air between them. IVY finally breaks away and walks to the window again. GEORGE allows her her time.)

IVY. I didn't realize how much I needed John until he was gone. It was a complete surprise to me. I knew I loved him, of course, but I didn't realize I *needed* him. For so *much*. And on top of the grief was this incredible fear. Of everything. It was like everything was new and dangerous and unexplored. I had to learn it all over again before that fear finally began to die away.

(She turns to look at GEORGE.)

And I swore to myself, after all the fear was gone, that I'd never, *never* need anyone again the way I'd needed John.

GEORGE. I'm not asking you to need me. Just enjoy me.

(IVY looks at him for a long time. Finally she speaks, almost to herself.)

IVY. That's one thing I didn't relearn, how to enjoy a man. Some of that fear might just still be there.

(GEORGE grins his loving grin at her.)

GEORGE. When Maddie and I got married, we were both scared to death. I was in the service and we were driving out to San Diego. It took four days to get there. Well, each night at the hotels, we got a little bit closer and a little bit closer, but we couldn't seem to do it, you know? We'd laugh and promise each other, "When we get to

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FIGHT DREAMS
by Alison Weiss

Cast of Characters

BRADLEY, 20s–30s, sensitive, devoted and whiney.

DINAH, 20s–30s, neurotic and pushed to her limit.

DR. WERMAN, 30s–50s, intellectual, caring and businesslike. Could be made into male role.

PHARMACIST, any age, lazy and jaded.

CUSTOMERS, non-speaking, all types, annoyed by a long wait in line at the pharmacy.

JULIO, 20s–30s, ridiculously handsome, powerful and fantastical. With a little creative staging and a moustache, Julio and Bradley could conceivably be played by the same actor.

Character Notes

The Pharmacist and Customers can be optional, non-speaking comedic roles. In one production of this play, the need for a Pharmacist and extras in the drug store scene was avoided by having Dinah and Bradley pantomime the exchange downstage. Alternatively, in an evening of short plays, the Pharmacist and Customers could be played by actors from other pieces.

Acknowledgments

Fight Dreams was presented in workshop at the Ensemble Studio Theatre's Intern Fest (India Cooper, Lab Director) in New York City in June of 2001. It was directed by Moira Squier with the following cast:

BRADLEY..... Mark Frankos
DINAH Gwendolyn Wilson
DR. WERMAN Michelle O'Connor
JULIO Christos Klapsis
PHARMACIST Laura Maxwell

Fight Dreams premiered as part of *Five by Five and One by Ives* (Sara Sessions and Alison Weiss, co-producers) at the HERE Arts Center in New York City in December of 2002. It was directed by Richard Harden with the following cast:

BRADLEY..... Roger Del Pozo
DINAH Alison Weiss
DR. WERMAN Sara Sessions
JULIO Christos Klapsis

FIGHT DREAMS

by Alison Weiss

(BRADLEY and DINAH are in bed together, snuggling and kissing.)

BRADLEY. God, I love you so much. I can't imagine life without you, Dinah.

DINAH. I love *you*, Bradley.

BRADLEY. Do you really love me?

DINAH. I do! (*They kiss.*) Mmmm.

BRADLEY. Pookie? Is something bothering you?

DINAH. (*Kisses him.*) What do you mean?

BRADLEY. You can't hide from me, love. You know how in synch we are... Look, just...tell me what's making my angel sad, and we'll work on it. We'll work on us.

DINAH. (*Totally fed up all of a sudden:*) I can't do this anymore.

BRADLEY. Oh come on now! You are the most precious, exquisite—

DINAH. I can't go on like this.

BRADLEY. Like what?

DINAH. IMAGINING YOU!

BRADLEY. *What?!*

DINAH. Ugh, this is pathetic. I can't even fantasize anymore! This is supposed to be my healthy fantasy life, and it's come to this!

BRADLEY. You're thinking too much again, honey.

DINAH. You don't fucking *exist*, Bradley. Hate to be over-analytical here, but it's one hell of a stumbling block in this relationship.

BRADLEY. I don't understand this. Everything was perfect a moment ago. I'm your *fantasy*, for chrissakes. I was doing all the right

things...

DINAH. Of *course* you were doing the right things, Bradley. I'm the one thinking them up!

BRADLEY. We were spooning...

DINAH. I was curled up on my side, alone. Look, there wouldn't even be enough room for you in this bed!

BRADLEY. Sure there is!

DINAH. Well, maybe if I move the Times (*Begins shuffling papers, books and teddy bears around the bed*). Oh what the hell am I doing?! I'm a mess! (*Tosses papers, cries.*)

BRADLEY. Maybe you're bored. Are you bored with me?

DINAH. I—I don't know. Maybe I just wish you could do things on your own. Like...I always wanted a man with a pulse. And maybe a working set of anatomical features strong enough to sustain human life.

BRADLEY. Good lord, do you even *hear* how demanding you are right now? Will you please just get out of your head, Dinah? I'm here for you!

DINAH. It's just not the same.

BRADLEY. Is it something I said?

DINAH. No, honey—you don't say anything I haven't created myself.

BRADLEY. Well to be honest, Dinah, it's starting to feel like...sometimes you deliberately have me say the wrong thing. Just to liven things up. Creating controversy, is that it?

DINAH. Oh God.

BRADLEY. You know, I'm supposed to be your fantasy here. And you're making me the Bad Guy! How do you think that makes me *feel*?

DINAH. I think you might be right. I've got to tell Dr. Werman about this.

BRADLEY. Dinah, no! You *cannot* tell Dr. Werman about our

problems.

DINAH. (*Putting on shoes and preparing herself to leave:*) Bradley, I cannot go on battling with you over your existence or lack of existence every time I try to enjoy myself in bed!

BRADLEY. (*Panicking:*) You know what those doctors do to us, don't you? They kill us. Kill us! Maybe with hours of therapy. Maybe with a pill. (*Mimicking doctors:*) Bradley's not healthy. Bradley's not "Real."

DINAH. (*Putting a raincoat over her nightgown:*) Doctor Werman is a brilliant woman.

BRADLEY. (*Still mimicking:*) Bradley doesn't actually "Exist."

DINAH. (*Picking up purse, heading out:*) Do you hear yourself? Do you hear what that does to me?

BRADLEY. Fine, go! Go to her plush little Upper West Side home office! Stare down into the repeating patterns of her Persian carpet as you rattle off the list of *my* inadequacies!

(*Beat.*)

Dinah, is this really what you want? She'll take out her pen and her pad. You'll go to the drug store. The pharmacist will sneer at me. Oh, yes. Pharmacists can see us.

DINAH. Goodbye, Bradley. I wish it didn't have to be this way.

(*She crosses the stage to the office of Dr. Werman. DR. WERMAN enters with her pen and pad and sits down across from DINAH.*)

DR. WERMAN. So...you're telling me...you fantasize dysfunctional relationships.

(*BRADLEY crosses from bed to Werman's office; he sits beside DINAH.*)

BRADLEY. Honey, we're not dysfunctional! We've got a great situation here.

DINAH. Will you shut up! I never asked you to come.

BRADLEY. (*To DR. WERMAN:*) This is exactly—see this?! See this

sort of behavior?!

DR. WERMAN. (*She doesn't see BRADLEY.*) Dinah? Need a moment to think?

BRADLEY. Dinah please. We can fix this! Don't let her kill me off. Is it the sex? Is that it? If it's the sex, I can improve!

DINAH. (*To BRADLEY:*) Oh, of course the sex is fine, Bradley. Which one of us do you think actually *handles* the sex?

DR. WERMAN. Dinah, how are your sexual fantasies? I mean, have those taken a back seat to these—these “fight dreams,” we'll call them?

DINAH. (*To DR. WERMAN:*) Doctor, I—um—I think I handle that area pretty well. (*To BRADLEY:*) Myself.

BRADLEY. OH! So I get none of the credit, then, is that how it works? Dinah, I am sorry but this is ludicrous. I AM YOUR FANTASY! Where would this alleged sex life of yours be without *ME?*!

DINAH. (*To DR. WERMAN:*) But sometimes, Doctor, our most intimate moments—

DR. WERMAN. “Our” most intimate moments?

DINAH. Well, *my* most intimate moments, you know...

DR. WERMAN. Yes. I know.

BRADLEY. Oh, this is just rich. Hello! In bed Thursday morning? *My* creative work. Oh, and what about the futon after *Days of Our Lives*? You're telling me I had *nothing* to do with that concept?

DINAH. (*To DR. WERMAN:*) Sometimes, Doctor...those intimate moments are interrupted by a profound anger inside me that none of it is real, so why bother! Why bother imagining someone else so incredible it can only be a letdown to continue my own existence?

BRADLEY. Thanks for the gratitude.

DINAH. How is that useful in my life? What do I need this for?

DR. WERMAN. Dinah, in fact, a healthy fantasy life can be paramount to one's happiness.

BRADLEY. Yes!

DR. WERMAN. We've discussed this.

BRADLEY. You hear that?

DR. WERMAN. However, if you feel these depressing intrusions of conflict into your otherwise healthy sexual dream life are inhibiting your ability to function—

DINAH. Yes, Doctor. They are.

