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Cast of Characters

THE EGGMAN, male, a strange man-child whose character and voice changes based upon to whom he is talking. He likes to shout and has a playful, gregarious nature.

JULIE, female, similarly hip and pretentious, although slightly naïve.

PETER, male, a pretentious, arrogant, hipster snob.

THE BUSINESSMAN, male, aloof, self-absorbed, self-important, and fast-moving.

MR. DAMIEN, male, a mustache-twirling, effeminate, red-suited Devil character.

THE OLD WOMAN, female, a stereotypical old woman—hard of hearing, fond of reminiscing, carries a change purse, wears a shawl, and uses a walker. She is very slow and very distant.

BRIAN, THE AUTHOR, male, a debonair, 1920s gentleman. He both dresses and speaks like Jay Gatsby.

THE WAITRESS, female, cold, emotionless, and deeply dissatisfied with her life.

THE CHICKEN, male, a shady character with possible criminal ties, although he is prone to emotional outbursts.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE OFFICIAL, female, serious, professional, speaks in a near monotone.

Casting Notes

If necessary, the Businessman, Brian, and the Chicken may all be played by the same actor. The Old Woman and the Waitress may be played by the same actress.

Costume Notes

The Eggman: one-piece coverall uniform like that of a milkman

Julie: tasteful, “hipster” clothes

Peter: tasteful, “hipster” clothes

The Businessman: any suit

Mr. Damien: red suit, goatee

The Old Woman: long, flowered skirt, pink blouse, shawl

Brian, the Author: fancy, 1920s-era suit

The Waitress: black dress or black pants and a polo shirt, apron

The Chicken: bright, yellow chicken suit

Department of Agriculture Official: trench coat, sunglasses

THE EGG PLAY

by Brian Boone

(Scene: a bohemian, coffee shop-and boutique-laced street corner. As the lights rise in a manner to suggest sunrise, Grieg's "Morning" plays. At a coffee shop, JULIE and PETER enter and sit at an outdoor table and mime stage talk. They are pretentious and arrogant, especially PETER.)

(The man-child EGGMAN enters. He fiercely clutches a clear plastic bucket filled with eggs, labeled in large print "EGGS." His uniform suggests that of a milkman. He sets up a sandwich board declaring "Eggs: Cheap, Fresh, and Tasty!")

EGGMAN. *(To nobody, really:)* I am a dealer of eggs.

JULIE. *(Patronizing:)* Oh! He's a dealer of eggs.

PETER. No. He's a broker.

JULIE. Seller?

PETER. Barterer.

JULIE. Merchant?

PETER. Merchant.

(JULIE nonchalantly approaches the EGGMAN.)

JULIE. Hi.

EGGMAN. Hi.

JULIE. What's in the bucket there?

EGGMAN. Guess!

JULIE. *(Sarcastically:)* I don't know. Eggs?

EGGMAN. That's right! Eggs! You win a free egg!

JULIE. Really?

EGGMAN. It's only a dollar!

PETER. *(Stands, shouts:)* Everything has a price...

JULIE. And...scene.

(JULIE freezes, as if performing a scene tableau. She remains frozen for a long time—past the point where it's still funny and nearly to where the audience grows agitated. The actor has full license to really push that frustration to the brink, should they so desire. Then JULIE unfreezes and returns to her table. As she goes, a BUSINESSMAN enters and stands near the EGGMAN, obviously reading a newspaper. The EGGMAN pounces.)

EGGMAN. *(Softly:)* Hey.

(BUSINESSMAN does not respond.)

EGGMAN. *(Louder:)* Hey!

BUSINESSMAN. *(Looks up:)* Oh. Hello. *(Continues to read.)*

EGGMAN. *(Like a 1930s newsy:)* Hiya, Jack. Mind if I read the egg section?

BUSINESSMAN. I, uh, don't think there is an egg section.

EGGMAN. Then that means I'm your only source for eggs! *(Back to the man-child voice:)* Cause I've got eggs, Chester!

BUSINESSMAN. I don't want any eggs, thanks. Please leave me alone.

EGGMAN. Guess what's in my bucket?

BUSINESSMAN. I don't know. Effs, maybe?

EGGMAN. *(In a normal speaking voice:)* Huh? What are effs?