BRADLEY. How can you be so cold?

DR. WERMAN. Okey dokey. (*BRADLEY begins to tremble as DR. WERMAN jots down a prescription.*) I'm going to write you a little three-month supply here... (*Tears sheet off the pad and holds up the prescription.*) This has been shown to help many of my patients gain some extra... Focus. Still the same old you, just a lot more... Composed. (*Hands DINAH the piece of paper.*)

BRADLEY. (*Trembling:*) No warmth. No breath...

DINAH. (*She takes the prescription.*) Give me strength, doctor!

DR. WERMAN. Now, now. Same time next week.

(They shake hands, WERMAN exits. Lights fade on Werman's office. DINAH, with BRADLEY following, approaches a counter center-stage where a PHARMACIST appears, chewing gum and chatting on the phone. DINAH hands the PHARMACIST the prescription, then gets in line and waits. About five annoyed CUSTOMERS are ahead of her, impatient. PHARMACIST helps them with super-human slowness and "attitude" during the following exchange.)

BRADLEY. Dinah. You don't fool me. You chose Duane Reade on purpose. Look at this line! They'll take hours! You have time to change your mind!

DINAH. I just want to get you out of my head.

BRADLEY. Dinah, honey! Think...about us...about your feelings...about ME. Pookie? This is you...and ME.

DINAH. There is no US, there is no YOU, there is no Pookie!

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I AM NOT BATMAN.
by Marco Ramirez

Cast of Characters

A BOY

A DRUMMER

Acknowledgments

I am not Batman. premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays in March 2007. It was directed by Ian Frank with the following cast and staff:

A BOY	Phil Pickens
A DRUMMER.....	Zdenko Slobodnik
Scenic Designer.....	Paul Owen
Costume Designer.....	Susan Neason
Lighting Designer	Paul Werner
Sound Designer	Benjamin Marcum
Properties Designer.....	Doc Manning
Fight Director.....	Lee Look
Stage Managers.....	Michael D. Domue, Debra Anne Gasper
Production Assistant.....	Melissa Miller
Dramaturg.....	Joanna K. Donehower
Assistant Dramaturg.....	Diana Grisanti

I AM NOT BATMAN.

A SHORT PLAY FOR AN ACTOR AND A DRUMMER

by Marco Ramirez

(Sudden drumming, then quiet. Lights up on a BOY, maybe 7, maybe 27, wearing a hooded sweatshirt. He looks out directly before him, breathing nervously. A DRUMMER sits behind a drum set placed in the middle of the stage, in some kind of silhouette. The boy is excited, but never gets ahead of himself.)

BOY. It's the middle of the night and the sky is glowing like mad radioactive red. And if you squint you could maybe see the moon through a thick layer of cigarette smoke and airplane exhaust that covers the whole city, like a mosquito net that won't let the angels in.

(LIGHT SNARE DRUMMING.)

And if you look up high enough you could see me. Standing on the edge of a eighty-seven story building,—

(Thick steam shoots out of some pipes behind him.)

—And up there, a place for gargoyles and broken clock towers that have stayed still and dead for maybe like a hundred years— up there is *me*.

(DRUMS.)

And I'm freakin' *Batman*.

(CYMBAL.)

And I gots Bat-mobiles and Bat-a-rangs and freakin' Bat-caves like for real, and all it takes is a broom closet or a back room or a fire escape, and Danny's hand-me-down jeans are gone.

(BOOM.)

And my navy blue polo shirt?—

(—BOOM—)

—The-one-that-looks-kinda-good-on-me-but-has-that-hole-on-it-

near-the-butt-from-when-it-got-snagged-on-the-chain-link-fence-behind-Arturo's-but-it-isn't-even-a-big-deal-cause-I-tuck-that-part-in-and-it's-like-all-good?—

(—BOOM—)

—*that* blue polo shirt?—

(—BOOM—)

—It's gone too. And I get like, like transformation-al.

(BOOM. SNARE.)

And nobody pulls out a belt and whips Batman for talking back,—

(—SNARE—)

—Or for *not* talking back,—

(—SNARE, CRASH—)

And nobody calls Batman simple—

(—SNARE—)

—Or stupid—

(—SNARE—)

—Or skinny—

(—CYMBAL—)

—And *nobody* fires Batman's brother from the Eastern Taxi Company 'cause they was making cutbacks, neither, 'cause they got nothing but respect, and not like *afraid*-respect. Just like *respect*-respect. 'Cause nobody's afraid of you.

'Cause Batman doesn't mean nobody no harm.

(BOOM.)

Ever.

(SNARE, SNARE.)

'Cause all Batman really wants to do is save people and maybe pay Abuela's bills one day and die happy and maybe get like mad fa-

mous. For real.

...And get the Joker.

(DRUMS.)

Tonight, like most nights, I'm all alone. And I'm watching... And I'm waiting...

Like a eagle. Or like a—, no, yea, like a eagle.

(The DRUMS start low but constant, almost tribal.)

And my cape is flappin' in the wind ('cause it's freakin' long), and my pointy ears are on, and that mask that covers like half my face is on too, and I got like bulletproof stuff all in my chest so no one could hurt me and nobody—*nobody*—is gonna come between Batman,

(CYMBAL.)

and Justice.

(The SLOW KICKS continue, now there are SHORT hits randomly placed on the drum set. They somehow resemble city noises.)

From where I am I could hear everything.

(The DRUMS build, then STOP.)

Somewhere in the city there's a old lady picking Styrofoam left-overs up outta a trash can and she's putting a piece of sesame chicken someone spit out into her own mouth.

(SNARE.)

And somewhere there's a doctor with a whack haircut in a black lab coat trying to find a cure for the diseases that are gonna make us all extinct for real one day.

(SNARE. SNARE.)

And somewhere there's a man, a man in a janitor's uniform, stumbling home drunk and dizzy after spending half his paycheck on forty-ounce bottles of twist-off beer and the other half on a four-hour visit to some lady's house on a street where the lights have all been shot out by people who'd rather do what they do, in *this* city,

in the dark.

And half a block away from JanitorMan there's a group of good-for-nothings who don't know no better waiting to beat JanitorMan with rusted bicycle chains and imitation Louisville Sluggers, and if they don't find a cent on him—which they won't—they'll just pound at him till the muscles in their arms start burning, till there's no more teeth to crack out.

But they don't count on me.

(The BOY becomes proud, stands up straight.)

They don't count on no dark knight (with a stomach full of grocery store brand macaroni-and-cheese and cut up Vienna sausages),

'Cause they'd rather believe I don't exist,

(CYMBAL. The DRUMS start to build slowly again. The steam comes out thicker and thicker.)

And from eighty-seven stories up I could hear one of the good-for-nothings say "Gimmethecash" real fast (like that) just "Gimmethe-fuckingcash" and I see JanitorMan mumble something in drunk language and turn pale and from eighty-seven stories up I could hear his stomach trying to hurl its way out of his Dickies.

So I swoop down like mad fast and I'm like darkness. I'm like SWOOSH—

(—A LIGHT DRUMROLL—)

—And I throw a Bat-a-rang at the one naked lightbulb—

(—Light CYMBAL—)

—And they're all like "whoa-motherfucker-who-just-turned-out-the-lights?",

(Silence. The BOY breathes, re-enacting their fear; the largest and lowest CYMBAL builds slowly throughout this.)

"What's that over there?"—

—"What?"—

—"Gimme whatchou got old man"—

—“Did anybody hear that?!”—

—“Hear what? There ain’t nothing”—

—“No, really”—

—“There ain’t. No. Bat.”

(The CYMBAL reaches its height.)

But then—

(—A KICK on the drums as the boy suddenly springs into action—)

—One out of three good-for-nothings gets it to the head!

And number Two swings blindly into the dark cape before him but before his fist hits anything I grab a trash can lid and—

(—A CRASH on a CYMBAL—)

—right in the gut, and number One comes back with a jump-kick but I know judo-karate too so I’m like—

(—CRASH, happy from the response, he adds this part.)

—Twice—

(—CRASH—)

—but before I can do any more damage suddenly we all hear a CLIC--CLIC—

(--The DRUMMER’s TOMS finish, BOOM. The steam stops.)

And suddenly everything gets quiet.

(The steam clears.)

And the one good-for-nothing left standing grips a handgun and aims straight up, like he’s holding Jesus hostage, like he’s threatening maybe to blow a hole in the moon.

And the good-for-nothing who got it to the head who tried to jump-kick me and the other good-for-nothing who got it in the gut is both scrambling back away from the dark figure before him.

And the drunk man the JanitorMan is huddled in a corner, praying to Saint Anthony ’cause that’s the only one he could remember.

(HIT. HIT.)

And there's me,

(CYMBAL. HIT. HIT.)

Eyes glowing white, cape blowing softly in the wind.

(HIT. HIT.)

Bulletproof chest heaving. My heart beating right through it in a Morse code for "fuck with me, just once, come on, just try."

(HIT. HIT. HIT.)

And the one good-for-nothing left standing, the one with the handgun, he laughs, he lowers his arm, and he points it at me and gives the moon a break, and he aims it right between my pointy ears, like goalposts and he's special teams.

(The BOY stands, frozen, afraid.)

And JanitorMan is still calling Saint Anthony but he ain't pickin' up,

(Silence.)

And for a second it seems like...*maybe I'm gonna lose.*

(The BOY takes a breath. Sudden courage.)

Naw...

(—SNARE. The BOY mimes the fight.)

SHOO—SHOO! FUACATA!—

(—SNARE—)

—“Don't kill me mannn!!”—

(—CYMBAL—)

—SNAP!—

(—SNARE—)

—Wrist CRACK—

(—SNARE—)

—Neck—

(—*SNARE*—)

—SLASH!—

(—*CYMBAL*—)

—Skin--meets--acid—

(—*SNARE*—)

—“AHH!!”—

(—*SNARE.*)

And he's on the floor. And I'm standing over him. And I got the gun in MY hands now. And I hate guns, I hate holding 'em cause I'm Batman, and—*ASTERICKS*: Batman don't like guns cause his parents got iced by guns a long time ago—but for just a second, my eyes glow white, and I hold this thing, for I could speak to the good-for-nothing in a language he maybe understands,

(He aims the gun up at the sky.)

...CLIC--CLIC...

(The BASS DRUM.)

And the good-for-nothings become good-for-disappearing into whatever toxic-waste-chemical-sludge-shit-hole they crawled out of.

(A pause.)

And it's just me and JanitorMan.

And I pick him up.

And I wipe sweat and cheap perfume off his forehead.

And he begs me not to hurt him and I grab him tight by his JanitorMan shirt collar and I pull him to my face, and he's taller than me, but the cape helps, so he listens when I look him straight in the eyes and I say two words to him:

“Go home.”

And he does, checking behind his shoulder every ten feet.

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**THE MERCURY
AND THE MAGIC**

by Rolin Jones

Cast of Characters

JOE

MIKE

CAR

Setting

A roadside, Central New Jersey.

THE MERCURY AND THE MAGIC

by Rolin Jones

(We hear the sound of a dog barking. The sound of an owl. Crickets. JOE and MIKE are crouched roadside, looking straight ahead. They have long, disturbing tails. They are possums.)

JOE. I've been having a lot of thoughts lately, Mike.

MIKE. Anything you want to talk about?

JOE. Not really.

MIKE. You sure?

JOE. I'm sure.

MIKE. Fine. It's not healthy though, Joe. Keeping your thoughts inside. Not a healthy thing.

JOE. I think I have seasonal depression.

MIKE. Seasonal what?

JOE. Depression. The winds come through the trees and the leaves fall to the ground and lake ices over and a void opens up inside you... There's a void inside me, Mike.

MIKE. You don't have a void inside you, Joe.

JOE. Yes, I do.

MIKE. You don't have seasonal depression. You're a fucking possum. You eat garbage, you shit in the gutters, and when cars are really close and traveling at high speeds you cross in front of them. Don't be a pussy. Suck it up.

JOE. I'm having trouble justifying my existence.

MIKE. What the fuck's that supposed to mean?

JOE. I'm just saying. This life we got here. It ain't right, Mike.

MIKE. What ain't right about it?

JOE. It's like you said. All we do is eat garbage, shit in the gutters,

and run in front of cars.

MIKE. Sometimes we shit in a tool shed.

JOE. I'm not waking up every morning so's I can shit in a tool shed, Mike. I'm sorry if that upsets you, but me, I think I've gotten all I can out of that activity thank you very much.

(We hear the sound of a car in the distance.)

MIKE. Car's coming.

JOE. I mean, I'm going through something here, Mike.

MIKE. Car's coming, Joe.

(Car sound gets louder.)

JOE. I don't even know who I am anymore.

MIKE. Time to focus, Joe.

(Louder! Two headlights appear.)

JOE. I'm dead inside.

MIKE. JOE!

(JOE snaps to attention. He joins MIKE in making some godforsaken possum screech. An actor holding two flashlights ["the car"] runs across the stage. JOE and MIKE race out in front of it. The car swerves. Sound of skidding.)

CAR. *(As CAR exits:)* Motherfucckkkkeeeerrrrr!

MIKE. That's right bitch, this is my goddamn road! I OWN THIS SHIT!

(MIKE rolls on his back.)

MIKE. Suck my possum balls, whoo-hooo.

(MIKE gets up and joins JOE.)

MIKE. Any fucking cars wanna come through here, they gotta go through Mikey!

(He holds out a fist for JOE to "dap." But there's no "dap" from JOE.)

MIKE. Oh, it's like that now?

JOE. No.

MIKE. I see how it is.

JOE. I wish you did, Mike. I truly wish you did.

MIKE. You're beginning to piss me off.

*(They resume their crouching posture, looking straight ahead again.
We hear a dog bark.)*

JOE. Look at Fred over there.

MIKE. The dog?

JOE. Yeah. Now there's a life.

MIKE. You got to be fucking kidding me.

JOE. A little doggie door. Food bowl. Taking a walk out in the light of day. Taking photographs with the family.

MIKE. D.T.S.

JOE. D.T.S.?

MIKE. Dog taking a shit. You ever watch a dog take a shit with his owner.

(MIKE demonstrates.)

MIKE. All leashed up. His back all hunched up. His owner pulling out one of those blue bags. Where's the dignity I ask you?

JOE. They get to go on drives.

MIKE. So what?

JOE. Tell me you don't dream about that. Getting in the front seat, sitting in a warm lap, sticking your head out the window, the wind blowing back your jowls, all your regrets, the sheer terror of living, just flying off your face, falling away onto the open road.

MIKE. You want that life, Joe? Sniffing asses, licking your balls, playing fetch. What the fuck is fetch? Fred could play fetch till he fucking vomited. And then he'd eat the vomit, lick his balls and go

play catch again. You want to know why, Joe? Because Fred is fucking retarded. Dream about taking a drive. Fuck you. Possum don't need to take drives. Possums own the road.

(We hear the sound of an owl hooting.)

JOE. What about Karl?

MIKE. What ABOUT Karl?

JOE. Karl can fly. Karl owns the sky.

MIKE. Karl's an asshole.

JOE. He looks down on us. He's got a barn. You're jealous.

MIKE. Jealous? Who sees Mikey snatch a Twinkie outta the McGiver's garbage then thinks to himself it's a good idea to swoop down, dig his claws in Mikey's back and take me up...

JOE. Karl?

MIKE. Bit that asscracker right in the ankle before he even got me a foot off the ground. Try and take my Twinkie. SUCK MY DICK, KARL. YOU GOT THAT?!

(We hear Karl hoot.)

MIKE. Yeah, who's your fucking daddy?

(MIKE looks over at JOE.)

MIKE. What we got here, Joe? You shouldn't question it.

JOE. Well, that's what I'm doing, Mike. I'm asking the big questions. I'm engaging the universe.

MIKE. Engaging the universe? Seasonal depression? You're getting soft is what's going on here. You're disgracing yourself in front of your marsupial ancients.

JOE. You don't understand. You never will.

MIKE. Hmmm. Is that right?

(We hear the sound of a car in the distance.)

MIKE. I love that sound. Ain't it beautiful? In all that engaging of

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**MOMMY SAYS I'M PRETTY
ON THE INSIDES**

by Lucy Alibar

Cast of Characters

TZIPPORAH O'MALLY, our heroine. A sweet little girl with a big scar on her face. She wears a Chicago Bulls jersey.

DADDY, Tzipporah's big, trigger-happy, accidentally-castrated Southern Daddy

MOMMY, Tzipporah's little Jewish Mommy

PRECIOUS, Tzipporah's sweet, slutty little friend

BEEFCAKE, a giant, stupid, luscious football player

ROSASHARN, a bloodthirsty Southern girl who loves dairy products and hates Jews

SAUSAGE McBISCUIT, a big truck driver

Time

Confederate Memorial Day, right now.

Place

Flaming Cross, a little town deep in Georgia.

Acknowledgements

Mommy Says I'm Pretty on the Insides premiered in 2007 as a Williamstown Theatre Festival Workshop Production (Amanda Charlton, Artistic Associate) with the following cast and staff:

TZIPPORAH O'MALLEYEmma Rosenthal
PRECIOUS / ROSASHARN..... Kirsten Kollender
BEEFCAKE /
SAUSAGE McBISCUIT Jon O'Brien
DADDY Eric Schulman
MOMMY Chelsey Dunn
Director Zoe Aja Moore

This play is for Adam Maclean and Brian Maloney.

MOMMY SAYS I'M PRETTY ON THE INSIDES

A SOUTHERN ODYSSEY IN TEN MINUTES

by Lucy Alibar

(TZIPPORAH O'MALLEY skips rope.)

(We hear a clock ticking.)

(Flowers fall from the sky.)

(We hear nails, flying through the air. Breaking windows. Lodging themselves in wood. We see DADDY, a big Southern man, with his Nail-Em Up 2000 Nailgun, darting around the stage and shooting.)