BUSINESSMAN. You know, effs. E-F-F-S. Effs.

EGGMAN. *(Normal voice:)* Do you mean eggs?

BUSINESSMAN. I think so. That was probably a typo. I meant to say *eggs*. The bucket's full of *eggs*.

EGGMAN. *(Back to his sing-songy shouting:)* Hey, that's right. You're a smart guy, newspaper man. You wanna free egg?

BUSINESSMAN. What kind of egg?

EGGMAN. White! Chicken! Boiled!

BUSINESSMAN. Soft boiled or hard boiled?

EGGMAN. *(Shouts proudly:)* I DON'T KNOW!

BUSINESSMAN. Fine. Will you leave me alone if I buy one?

EGGMAN. EGGS!

BUSINESSMAN. *(Retrieves his wallet.)* How much then?

EGGMAN. *(Louder:)* EGGS!

BUSINESSMAN. *(Testy:)* How much?

EGGMAN. *(Screaming:)* EEEEEEGGGGGGGS!

BUSINESSMAN. I said how much?

EGGMAN. *(Screams:)* They're free! *(Whispers:)* They're six bucks.

BUSINESSMAN. Well, are they free, or...?

EGGMAN. No. They're six bucks.

BUSINESSMAN. *(Melodramatically, to the audience:)* What has happened to the social fabric that we are subject to hyperinflation and must deal with the crippling reality of the inability to purchase necessities like food? What will the children do? What will...the children do?

(BUSINESSMAN falls to his knees and slowly curls up into a tiny ball.)

JULIE. Hey.

PETER. *(Inattentive, writing in a journal:)* Huh. What?

JULIE. Look. He's charging six bucks for an egg.

PETER. Well, maybe they're really good eggs.

JULIE. They look pretty normal.

(The BUSINESSMAN quietly leaves.)

PETER. Hmm. It's the Eggman. He's merely trying to make a point about socioeconomic inequality in a modern, post-agrarian society.

JULIE. That moron is saying that?

PETER. Yeah, look closely, Julie. The overflowing basket of eggs represents the mass quantities of goods in the control and possession of the upper class. By displaying them in a clear plastic container, this represents a glass wall, how the wealthy like to show off their affluence, not in order to share it, but as to arrogantly hoard it over the have-nots.

JULIE. So the Eggman isn't mentally disabled. *(Pause.)* He's a Marxist!

PETER. Precisely. He's merely sharing his views on wealth distribution. We should all heed his advice and be kinder to the working classes. *(Loud, coarse:)* Waitress!

WAITRESS. *(Immediately appears, as she will always do when called. She carries an empty platter and speaks with little emotion, unless otherwise noted.)* Yes?

PETER. What took you so long? Bring me another espresso with milk. And keep them coming *exactly* every 24 minutes. Not 20 minutes, not 25 minutes, but 24 minutes. Do you think you can understand all that, sweetie pie?

WAITRESS. Yes.

PETER. Good for you! Chop chop, then.

JULIE. Oh, Peter. It's such a beautiful day to butt our noses into other people's business.

(Menacing music plays. MR. DAMIEN enters, dressed in a red suit. He also has a goatee and a pitchfork. He's clearly supposed to be the devil. He approaches the EGGMAN.)

DAMIEN. Hello, Eggman! *(He pronounces it "EGG-muhn," as if it's a name like "Sherman.")*

EGGMAN. Hello, Mr. *Damien!* My, what a fetching red suit and *tails* you have on today!

DAMIEN. Why thank you, Eggman. Might I purchase an *egg*?

EGGMAN. Certainly. For a price!

DAMIEN. Any price will do!

EGGMAN. Ten dollars! Ha ha ha ha ha!

(DAMIEN holds out an oversized dollar bill. The transaction is made.)

DAMIEN. Pleasure doing business with you! *(He exits, laughing maniacally.)*

JULIE. There goes that Eggman again.

PETER. Right. See, anyone can have those eggs, or, the wealth, as it were. But for a certain unnamed price...their soul!

JULIE. I don't follow.

PETER. The money, my dear Julie, the money! To be part of the financially elite, you have to give up your *soul*.

JULIE. Alright, so the money used to buy an egg represents buying your way into high society? What about the eggs?