TZIPPORAH. The day after an amateur mohel botched my Daddy's circumcision and scarred my family irreparably, our house was invaded by a Giant White Rat named Moby Dick. As soon as he was able to walk again, Daddy bought a Nail Em Up Two Thousand Nailgun and declared war on Moby Dick. Now Daddy builds birdhouses in my closet. At night, I can hear the click, click, click of his fingers on an empty nailgun. Today is Confederate Memorial Day and there are flowers everywhere. I am sixteen years old. I am at the Getting Place. I have a big red scar that cuts across my face, and it is my job to repair the world.

(3:14 PM. The Getting Place. TZIPPORAH skips rope.)

TZIPPORAH. After I was born, Mommy wanted a traditional Jewish home.

Daddy was circumcised.

All Mommy has to say about it is,

MOMMY. It was the mohel's second day on the job. Mistakes happen.

TZIPPORAH. When I try to ask any more she reaches for her bottle of Quaaludes and changes the subject to cancer.

Behind the First Baptist Church there's a clearing, covered in flow-

ers. It's called the Getting Place.

I am sixteen years old. I am at the Getting Place with Precious, who's my best friend, and Beefcake. Beefcake plays football.

Precious is wearing a sweater the color of egg yolks and a little gold crucifix. Precious looks so pretty in crucifixes. Precious looks so pretty in everything.

Mommy says I am pretty on the insides.

Precious says,

PRECIOUS. Tzipporah? Could you go hang out by the drainage ditch? Your face is messing with Beefcake's erection.

(3:30 PM. TZIPPORAH skips rope by the drainage ditch.)

TZIPPORAH. My face didn't always look like this. One day when I was nine Mommy and Daddy came home from Couple's Therapy angrier than usual.

DADDY. Go ahead and cry, Lilith! Cry! I'm glad the mohel did what he did! You let me in there just once in nine years—

(DADDY points at LITTLE TZIPPORAH.)

DADDY. —and look what comes crawling out!

TZIPPORAH. Mommy started crying. Between her ragged sobs, I heard "Walking Abortion" and "Waste of Chromosomes."

Time stopped.

The universe was still except for Mommy.

Mommy snatched up the Nail Em Up Two Thousand and pointed it straight at my face.

(MOMMY pulls the trigger.)

TZIPPORAH. Time unstuck and the universe came crashing back together!

The nail ripped through my forehead and continued, on to the wall, where Moby Dick, the Giant White Rat, had scuttled out to see what all the fuss was about.

(A GIANT SQUEAK.)

DADDY. Got him! Got him!

TZIPPORAH. I hadn't seen Daddy this happy since they released

Schindler's List on DVD.

DADDY. This is my house, Moby Dick! You hear that, Devil Woman? You can kill my Messiah and hack off my foreskin, but you can't turn me into trash, you Jesus-killing Goat Worshipper!

TZIPPORAH. Mommy apologized on the way to the emergency room.

MOMMY. Sometimes Mommy FEELS THINGS. Sometimes the only way to make Mommy's feelings go away is to watch someone bleed. So, thank you.

(MOMMY tries to touch TZIPPORAH's face, but flinches away.)

MOMMY. Who's Mommy's Pretty-On-The-Inside Princess?

TZIPPORAH. Mommy and I held hands and sang "Dayenu" while I got thirteen stitches across my forehead.

"Dayenu" means, "that would have been enough".

It's a Hebrew song about how God keeps giving and giving and giving, and just when we think he's given us enough—Dayenu—he gives us something even better.

Mommy says that before my scar, I was just an ordinary, homely little girl. But Mommy says now my face has character.

Dayenu!

Mommy says that being the only ethnic minorities in a town of war-hungry Visigoths can only make me a better writer.

MOMMY. Look what it did for Anne Frank.

TZIPPORAH. Dayenu!

Mommy is on a healing retreat this summer called Camp Tikkun.

Tikkun means repair.

Do you know?

When the Universe began, everything and everyone lived VERY CLOSE TOGETHER.

But after a while, everything and everyone being so close together made the Universe VERY UNCOMFORTABLE, and it SHATTERED!

Pieces of the Universe went EVERYWHERE!

(TZIPPORAH spans the UNIVERSE with her hands.)

And our job is to find these torn up pieces of the Universe and—

(TZIPPORAH pushes her hands together in front of her face.)

That's Tikkun. I asked Mommy if I could come with her to Camp Tikkun, and we could heal together, but Mommy said,

MOMMY. It's not the kind of healing you need. And frankly, Tzipporah, my eyes need a break.

TZIPPORAH. And do you know what? It's true? Of everyone in my family, sometimes I think I need healing the LEAST! Dayenu!

(5:12 PM. TZIPPORAH skips rope.)

TZIPPORAH. I won a poetry contest last year. This is what my award certificate says:

TZIPPORAH O'MALLEY
SECOND PLACE
DAUGHTERS OF THE CONFEDERACYAWARD
FOR POETIC EXCELLENCE

My poem was a haiku called "Gatorade." It goes:

*Hey, Michael Jordan
What does Gatorade have to
Do with basketball?*

I'd entered a lot of haiku about Michael Jordan in the contest, but "Gatorade" I guess was the strongest.

Who's a Waste of Chromosomes now? Who's a Walking Abortion now? Not me!

Oh, hi Rosasharn! Happy Memorial Day!

(ROSASHARN, a big girl who loves dairy products and hates Jews, tackles our heroine and wrestles her to the ground. Maybe she has TZIPPORAH in a headlock in her thighs. She's a mean, dirty fighter.)

ROSASHARN. Who's President of the 4-H Club?

TZIPPORAH. You are!

ROSASHARN. It's not my fault my Daddy left, right?

TZIPPORAH. It's not your fault your Daddy left.

ROSASHARN. Tell me I'm pretty!

TZIPPORAH. You're so pretty, Rosasharn! You're pretty and your dad probably left because he loved you so much he was worried he'd set you on fire or something.

ROSASHARN. Good. That's good. Thanks, Scarface. Happy Memorial Day.

(She lets TZIPPORAH go. She gives TZIPPORAH a flower and stomps off.)

(5:37 PM.)

TZIPPORAH. A BIG truck driver with a mullet and eczema pulls over.

(SAUSAGE MCBISCUIT reaches through his window and pulls TZIPPORAH up into his truck.)

TZIPPORAH. He tells me his real name is Scott, but—

SAUSAGE MCBISCUIT. The ladies like to call me Sausage McBiscuit.

When I was sixteen I went to Scout camp

I was a Weeblo even though I was sixteen because I wasn't good at knots

And one night as I lay on my bunk bed

The truth came crashing into me

That I was irreparably different from the other Weeblos

Because my heart was so strange and specific

so I snuck out of bed and ran twelve miles to the Mac-donalds and I hid in the bathroom

and they locked me in

and I built a fort outta surplus Sausage McBiscuits.

I stuck them together with mayonnaise.

And I lived there for two days until I started to eat the fort

and they found me and I was in the paper

and after that everyone called me Sausage McBiscuit.

Now I got my own truck and it's like a fort

and I leave Sausage McBiscuit wrappers in it overnight

'cause the smell makes me feel cohesive.

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picnic (pik' nik): v.i.
by Brendan Healy

Cast of Characters

SHEILA

LOUISE

Acknowledgments

picnic (pik'nik): v.i. was first performed at the Actors Theatre of Louisville's *Ten to Grow On* evening of ten-minute plays (Erica Bradshaw, Producer), February 2, 2005. The cast and staff was as follows:

LOUISE.....Brie Eley
SHEILA..... Kirstin Rebekah Franklin

Director Barbara Gulan
Scenic Designer..... Brenda Ellis
Costume Designer..... Kevin Thacker
Lighting Designers..... Matt Cross, Katie McCreary
Sound Designer Benjamin Szepesi
Properties Designers.....Joe Cunningham,
Deanna Hilleman
Stage Manager Danielle Teague-Daniels
Assistant Stage Manager..... Rebecca Stevens
Communications Amanda Hack,
Allison M. Leake
Dramaturg.....Kyle J. Schmidt

The play was subsequently produced by City Theatre (J. Barry Lewis, Festival Artistic Director) as part of the Summer Shorts Festival 2005. It was directed by Desmond Gallant with Danielle Worth and Kameshia Duncan.

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

Originally developed with Actors Theatre of Louisville's Apprentice/Intern Company, Marc Masterson, Artistic Director, Jennifer Bielstein, Managing Director.

picnic (pik'nik): v.i.

by Brendan Healy

(Lights up. LOUISE and SHEILA stand downstage, facing out. SHEILA wears a veil and white dress. LOUISE wears a bow tie and black tux jacket, maybe a top hat. They hold a big picture frame in front of themselves, forming the image of a wedding portrait.)

SHEILA. Stage direction: Lights up. Louise and Sheila stand in bride and groom apparel. The sound of rain against a window. Thunder.

LOUISE. Mother fucker.

SHEILA. Your hostility is ruining the moment.

LOUISE. I can't believe you're making me do this.

SHEILA. Friends don't *make* other friends do things. Friends ask nicely, saying "please" and "thank you" with sincere tones and other friends, being good friends, comply.

LOUISE. I can't believe you're making me do this.

SHEILA. I wanted to see what it would be like.

LOUISE. You're gonna know soon enough, aren't you?

SHEILA. I wanted to get a sense of it. Take a test drive. Kick the tires.

LOUISE. Why not take it for a spin with *him*?

SHEILA. Bad luck.

LOUISE. Test drives are bad luck?

SHEILA. Seeing one another in our special, near-sacred garments prior to the wedding. That's bad luck.

LOUISE. You're not superstitious.

SHEILA. I am now. Change is like that. People change. You. And me. Him. We all change. Me, I'm about to change.

LOUISE. It's raining, you know. What if it rains tomorrow?

SHEILA. It won't.

LOUISE. But what if it does? Isn't rain on a wedding day supposed to be some kind of bad omen or something? Wouldn't that fuck with your new superstitiousness?

SHEILA. I'm not that superstitious.

LOUISE. Stage direction: Thunder.

(A clap of thunder shakes the floor and walls.)

SHEILA. Mother fucker.

(SHEILA breaks the picture and sets the frame upstage, then exits. Beat. LOUISE exits; she soon returns with a gas can and promptly starts pouring its contents on the stage.)

LOUISE. Stage direction: Louise pours gasoline on the floor. She puts down the gas can.

(LOUISE sets the gas can upstage.)

She feels her pockets for matches.

(LOUISE starts searching herself for matches but can't find any. She continues to search while SHEILA enters smoking a cigarette and carrying an ashtray.)

SHEILA. You know. I had a dream last night. It began with me smoking a cigarette. It was a long cigarette and took me most of the dream to smoke it. I remember thinking, in the dream, "Why am I dreaming about a long cigarette? Is this a Freud thing?"

LOUISE. Hey, Sheila?

SHEILA. Then an old lady with crow's-feet and a basket full of rotting cabbage walked up to me and started telling me about my children. She was a soothsayer. I think she had an accent.

LOUISE. Hey, Sheila, you got a match?

SHEILA. She told me all about the kids I'm supposed to have someday. My first child—a boy—will have clubbed feet and a nasty case of halitosis. I have to admit I've got a real thing about halitosis.

LOUISE. Sheila!

SHEILA. Then she said my next kid—also a boy—will be prone to rare, even tropical, childhood illnesses that, instead of inspiring sympathy, will earn him daily beatings on the playground. And my daughter will grow up to look just like my best friend—that's probably you, Louise—and I'll wonder all my life if this familiar-looking child is really mine.

LOUISE. Sheila, do you have a match? A match?

SHEILA. Now that I think about it, my dream was mostly exposition.

LOUISE. Sheil—

SHEILA. Exposition, they say, is the weakest form of storytelling.

LOUISE. She—

SHEILA. The last thing she said was, “You will put out your cigarette in three seconds.”

LOUISE. Your cigarette? Oh. Um. Could I? Could I borrow that?

SHEILA. Stage direction: Sheila extinguishes her cigarette in ashtray.

(As SHEILA delivers this last line, she puts out the cigarette and sets the ashtray down.)

LOUISE. Oh.

SHEILA. I'm sorry, did you ask me something?

LOUISE. Never mind; no problem.

SHEILA. Okay. It's time.

LOUISE. Shit.

SHEILA. It's my day and I say it's time. Let's picnic.

LOUISE. For the last time, picnic is not a verb. It's a noun.

SHEILA. It can be a verb, too.

LOUISE. No, it's a thing, an event. Let's have a picnic—have—let's have.

SHEILA. Picnic. Verb. Let's picnic.

LOUISE. No! Noun! Let's have a goddamn fucking picnic for Christ's sake!

SHEILA. Have I mentioned your hostility?

LOUISE. Do we have to do this? I did the dress-up thing.

SHEILA. When will we ever get another chance to do this again?

LOUISE. There'll be other times.

SHEILA. Maybe not. Change is like that.

LOUISE. We won't change.

SHEILA. We could. We could be changing right now. You and I could be changing this very second. As I look at you. Changing.

LOUISE. Stage direction: Louise and Sheila look at each other.

(Pause.)

SHEILA. Let's picnic.

LOUISE. Fine; let's have a goddamn picnic.

SHEILA. *(Moving towards the picnic basket upstage:)* Stage direction: Sheila opens the picnic basket and takes out a blanket.

(SHEILA opens the picnic basket and takes out a blanket.)

LOUISE. Stage direction: Louise stands downstage and delivers a monologue as Sheila notices the gasoline on the floor and cleans it up with paper towels.

SHEILA. Huh. Something spilled here. Well, it's a good thing I brought paper towels, too.

(SHEILA takes out paper towels and mops up the puddle. As LOUISE delivers her monologue, SHEILA sets up a picnic with paper or real plates, utensils, whatnot.)

LOUISE. (*Delivered out, to audience:*) I hate disco. Most disco. I hate country music, too. I hate mullets. I have an unconquerable fear of mass-produced, pre-packaged, centrally-manufactured and nationally-distributed pastries. It's like eating salmon in Nebraska. I just don't trust it. I like...to not give a fuck. Mostly, I don't give a fuck. I like, for emphasis, to say "fuck." Because of these things, and others, I am not the best person. To be honest, most things out there I hate, fear or say fuck at. There are better people than me.

SHEILA. (*Handing LOUISE a peanut butter and jelly sandwich:*) Course one. Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

LOUISE. (*LOUISE eats the sandwich as she continues. SHEILA returns to the picnic blanket.*) I met Sheila eleven years ago. I like her. I do not hate or fear Sheila. Once in a while I say fuck at her. She eventually moved in, about four years ago. She brought two things worth noting: a picnic basket she uses just about every week, even indoors, and a bathroom scale with green shag carpet glued to the pad.

(By now SHEILA has taken a frying pan with scrambled eggs out of the basket. She puts the eggs on two plates. Here she takes the PB&J from LOUISE and hands her one of the plates with fork.)

SHEILA. Course two. Scrambled eggs.

LOUISE. (*Eating the eggs:*) If anyone can get away with having a green shag bathroom scale, it's Sheila. If anyone could get away with forcing their roommate to have picnics all the time, it's Sheila. Now, I hate most disco. But if anyone could get away making me listen to disco, that'd fucking be Sheila, too.

(Beat.)

But I'll always hate mullets.

(LOUISE sits down on the picnic blanket with SHEILA.)

SHEILA. Course three. Checkers.

(SHEILA takes a checkers board out of the basket and sets it between them. They play in silence for a moment.)

LOUISE. How many times you think we've played this stupid game?

SHEILA. Dunno.

LOUISE. Guess.

SHEILA. Maybe a couple hundred.

LOUISE. I say more. Couple thousand.

SHEILA. Could be.

LOUISE. Think you'll play this a lot?

SHEILA. When?

LOUISE. After tomorrow.

SHEILA. Maybe not as much. I'll probably still play it though. King me.

LOUISE. Fuck you.

SHEILA. *(She fishes through the picnic basket:)* Course four! Funny hats.

(SHEILA takes out a few hats; cowboy hats, beer helmet hats, lodge hats, etc.)

LOUISE. I don't wanna wear a funny hat.

SHEILA. Sure you do.

LOUISE. No, I don't.

SHEILA. But we wear funny hats all the time.

LOUISE. Not all the time. A couple times. Once or twice.

SHEILA. Enough times to establish a tradition. Now pick a funny hat and put it on.

LOUISE. Why are you doing this?

SHEILA. Because you promised to have a picnic with me today and tomorrow there won't be a picnic and maybe not the day after that and this is something I like about you, that you would do this for me and I want to remember you with a funny hat on so, dammit, put on a funny hat.

LOUISE. I meant why are you getting married tomorrow.

SHEILA. It's the day we planned it. We sent out invitations and everything.

LOUISE. Why get married at all?

SHEILA. This is your last chance, possibly your last chance for all time. So put on a funny hat.

LOUISE. Fuck the funny hat.

SHEILA. You say that too much.

LOUISE. Never bothered you before.

SHEILA. It bothers me now.

LOUISE. It's emphasis.

SHEILA. It's excessive.

LOUISE. Just tell me. Why?

SHEILA. Course five. Disco!

LOUISE. Stage direction: a disco song—one of the less annoying disco songs—fills the room while they dance.

(Music cue: disco. SHEILA stands and waits for LOUISE. After a moment of hesitation, LOUISE stands and they dance together. The music fades out.)

LOUISE. I hate most disco.

SHEILA. I know.

LOUISE. Any more courses?

SHEILA. One more.

(SHEILA kisses LOUISE lightly on the lips, tenderly.)

SHEILA. Thanks for picnicking with me.

LOUISE. For the last fucking time, picnic is a noun not a verb. It's a noun, a goddamn noun.

SHEILA. Verb.

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THE SPOT
by Steven Dietz

Cast of Characters

CHUMLEY, woman or man. The Communications Director. Well-dressed. Nervous.

WAGNER, man. Director of “The Spot.” Khaki pants, black turtle-neck. Fashionable glasses. An auteur.

NELSON, woman or man. The Pollster. Disheveled. Always working at a laptop computer strapped to her/his body. Often sipping from a diet soda.

ROGER, man. The Senior Advisor to the Candidate. Three-piece power suit. Expensive cowboy boots. Cell phone headset attached to his ear at all times.

BETSY, woman. A young mother. Dressed casually—a cardigan sweater, slacks.

GLORIA, woman. A production assistant. Jeans. Headset.