PETER. The eggs *are* money! You need to spend money to make money. It's quite obvious.

JULIE. So the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

PETER. Sounds about right.

JULIE. This guy is a genius. Do you think he's actually selling those eggs?

PETER. Sure. Ironically, economists don't make very much money. You've got to have money these days. Money to buy stuff with.

JULIE. Of course.

PETER. Everything is so expensive. Especially dietary staples. Bread, milk...

JULIE. Eggs.

PETER. *(Angered at her idiocy:)* No, not eggs. Eggs are cheap.

(A stereotypical OLD WOMAN enters at a great distance from the EGGMAN, assisted by both a cane and a walker. Her movement onto the stage takes annoyingly long. Once again, the actor can take an obscene amount of time, should they wish.)

JULIE. Oh look, dear, society's indictment of the elderly! I get it! Hey grandma, why not skip the heart pills and treat yourself to some cat food for dinner tonight? *(She bows with great flourish and winks at the audience, prodding them for laughter that doesn't come.)*

PETER. Oh, cut it out. She's obviously meant to reference society's indictment of the handicapped, not the elderly. *(Beat.)* Let's knock her down and take her purse.

OLD WOMAN. *(Breaking character:)* So slow. Should've entered stage right.

(She tosses the walker offstage and walks at a brisk stride up to about two feet from the EGGMAN. She gets back into character and hunches over and walks slowly with her cane.)

EGGMAN. Hey there, old lady! Want to buy some old lady eggs?

OLD WOMAN. Why, that would be lovely! Would you like to see a picture of my grandchildren? My bones hurt. I remember the Depression and the War! Back then, I could buy an ice cream cone for a nickel. How much are your eggs?

EGGMAN. *Two* for a nickel!

OLD WOMAN. Let me get out my change purse. *(She opens her handbag and tosses out a dozen empty prescription bottles and hundreds of pieces of hard candy before finding her change purse.)* There you are, sonny boy. A nickel!

EGGMAN. Thank you, old, old woman!

(The OLD WOMAN very slowly exits.)

JULIE. This just shows you, Peter. Stereotyping is bad.

PETER. It certainly is. But not when it concerns the Chinese. Good for nothing, border-hoppers who come in here and take all our landscaping jobs and litter our streets with their taco trucks. Hey, you know what sounds good? Tacos!

(PETER exits.)

JULIE. *(Aside:)* The comment that was just made was by no means serious. It was an attempt by the author to lament the casual racism so prevalent among the young people today. Peter is a racist, and as

the play has frequently demonstrated, not a nice person. His offensive comments were merely reinforcements to ensure that, you, the incredibly stupid and likely confused audience member, grasped that Peter was a despicable character not to be imitated. Personally, I thought the author has done a swell job characterizing Peter. (*To the wings:*) Good work, Brian! You're really coming along nicely!

(BRIAN, THE AUTHOR *enters, dressed like Jay Gatsby and smoking a pipe.*)

BRIAN. Thanks, old sport! (*Exits.*)

(PETER *returns and sits, eating a taco.*)

PETER. Would a bite of taco interest you any?

JULIE. No thanks. I'm about ready for another cup of coffee, though.

PETER. I wish that waitress would come back sooner. It's been nearly 15 minutes since my last cup.

JULIE. You told her to come back only every 24 minutes.

PETER. Yes, but I don't want coffee. I want some food and she should intrinsically know when I'm hungry.

JULIE. If you're hungry, eat your taco.

PETER. I can't eat this. (*He violently throws it onto the table.*) Not without eggs. Tacos go really well with eggs. Everyone knows that.

JULIE. Tacos and eggs?

PETER. I hope this café has eggs. I don't know where I could possibly get eggs this time of day.

JULIE. It's 8:30 in the morning.

PETER. But I don't want just any old eggs.

JULIE. Why don't you ask the Eggman for some eggs?

PETER. Who?

JULIE. The Eggman. The guy we've been endlessly critiquing all morning.

PETER. Right!

(The EGGMAN nears.)

EGGMAN. Hi! Want some eggs?

PETER. No. *(Turns away:)* Waitress!

(She enters.)

WAITRESS. Yes?

PETER. Bring me some eggs.

WAITRESS. Sure.