Time and Place

The present. A soundstage.

Setting

An open area with one simple chair and side table, center.

Note on Style

Fast. Fun. Fierce.

Acknowledgments

The Spot received its professional premiere as part of Actors Theatre of Louisville's 28th Humana Festival of New American Plays in April 2004. It was directed by William McNulty. The set design was by Paul Owen; the costume design by John P. White; the lighting design by Paul Werner; the sound design by Benjamin Marcum; and the stage manager was Debra A. Freeman. The cast was as follows:

CHUMLEY	Mary Tuomanen
WAGNER	Mauro Hantman
ROGER.....	Fred Sullivan, Jr.
NELSON.....	Tom Kelley
GLORIA.....	Jody Christopherson
BETSEY	Emily Ruddock

THE SPOT

by Steven Dietz

(At center: a chair and a small side table. On the table, a cup of tea.)

(Surrounding this—four people, all staring at the chair: WAGNER, NELSON, CHUMLEY, and ROGER.)

CHUMLEY. –so, Roger, what we’ve envisioned—and Wagner, just jump right on in here if I miss something—what we envision for “The Spot” is a sort of solid, homespun, no-nonsense, eyes-right-into-the-camera kind of thing—

WAGNER. Something that cries out: “Here-we-are-in-her-living-room-and-she’s-gonna-be-straight-with-us-so-help-her-God.”

CHUMLEY. The young mother we’ve found—and Wagner, correct me if I’m off-base here—this young mother is really just a *perfect choice* for—

ROGER. She really a mother?

CHUMLEY. Pardon me?

ROGER. She really have kids?

CHUMLEY. Well, as far as—

ROGER. People *want in*, Chumley. Everyone wants to be in “The Spot.”

CHUMLEY. Yes, I know.

ROGER. They’ll *lie through their teeth* to be in “The Spot.”

WAGNER. She has kids.

ROGER. Real kids?

WAGNER. Yes.

ROGER. You’ve seen ‘em?

WAGNER. Yes, I have.

ROGER. What are their names?

CHUMLEY. Roger, just to be clear, just to be what I like to call *crystal*: this woman's kids are *not* in "The Spot." It's just her.

ROGER. I see.

CHUMLEY. No kids in "The Spot." No kids at all.

ROGER. Got it.

CHUMLEY. Thank you, sir.

ROGER. (*Immediately, to WAGNER:*) What are their names?

WAGNER. Joey and Gretchen

ROGER. (*Immediately, to NELSON:*) I want those names *polled*.

NELSON. Right away, sir. (*Begins typing on her/his laptop.*)

CHUMLEY. Shall we bring her in and get started? Her name is—

ROGER. I don't give a turd in a taco what her *name* is. WE'RE ON THE *CLOCK*, CHUMLEY. *GET HER BUTT IN HERE.*

CHUMLEY. Yes, sir.

WAGNER. (*Calls off:*) GLORIA—

ROGER. (*Stops suddenly.*) You a *religious person*, Wagner?

WAGNER. Not as a rule.

ROGER. Then why the HOSANNA? Why the sudden *speaking in tongues*?

WAGNER. I was just calling my assistant—

(GLORIA *appears—friendly and efficient.*)

GLORIA. (*To WAGNER:*) Yes, what can I do for you?

ROGER. Is this the little mother?

WAGNER. No—

GLORIA. I'm Gloria.

WAGNER. She's my assistant.

ROGER. *This one* I like! This one's got spunk. Moxie! Great heaps of

chutzpah! Look at her. She's not one of those punky, pierced-up, tattoo-on-her-titties troublemakers! This one's got VIM AND VIGOR. This one EATS MEAT. Don't you, Gloria?

(GLORIA nods, polite, confused.)

Atta girl! GLORIA, HALLELUJAH!

WAGNER. *(To GLORIA:)* We're ready for the talent.

(GLORIA nods and is gone.)

NELSON. Roger.

ROGER. What?

NELSON. The name Joey polled at 78.

ROGER. Good. What about Gretchen?

NELSON. 31.

ROGER. Toss it out.

NELSON. Right.

ROGER. How 'bout Sally? Run the numbers on Sally.

NELSON. Will do. *(Back to her/his laptop.)*

ROGER. Sally always *packs a punch.*

(GLORIA enters with BETSY.)

GLORIA. Everyone: this is Betsy Taylor.

BETSY. Hello.

CHUMLEY. We're so glad you're doing this.

WAGNER. I've been *dying* to work with you.

CHUMLEY. Betsy, I'd like you to meet Roger. He's the Senior Advisor to the Candidate.

BETSY. *(Extends her hand.)* A pleasure.

ROGER. *(Suddenly:)* YOUR HAND?

BETSY. Pardon?

ROGER. YOU WANT TO OFFER ME YOUR *HAND*?

BETSY. I just wanted to—

ROGER. WELL, YOU CAN TAKE THAT HAND AND CHOP IT OFF WITH A STEAK KNIFE AND FEED IT TO THE BEAR THAT'S GONNA *CRAP ALL OVER YOUR FACE!* HOW DARE YOU TRY TO PULL A STUNT LIKE THIS? WHO DO YOU THINK YOU'RE *DEALING WITH?*

(It becomes clear that he is talking into his phone.)

THE DAY MY CANDIDATE SHAKES THE HAND OF SOMEONE FROM YOUR PARTY—YOUR *TRIBE*—YOUR *GANG*, YOUR *SECT*, YOUR *CABAL*—THE DAY I LET MY CANDIDATE GET IN BED WITH THE LIKES OF YOU IS THE DAY *PIGS WILL PLAY HOCKEY IN HELL!!!*

(He clicks the call off. Turns pleasantly to BETSY. Extends his hand.)

Hi, there. I'm Roger. Did you meet Gloria? Isn't she something? Don't you just want to download that face and make it your screen saver? *(Before she can respond:)* I'm told you're a mother. Joey and Sally.

BETSY. Gretchen.

ROGER. Huh?

BETSY. My daughter—Gretchen.

ROGER. Sorry. It didn't poll. Rhymes with Chechen. On the other hand—

NELSON. Sally's at 83.

ROGER. –Sally polled like a champ. Rhymes with *rally*—good times ahead! You've got a daughter named Sally. You must be very happy. Mint? *(Offers her one.)*

BETSY. No, thank you.

CHUMLEY. *(Jumping in, nervous:)* Okay, let's get you in place, Betsy.

(BETSY sits in the chair. WAGNER approaches her.)

WAGNER. Now, the *aesthetic* I'm—are you with me?—the *paradigm* I'm working with in “The Spot” might well be called a “post-ironic, reality-infused, Mom-at-home” kind of thing—

CHUMLEY. Something I like to call “*honesty*.” Are you with me?

BETSY. Sure.

WAGNER. And you're clear on the text?

CHUMLEY. What I call “the lines.”

BETSY. Yes, I am.

WAGNER. Okay, then, people: let's shoot one.

GLORIA. (*Calling out:*) QUIET ON THE SET.

ROGER. (*Re GLORIA:*) Isn't she a *pistol*?

GLORIA. (*Calling out:*) ROLL SOUND.

WAGNER. And...ACTION.

(*BETSY looks straight ahead and speaks. Calm. Honest. Very good at this.*)

BETSY. Just the other day, my daughter... (*Slight pause.*) Sally... (*ROGER smiles.*) asked me who I was going to vote for. And I told her that there are three things I look for in a candidate: *trust, honor, and integrity.* (*She lifts her tea.*) And this year, only *one* candidate has all of—

ROGER. STOP RIGHT THERE!

BETSY. What is it?

CHUMLEY.
Roger, what one earth—

WAGNER.
CUT.

ROGER. Set. The teacup. *Down.*

(*She does.*)

What are you *doing*, Betsy? Are you trying to *kill me*? Are you trying to *butcher my candidate*?

BETSY. (*Worried, confused:*) I'm not sure I—

ROGER. Do you know the *numbers* on TEA? They are *abysmal*. Tell her the numbers on tea, Nelson.

NELSON. (*Helpfully:*) 17.

ROGER. Seventeen! The TEA is polling at SEVENTEEN and there you are in your little sweater and your little chair and you're LIFTING THE TEA TO YOUR LIPS. Why don't you just DO SOME CRACK? Why don't you just *MAKE OUT WITH O.J.* and DANGLE A BABY OVER A BALCONY?

CHUMLEY.

Roger, please, we're on a deadline.

WAGNER.

(*To BETSY:*) What I think Roger's looking for—

ROGER. What we call an election, Betsy—this quaint little practice of people *going out to vote*—that is nothing but a *nostalgic formality*—just a *symbolic narcotic* to placate the populace. (*Grandly, to NELSON:*) THE *REAL VOTES ARE NOT CAST AT THE POLLS—BUT WITH THE POLLSTERS*—with great Americans like Nelson here.

(*NELSON lifts her/his diet soda.*)

And has the Carefully Polled Public voted for TEA, Betsy? *I think not.*

CHUMLEY.

Roger, let me explain—

WAGNER.

Perhaps we can rethink it—

ROGER. Tell them, Nelson. Tell them who America wants Betsy to be.