PETER. But I don't want any of your café's eggs. They've probably been sitting around for a while. So what I want you to do is track down a local egg vendor of some sort and get some fresh eggs. Maybe you'll get a tip if you don't screw that up. Think you can handle it?

WAITRESS. Yeah. *(Turns around, to EGGMAN:)* Hi, give me an egg.

EGGMAN. You want an egg?

WAITRESS. Yeah, give me an egg.

EGGMAN. I'm out.

WAITRESS. What? What about all those eggs in your bucket?

EGGMAN. Show eggs. They're wax. See?

(He picks one up, throws it on the ground, and it breaks.)

WAITRESS. Well, do you think you'll be getting some more soon?

EGGMAN. Yeah, I get the leftover eggs from a café.

WAITRESS. Great.

(She walks into the café while the EGGMAN waits.)

EGGMAN. *(To the audience:)* And he waits!

(WAITRESS immediately returns with a bucket of eggs identical to the Eggman's. She hands it to the EGGMAN.)

WAITRESS. Here you go.

EGGMAN. Thanks.

WAITRESS. Can I buy an egg now?

EGGMAN. Sure. That'll be three shillings.

(They barter. She gives him the whole bucket.)

WAITRESS. Pleasure doing business with you.

(She takes an egg out of the new bucket.)

EGGMAN. *(Normal voice:)* See you tomorrow, Rita.

(WAITRESS tosses her egg to PETER. He catches the egg with one hand and shoves the whole thing in his mouth, followed by a huge bite of taco. WAITRESS exits.)

PETER. That's good egg.

(Menacing music again. A giant, masculine CHICKEN enters. He confronts the EGGMAN with the swagger of a crime lord.)

CHICKEN. I hear you've seen selling eggs. You mind telling me where you get those eggs?

EGGMAN. Yes!

CHICKEN. Yes, you mind telling me, or yes, you'll tell me where you get the eggs?

EGGMAN. Huh?

CHICKEN. What?!

EGGMAN. I get them from that café over there.

CHICKEN. Would you happen to know where they get their eggs?

EGGMAN. Buy eggs from me, not them! My eggs are good! I don't know where they get their eggs from. Their eggs are terrible.

CHICKEN. I'll tell you where they get their eggs! From me! They stole my precious babies and sold them at inflated prices on the black market! My poor, poor babies!

EGGMAN. *(Guilty:)* I didn't do it.

CHICKEN. I want what's mine, understand?

EGGMAN. Nope.

CHICKEN. I said I want what's rightfully mine.

EGGMAN. You want back your egg babies?

CHICKEN. No, just give me a cut of the profits. If they're my babies, I think I'm entitled to a portion.

(EGGMAN hands a wad of cash to the CHICKEN.)

CHICKEN. I'm glad we could reach an agreement.

(He snatches an egg as he exits, counting his money and eating the egg.)

JULIE. Now this here represents a rejection of family values. It's a comment on people who work long hours to give their spoiled children what they think are the necessities of life, when in fact they're just materialistic workaholics, too preoccupied with themselves and their possessions to know what's really going on in their children's lives.

PETER. Then their neglected offspring turn to lives of murder, prostitution, and smoking.

JULIE. It really makes you think.

PETER. This is some eventful street corner.

(JULIE and PETER, in succession each take a long, loud sip of coffee.)

JULIE. Hey, Peter, I bet since we've just summed up our comments on this little episode of the Eggman's day and there's nobody talking to him right now, I bet someone will show up in just a couple of seconds to start another witty exchange.

PETER. Wrong.

(On cue, an OFFICIAL from the Department of Agriculture enters. She wears a trench coat and shades.)

OFFICIAL. Eggman? *(Like Mr. Damien, she pronounces it "EGG-muhn.")*

EGGMAN. That's me! Want some eggs?

OFFICIAL. Sir, I'm from the Department of Agriculture. *(She pulls a corn-on-the-cob from her pocket and brandishes it as if it were her ID badge, pulling back the leaves as if they were the folds of a leather wallet containing the "badge," which is corn.)* I've been ordered by my superiors to buy up all of your egg stock in order to maintain the current market price of eggs.

EGGMAN. If you buy all of them, I won't have any more eggs. Then my life will be meaningless.