(*As NELSON fires the data very quickly off her/his laptop—GLORIA instantly produces the necessary items and places them on the side table, transforming it as directed.*)

NELSON. Well, in addition to Joey and Sally—

BETSY. Her name is not—

NELSON. You have a husband named Bill and a dog named Buster.

(*GLORIA adds photographs of each to the side table.*)

(*Quickly consults new data on laptop:*) Correction! No husband—

you're a *single mom*.

ROGER. Get Bill out of there!

(GLORIA does.)

NELSON. You work at Wal-Mart.

BETSY. No, I—

(GLORIA affixes a bright "Welcome to Wal-Mart" name tag to BETSY's chest.)

NELSON. And your Joey's all grown up—

BETSY. He's only nine!

NELSON. Sorry, ma'am: he's a soldier now, gone to rid the world of evil.

(New photo of Joey the soldier.)

ROGER. Atta boy, Joey!

NELSON. And you're not sipping tea—

ROGER. I told you!

NELSON. *(Overlapping:)* No, Betsy, you're sipping a Starbucks extra-hot low-fat double-tall mocha with *extra whipped cream*.

BETSY. But I—

(GLORIA immediately puts the coffee in BETSY's hand and tops it off with a major swirl of whipped cream. Takes the tea away.)

ROGER. *(Buoyantly:)* **THAT IS THE WOMAN THEY WANT,** Betsy—and, hey, don't look at me, *I didn't invent her.* She is the Love Child of Entitlement and Complacency—the voice of the American vox populi. She is the **PEOPLE'S CHOICE!**

(He places a small American flag on the side table.)

ROGER. NOW: LET'S SHOOT HER!

GLORIA. *(Calling off:)* QUIET ON THE SET.

ROGER. You tell 'em, Gloria!

GLORIA. ROLL SOUND.

WAGNER. And...ACTION.

(BETSY takes her place, about to begin. Then...)

BETSY. *(Stands suddenly.)* I won't do it.

EVERYONE. *WHAT?!*

BETSY. I just won't do it.

ROGER. You *won't* do it? What's *that* mean?

BETSY. It's not true—it's all a lie.

ROGER. Just what the hell kind of actress *are you*, anyway?

BETSY. I'm not an actress.

ROGER. Oh, you can say **THAT** again.

BETSY. *(Genuine, with passion:)* I'm a wife and a mother. I was chosen for "The Spot" because I really *believe in it*. I believe in your candidate. I want to give him my vote. When I look into the camera, I am speaking from my heart.

(Silence. ROGER turns to CHUMLEY, then WAGNER, then NELSON, as if to say: CAN THIS BE TRUE? CHUMLEY, WAGNER, and NELSON all shrug and reluctantly nod: YES. ROGER turns back to BETSY. Approaches her slowly.)

ROGER. Take off your sweater.

BETSY. What?

ROGER. You heard me. Take it off.

BETSY. But didn't you hear what I said? I really—

ROGER. Here's the thing about people who speak from their heart: I don't trust 'em. Hearts are *fickle*, Betsy. *Hearts change*. And when the future of the free world is on the line, I can't be taking a chance on what *people believe in their hearts*.

(Beat. He stares at her hard.)

Take. It. Off.

(BETSY, staring right at ROGER, takes off her sweater. Under-

neath, attached with a strap over her shoulder, is a tape recorder.)

See there.

CHUMLEY.

Betsy—?

WAGNER.

Oh, my...

ROGER. Hand me the tape recorder.

(She does.)

This another one of your TRICKS?!

BETSY. I'd like a chance to explain—

ROGER. *(Overlapping:)* ANOTHER WAY TO TRY TO “SHAKE MY HAND”? GET IN BED WITH OUR CAMPAIGN? SELL US OUT TO THE JACKALS AT THE NETWORKS? IS THAT WHAT THIS IS?

BETSY. No, not at all—

(We realize that once again, he is speaking into his phone.)

ROGER. YOU LISTEN TO ME: WE'RE GONNA WIPE THE FLOOR WITH *YOU* AND *YOUR CANDIDATE* AND YOUR *DO-NORS* AND YOUR *PARTY*. AND THEN IN THE TRUE SPIRIT OF AMERICAN POLITICS, WE ARE GOING TO GLOAT LIKE HYE-NAS AND BEHAVE VERY VERY BADLY! *(Quickly, a smile.)* Bye-bye.

(Turns immediately to BETSY.)

What did they pay you?

(BETSY does not answer.)

Fess up, SuperMom. I know how they work. What did it cost them?

BETSY. I didn't want their money. I did it—

ROGER. Because of your *beliefs*, I suppose.

BETSY. Yes.

ROGER. What you *feel in your heart*.

BETSY. Yes.

ROGER. You disgust me.

(He tosses the tape recorder to GLORIA, who catches it.)

Get her out of here.

(CHUMLEY walks BETSY away, as—ROGER's cell phone rings.)

(Instantly, into the phone:) Yes? Mr. Candidate, great to hear from you, sir! It's going extremely well—couldn't be better! Yes, we'll send you a rough cut before the day is out. Thank you, sir. Good-bye.

(He ends the call. CHUMLEY rushes back in.)

CHUMLEY. *(In a panic:)* Oh my god, Roger, we are just—I mean, Wagner, correct me if I'm wrong here—but it seems to me that we are now what I like to call *completely screwed*.

ROGER. *(Calmly:)* Nelson.

NELSON. Yes, sir?

ROGER. Run the numbers on "Gloria."

NELSON. Right away. *(Back to her/his laptop.)*

CHUMLEY. Roger, no—

(ROGER turns to GLORIA.)

ROGER. Gloria, do you know the feeling we're going for?

GLORIA. Well, yes, but—

ROGER. And you're clear on the lines?

GLORIA. Yes, but I'm not really a—

ROGER. And do you *believe in them*, Gloria? Do you believe in them *deep in your heart*?

(Beat.)

GLORIA. *(Simple, direct:)* Not at all.

ROGER. *THIS ONE's got MOXIE.*

CHUMLEY. *(Really worried:)* Roger, listen to me—

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A TALL ORDER
by Sheri Wilner

Cast of Characters

SHE, age 25-35

HE, age 25-35

WAITER, male or female, any age

Setting

A restaurant, bar, or café.

Author Notes

This play was originally produced by Thirst Theater, which stages plays in local bars and restaurants. The current script has been adapted so that it can be performed in either a theater or a restaurant. If it is performed at a restaurant, producers should substitute the restaurant's name ("Christo's") for the name of the restaurant where the play is being staged.

Acknowledgments

A Tall Order was originally produced by Thirst Theater in Minneapolis, Minnesota in June 2006.

A TALL ORDER

by Sheri Wilner

(SHE and HE sit at a table, menus open. A WAITER approaches.)

WAITER. Hi there. Are you ready to or—

(She snaps her fingers and time stops. What follows takes place in the space of a second.)

SHE. *(Focusing intently on her menu:)* OK. Here goes.

Choose wisely. Choose well.

What do I want?

A salad?

Good god woman, no! You can't get a salad.

That's the kiss of death.

Every man on the planet has an "I used to go out with a woman who only ordered salad" story.

Those tales of terror are told in locker rooms, golf carts and bar-rooms everywhere.

HE. *(As if talking to his buddies:)* They had this enormous menu. Prime rib, manicotti, pork chops, *everything*. And she says, "I'll just have a salad."

SHE. And all his buddies will nod their heads in solemn acknowledgement. Yes, we know what that means:

HE. *(To his friends:)* A brittle, uptight neurotic so accustomed to starving and depriving herself, she thinks nothing of depriving you too.

SHE. To them "salad" is a synonym for:

HE. *(To his friends:)* Frigid, fussy...unsound.

Having sex with her was like playing ultimate frisbee with a tiny, overbred dog.

SHE. No, I have to show him I'm made of stronger stuff.

That I can eat meat.

I'll get the pork chops or a rack of ribs. No, a Black Angus steak.

(To him:) You'd like that, wouldn't you?

HE. Women who use all thirty-two teeth are sexy.

SHE / HE. Yeah!

HE. Because they bite. They tear flesh off the bone.

SHE / HE. Grrr.

SHE. But then again he might think I'm:

HE. Too aggressive.

SHE. I'm:

HE. Too masculine.

SHE. And envision it's his flesh between my teeth.
His bones falling in splinters onto my plate.

You can't show them any muscle, any force.

Don't make the "Larry" mistake again.

Kissing, caressing, wrestling on the couch.

Pinned down I was supposed to say, "OK, OK stop, stop."

But I felt power. My taut muscles felt the limpness in his.

And then:

Blam!

Off the couch and onto the floor.

(SHE and HE look into each other's eyes.)

And that look in his eyes told me I blew it.

It was over before his back hit the broadloom.

You can't be stronger than they are.

Physically, emotionally. Financially.

They can't endure it.

Black Angus beef says:

(Directly to him:) I can overpower you.

Prime rib says:

(Directly to him:) My strength just might be greater than yours.

Could you handle that?

HE. *(To his friends:)* There was just... I don't know...a toughness to her, you know? I think it was actually hormonal.

SHE. Skip the beef.