OFFICIAL. Frankly, sir, that's not my problem. I'm here to make you rich, not happy.

(The OFFICIAL tosses some money at the EGGMAN's feet and he gets on his knees to pick it all up. The OFFICIAL takes the eggs and leaves hurriedly, but not before dumping all of the eggs into a garbage can.)

JULIE. Farmers are taken for granted these days. Their livelihood depends upon the whim of the government and an arbitrary economic infrastructure.

PETER. The government buys up all their crops and throws them away to keep prices in check. *(Sarcastically:)* Progress!

JULIE. I wonder, Peter, is it really progress if it forsakes the people whose lives it supposedly improves? Is it Peter? Is it really? Is it really progress? Is it really? Is it? Peter? Is it? Progress?

PETER. And then there's the inevitable bank foreclosure on the old Joad homestead.

JULIE. Huh?

PETER. I don't know. It was literary.

JULIE. Right.

PETER. You know, with this Eggman and his fragile little chickens carrying on in spite of the odds, I can't help but wonder about the maternal spirit.

JULIE. The woman is mother and she has been crushed since the dawn of time by male domination. I think, as the current masters of

society, we have the responsibility to correct the sexist wrongs of the past.

PETER. Yes! Women need better treatment! They need to be paid the same as men and not be forced to take menial, low-paying jobs. *(Shouts:)* Hey! Waitress!

WAITRESS. Yes?

PETER. We were just talking about how horrible it is that women make little money and have to work degrading jobs.

WAITRESS. I never knew you felt that way, what with the way you demean and insult me all the time.

JULIE. And you're his wife.

PETER. I want to do my part to ensure that women no longer have to work degrading jobs.

WAITRESS. Amen!

PETER. So go away and get a waiter to serve us for the remainder of our visit.

(She shrugs and exits.)

PETER. It feels so good when you can make a difference. Especially here. *(He holds his stomach.)*

(EGGMAN gathers all his things into his arms. He comes up to JULIE and PETER who instinctively flinch. He addresses them in a calm, casual, sane manner.)

PETER. Move along, Eggman.

JULIE. We only sympathize with the working class. That doesn't mean we talk to them.

EGGMAN. You remind me of a story my mother told me when I was a young boy. There once lived a family of squirrels who had a massive abundance of various nuts stored up for the coming winter. But in only the next tree over, there was a family of squirrels who had no nuts and were often very hungry. The more well-off squirrel family never seemed to care, if they even noticed at all. Then the winter came. It was an especially cold winter and nuts

were especially scarce. The father of the hungry squirrel family wished and wished for a solution to his problem. The very next day, a bolt of lightning sent shocks of electricity and glorious fire through the tree of the well-fed squirrel family next door. The rich squirrels now lay dead in a mound of bloated, furry pulp. The hungry squirrel family heard the ruckus and rushed right over to the well-fed squirrel tree and found the dead family. They feasted for many, many months on the nuts the rich squirrel family had hoarded. And when the nuts were all gone, they feasted on the remains of the rich squirrel family itself. And the squirrel family that had once been poor grew old and happy with food in their bellies every single day for the rest of their squirrel lives because they assumed the identities of the now dead original rich squirrel family and took over their well-paying squirrel jobs and nobody ever noticed, because squirrels all look alike. The rich, selfish, dead, and subsequently cannibalized squirrel family, meanwhile, rotted away forever and ever, enduring unspeakable horrors and horrific torture in the seventh level of Squirrel Hell. *(Beat.)* Well, see you later.

(He exits. JULIE and PETER are unimpressed but silent for a few beats.)

JULIE. Any symbolism you can muster?

PETER. Nope. Frankly, I'm disappointed.

JULIE. True. But this could be so much better. There's flow problems.

PETER. Flow problems?

JULIE. These smarmy "commentators" ruin the flow of the play. The remarks about the latent symbolism and whatnot, make them seem so, I don't know...invasive. They really take you out of the action. The play would be so much better without them.

PETER. Huh? What exactly do you mean by "play"?

JULIE. All I said was that this play would be better without...

PETER. What is this "play" nonsense? Do you have trouble discerning fantasy from reality? Real life is one thing and fiction is another. Really, *[First name of actress portraying Julie used here]*.

JULIE. I know that, Peter. Plays are fictional reflections of reality.