Pass on the salad.
Avoid the extremes.
Nothing too herbivore.
Nothing too carnivore.
Chicken.
There you go.
Chicken might be good.
Chicken doesn't say frigid.
Chicken doesn't say strong.
Chicken's a safe choice.
But maybe too safe.
Chicken is boring.
Chicken is monotony.
I don't care what they put on it.
Chicken is chicken.
He'll think:

HE. Wow. How...bland.
Nothing but bedroom sex with her.
Nothing but tourist trap vacations,
toolboxes and neckties for birthday gifts,
spicy recipes prepared mild.
Assumptions that risks shouldn't be taken, money should be saved,
safety comes first.

SHE. He'll look at the chicken on my plate and see his whole future
on a bed of rice. He'll see:

HE. My father's life.
One long, sad compromise.

SHE. I have to excite him. I have to order something that will make
him say:

HE. Woo hoo! I'm in for one *wild ride* with this one!
Life with her is like a nonstop fireworks finale. She just keeps
sending herself up into the sky and bursting into colors that take
my breath away.

SHE. That's the ticket!
Go for some thing exotic, something wild.

The Pignoli Encrusted Chilean Sea Bass!

That says:

HE. Spontaneous.

SHE. That says:

HE. Untamed.

SHE. That costs:

HE. 22.95?!

SHE The most expensive item on the menu. He'll think:

HE. Sixty-hour work weeks.

Just to keep up, just to keep her happy.

Just to keep from feeling like I can't give her what she wants.

SHE. You cannot choose the most expensive thing.

Or the cheapest.

Aim for three dollars right of center, which would be...

Pasta.

Pasta? Bad idea. Bad, bad idea.

To brazenly go for the carbs. If he considers me overweight:

HE. Pasta. So that explains the slight chubbiness and her less than perfect figure.

SHE. Maybe I'll see what other women are eating.

Is that like cheating on a test?

Screw it.

Time has stopped. No one will know.

(SHE stands.)

No. Wait. What if I choose some self-sabotaging defeatist? Some relationship kamikaze who gives such crucial minutiae no thought? That would really suck if someone else's veal cacciatore screwed up my relationship.

Maybe I'll say I'm not hungry.

Maybe I'll say I'm fasting.

Maybe I'll go into the kitchen and cook something myself.

Were there specials?

Specials are good.

Specials say:

HE. She takes risks.

SHE. Or even:

HE. She's fearless!

SHE. So where are the specials?

Where are the specials?

Oh god! There are no specials!

No chalkboards.

No menu inserts.

No awkward recitation by the waiter.

Why aren't there any specials?

Screw you, Christo, for your unspecialized menu!

If he had only ordered first, I could have just said, "I'll have what he's having."

That's the way to go.

That's smart second date ordering.

I could say it in a playful flirty voice that makes him immediately know he's spending the night.

(Directly to him, seductively:) I'll have what he's having.

HE. And you know I'll give it to you, baby.

SHE. Maybe it's not too late.

Maybe I should say, "Gee, I can't decide. Why don't you order first?"

(Beat.)

OK, first of all, don't ever, ever say "Gee."

Secondly, stay away from that "can't decide thing."

They hate that.

They like a woman who knows her own mind.

Who's not going to make them:

HE. Pace around Blockbuster for an hour.

SHE. Or ask their opinion about:

HE. Fifteen different black dresses

SHE. That to him are:

HE. Indistinguishable.

SHE. He wants me to know what I want.

I can feel it.

I can feel his expectation.

(HE sits at the edge of his seat, grips the table and stares at her intensely.)

SHE. He's waiting for my answer.

I can see the smile poised and ready to appear on his face when I say something:

HE. Surprising, unexpected, sexy.

SHE. And I can also see it ready to drop when he realizes I'm:

HE. Just another dime-a-dozen marriage-minded mediocrity.

SHE. Everything depends on this, everything hangs on my order.

(SHE looks at the menu, at the WAITER, her date. Again, SHE looks at the menu, the WAITER, her date. SHE looks at the menu, but then:)

Screw it!

No, screw you!

Screw you for putting me through this!

I am not what I eat!

It all starts now.

This order is going to set the tone for the whole relationship.

I am going to order exactly what I want without giving him a single thought.

That's what he's about to do right?

That's what men always do.

Choose an entrée without fearing the consequences.

That's me from now on, and I'll make sure he sees that:

HE. She just ordered something *with no regard* to the effect it will have on me.

SHE. That will excite him. That will make him want me.

For once in my life a man will want me more than I want him and

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TWO BUBBLES
by Greg Romero

Cast of Characters

MARK

SHEILA

MARK 2

SHEILA 2

MARK 3

SHEILA 3

Time

Tonight, last night, and tomorrow night.

Setting

An oversized bed in the middle of Mark and Sheila's relationship.

Production Notes

About Pauses:

Breaks in speech are noted by a series of ellipses after the character designation. i.e.:

MAN. ...

Each single dot represents one heartbeat.

These ellipses represent space that the character uses either to react to what was just said, or to think of (or to hold back) the next thing to say, or both. These are definitely not moments in which to relax.

Acknowledgements

Thank you Audacity Productions and Rover Dramawerks for making me stay up all night to write this play.

Thank you to Brendan Ahearn who directed the original production of this play on very little sleep. And to the six actors who first brought Mark and Sheila to life: Brad McEntire, Laurie Farris, Jeff Hernandez, Shannon Marie, Brendan Ahearn, and Tiffany Feng.

TWO BUBBLES

by Greg Romero

(Lights up on MARK and SHEILA, a young couple.)

(They are sitting in an oversized bed with their left arms extended into the air.)

(MARK sits to SHEILA's right.)

(They are not looking at each other.)

(It is really late at night. Really Late.)

(For some time they sit in silence with their arms raised.)

(After some time, MARK drops his left arm from the air.)

(SHEILA keeps her arm raised high as MARK kind of rubs on his left arm.)

SHEILA. Mark?

MARK. Yeah?

SHEILA. Let's break it.

MARK. ...

SHEILA. The record.

MARK. Oh.

SHEILA. ...

MARK. Really?

SHEILA. Yes.

MARK. ...

SHEILA. Remember we decided that last night?

MARK. Last night?

SHEILA. We said we'd try it.

MARK. ...

(SHEILA drops her arm.)

(She looks hard at MARK.)

(He doesn't look at her.)

(They both extend their right arms into the air.)

(They sit in silence together, arms raised in the air.)

(MARK occasionally looks at the watch on his left arm.)

(After their arms are in the air for some time:)

MARK. What is the record anyway?

SHEILA. ...

MARK. How long do we have to go to break it?

SHEILA. All night.

MARK. ...

SHEILA. Maybe tomorrow night too.

MARK. Tomorrow night?

SHEILA. Maybe.

MARK. ...

SHEILA. ...

MARK. Didn't we look it up once?

SHEILA. ...

MARK. ...

SHEILA. I don't know.

MARK. ...

(MARK drops his right arm down.)

(SHEILA keeps her arm raised for a moment before dropping it from the air.)

(They sit in silence for a moment, kind of rubbing their arms.)

MARK. What did we do last night?

SHEILA. ...

MARK. ...

SHEILA. Didn't we do this?

MARK. I think we just started doing this tonight. It's hard to tell. They all blend together don't they?

SHEILA. They do?

MARK. Yeah.

SHEILA. What does?

MARK. Long nights. Full of sex. Hard to tell them apart, isn't it?

SHEILA. ...

MARK. Isn't it?

SHEILA. I guess.

(MARK 2 and SHEILA 2 enter and sit in the bed next to MARK and SHEILA.)

(MARK 2 and SHEILA 2 raise their left arms into the air.)

(MARK and SHEILA look at them for a moment, MARK 2 glances occasionally at his watch.)

MARK. I guess we did do this last night.

SHEILA. ...

MARK. Or is that tomorrow night?

SHEILA. Tomorrow?

(MARK 2 and SHEILA 2 drop their arms from the air.)

(MARK 2 and SHEILA 2 rub their arms for a moment.)

(MARK 2 switches his watch from his right arm to his left arm and puts his right arm back in the air.)

(They ALL raise their right arms into the air.)

(They ALL sit in silence with their arms raised for some time.)

MARK. Sheila?

SHEILA. Yes?

MARK. I'm tired.

MARK 2. Sheila?

SHEILA 2. Yes?

MARK 2. I'm tired.

SHEILA. ...

MARK. You're not

MARK 2. Tired yet?

SHEILA / SHEILA 2. No.

(Both of the MARKs drop their arms.)

(After a moment, both of the SHEILAs drop their arms.)

(Both MARKs and SHEILAs rub their arms for a moment.)

(Both MARKs switch their watches from their left arms to their right arms.)

(They ALL take a deep breath.)

(They ALL lift their left arms into the air again.)

(They ALL sit in silence together as the MARKs occasionally look at their watch.)

(MARK 3 and SHEILA 3 enter and sit in the bed next to MARK and SHEILA.)

(MARK 3 and SHEILA 3 extend their left arms into the air.)

(MARK and SHEILA look at them for a moment.)

MARK. I guess we did do this last night.

SHEILA. ...

MARK. Or is that tomorrow night?

SHEILA. Tomorrow?

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