PETER. We're sitting on a street corner commenting on the actions of others.

JULIE. Right. In the context of a play. Besides, I hate it that characters in a play can never admit to the fact that they're in a play. It's obvious to everyone but them. And as for the commentators, um, hello, Peter. We're the commentators.

PETER. No, we're objective bystanders.

JULIE. We're not objective bystanders. We're characters. Commentators. Why else would we be on a raised platform speaking so loudly? Sheesh.

PETER. Yet, here we are on this street corner discussing the crushing banalities of everyday life.

JULIE. A street corner? You don't...you think this is real, don't you?

PETER. Well, what we witnessed today was unimaginative, sloppy, and derivative. It was no work of art. Plays are works of art.

JULIE. So? It's still art, just really awful art.

PETER. No, it's reality. Think about it I'm sitting here. You're sitting there. I can taste this coffee. *(Sips.)* You can feel my pinch.

(He hits her in the shoulder instead.)

JULIE. Ow!

PETER. We're highly aware of our surroundings. On the other hand, fantasy is dreamlike, mystical. Sleepy even. Your senses are diminished during dreams. And since all of our senses are intact, it's clearly reality.

JULIE. A play is only a glorified parlor game. It's make believe within the realm of reality, not a change in your plane of existence. How can this be real life?

PETER. Well, this isn't a cartoon, is it? If it's not a cartoon, it's live action. Real life.

JULIE. I'm scared.

PETER. Fear is a side effect of living.

JULIE. I happily thought everything was fake, but now I'm not so sure. I want things to be like they used to. I don't want to question anything! I want to live in my bubble where everything is make believe as it should be!

PETER. Calm down.

JULIE. Yeah. Okay. No. I don't. You're wrong. This *is* a play. All of this is fake, right? I don't believe you. It's a play. It is a play.

PETER. It's not a play. It's real. Look around you—everything is tangible.

JULIE. Ack! Could this at least be a realistic play? You know, the genre of realism?

PETER. No, it's not a realistic play.

JULIE. Why not?

PETER. Because there's a crazy person screaming about eggs and a guy in a chicken suit eating eggs. That ain't realism. It's too far-fetched, ridiculous, and awkwardly self-aware of its own perceived cleverness to be realism. So, it would have to just be reality.

JULIE. (*Paranoia sets in:*) So if it's not realistic, it's absurd!

PETER. No, it can't be absurd either.

JULIE. (*Hapless:*) Well...why not?

PETER. Because it has a definite meaning. Things are being said. Important lessons to take with us are at hand.

JULIE. What?

PETER. Absurd plays just toy with the form or make human interaction seem unreal. They demonstrate the idea of meaninglessness. All those undertones and symbols we pointed out were just lessons to learn. That garbage about the class struggle was our life lesson for today.

JULIE. Couldn't that life lesson actually be the moral of a play?

PETER. No.

JULIE. Why not?

PETER. Because we're not in a play!

JULIE. But, hypothetically, let's say we were.

PETER. But we're not.

JULIE. Just hypothetically, let's say we are.

PETER. No! It's a waste of time to hypothesize about fictional, impossible levels of being. It's pointless to imagine myself in a surreal context of my life as a play. My life is my life, not a play. I hate it when people give me "what if" scenarios. "What if" they say? "What if people had four arms?" Well, they don't, so why bother? It's trivial and annoying. I've got more important things to do. *(He takes a long sip of coffee and the conversation pauses.)*

JULIE. But reality is in fact quite weird. That's why surrealism is so intriguing.

PETER. How is this surreal? We're merely sitting at a table. We do this everyday. It's not weird at all.

JULIE. The crushing banalities of everyday life?

PETER. Exactly!

(A short pause. PETER is a little peeved now. JULIE is merely perplexed. They drink their beverages.)

JULIE. Peter.

PETER. Yes?

JULIE. *(Smug:)* I can't taste my coffee.

PETER. *(Pause, then dismissively:)* So? What do you mean?

JULIE. If I could taste my coffee, that would mean my senses aren't diminished and that all of this is real. But if it were a play, then I wouldn't be able to taste my coffee because my senses would be lessened. And since I can't taste my coffee, this must be a play.

PETER. Well then, rest assured that this is a play.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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