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COULDA-WOULDASHOULD

by Glenn Alterman

Cast of Characters

CY, Yetta's husband, Marty's father

YETTA, Cy's husband, Marty's mother

MARTY, Yetta and Cy's son

COULDA-WOULD-DOULDA

by Glenn Alterman

(Scene: It's about 11:30 A.M. YETTA is seated at the kitchen table finishing her coffee. CY is rushing around getting dressed.)

CY. You're kidding? He said that?

YETTA. That's what he said.

CY. When?

YETTA. This morning when I gave him his bath.

CY. What a kid.

YETTA. Could you bust?

CY. *(Looking around:)* Where's my belt?

YETTA. On the chair.

(He gets it, puts it on.)

Stood up in the tub, put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Ma, I want to be a rabbi."

CY. A rabbi, really?

YETTA. At first I thought he said "rabbit."

CY. *(Stopping:)* What?

YETTA. Yeah, thought he said, "Ma, I want to be a rabbit." Almost dropped the sponge I laughed so hard. I mean can you imagine? But then he looked at me, seemed so serious. You know those eyes of his? Said it again, loud and clear, black and white. Looked like a little Moses in the tub waiting for the waters to part. *(Slowly, very strong:)* "Ma, I want to be a rabbi. A rabbi, you understand?!" I stopped, smiled, what could I...? Said, "Sure, okay, if that's what you want." Washed the soap off, towel-dried him, baby powder, kissed him on the head and gave him a big hug. But then he gave me a look, got upset, started to cry.

CY. Cry? Why?

YETTA. I don't know. I asked him, wouldn't answer. Looked at me like I was the worst mother in the world. Like I'd just stabbed him in the heart or something. Ran to his room, slammed the door, locked it shut. Wouldn't let me in. Couldn't get him out. Been in there all morning.

CY. All morning?

YETTA. All-morning-long!

CY. You're kidding? Where's my shoes?

YETTA. By the sink.

(He gets the shoes, starts putting them on.)

I've been sitting here waiting, didn't want to wake you. We've got a problem Cy.

CY. I'll say, our son. *(Calling to him:)* Marty! I'm taking that lock off his door first thing when I get home tonight. Enough of this shit!

YETTA. What are you talking about? You've got to go talk to him.

CY. Me? About what? I didn't have no fight with him.

YETTA. What fight? Who fought? A misunderstanding.

CY. *(Moving again:)* I don't have time for this. He'll come out when he's good and ready. And stop giving him so many baths for Christ's sake!

YETTA. Talk to him.

CY. Didn't you hear me?

YETTA. He's your son!

CY. I'm late. I'll talk to my son—later.

YETTA. When, at four in the morning when you get home?

CY. *(Grabbing his coat, starting to go:)* Whenever!

YETTA. *(Blocking the door:)* The drunks of the world can wait!

CY. Hey, the drunks of the world put food on this table and don't you forget it! You should thank God we got that bar. *(Looking in his coat pocket:)* Where's my keys?

YETTA. *(Ignoring him, looking toward the bedroom, calling sweetly:)* Marty, come on out. Daddy's leaving for work, come say good bye.

CY. *(Looking:)* Where the hell's...?!

YETTA. *(Sweetly, calling to the bedroom:)* Ma-rty.

CY. Where the hell are they?!

YETTA. On the bureau, where you left them!

CY. *(As he storms out, calling to the bedroom:)* Marty, come on out. I don't got all day.

(YETTA looks anxiously towards the bedroom. Loud banging:)

Martin get out here! You hear me? Out!

(It's quiet for a moment. Then returning, carrying the keys, under his breath:)

He doesn't want to come out.

YETTA. So you're just going to leave?

CY. What do you want me to do, break down the door?

YETTA. *(Turning away, upset:)* Go ahead, go. GO!

CY. *(He starts to leave, but then returning, upset:)* Why's it always got to be this way, huh?! Why, huh?! Why do I got to leave here almost every day with you crying and me with a knot in my stomach?

YETTA. *(Tensely, looking straight at him:)* I am not crying!

CY. Can't I leave here JUST ONCE, YETTA, a pleasant good bye, kiss on the cheek? Why's it always got to be Marty's been bad, or Marty's...? Always something!

YETTA. The drunks of the world are waiting. Go ahead, go!

MARTY'S OFFSTAGE VOICE. STOP IT! BOTH OF YOU! STOP YOUR GOD-DAMN ARGUING!

(A light change. They both turn towards the bedroom. A door slams. MARTY enters: He's in his forties, wearing large children's pajamas, a pair of glasses and a black hat. He's carrying a pen and pad.)

YETTA. What? What's wrong?

MARTY. I can't concentrate! This constant arguing, bickering back and forth!

YETTA. You don't have to yell.

MARTY. Why, did anybody ever just talk here?

CY. Told you he'd come out when he was good and ready.

YETTA. Marty, take your hat off in the house.

MARTY. Ma, I'm trying to finish this scene, please!

YETTA. So what's stopping you? We were just...

MARTY. Please, I got a whole play ahead of me!

YETTA. *(Very cool:)* Sorry, mister playwright.

MARTY. Alright, let's just go back a bit. You were standing here Ma, I'm still in the bedroom, and he's about to leave.

YETTA. But you're here now, just say good bye to him. What's the big...?

MARTY. Ma, please, don't tell me how to write my play. I'm still a kid in this scene: There's a scene later on when he leaves us; that's the big good bye scene.

YETTA. He leaves us?

MARTY. Yeah, but it's not for years. There's still five scenes before...

YETTA. What happens then?

MARTY. Ma!

YETTA. What?! After he leaves, what happens then, tell me!

MARTY. You divorce. He runs around, starts drinking, becomes a drunk. Finally, burnt out, broke, he has to move back in with his mother, gets diabetes, loses both his legs and an eye. Then there's a big father-son hospital scene. And when I leave, he dies.

CY. I die? Alone?

MARTY. Yeah, but that's not till late in the second act.

YETTA. What happens to me?

MARTY. You...never remarry, Ma. End up bitter, alone, miserable in Miami.

YETTA. That's it?!

CY. This is a comedy?

YETTA. Was that all true? Is that what really happens?

MARTY. It's a play Ma, make believe.

CY. So you made all that up about me, right?

MARTY. Let's see, where were we? Ma, you were just about to cry. Dad...

YETTA. Does he really leave us?!

MARTY. How do I know? I'm not God.

CY. 'Course not Yetta! I'd never leave you. Never, I swear!

MARTY. You liar! You leave us when I'm eleven years old.

CY. I thought you just said...!

MARTY. I make it up as I go along.

CY. Hey, what are you tryin' to pull here, huh?!

MARTY. Nothing.

CY. You just gotta start trouble, don'cha?!

MARTY. What?

CY. Some things never change!

MARTY. Dad, what are you talking about?

CY. You, Mister Playwright! S'just like when you were a kid, little mister in-between!

YETTA. Why are you blaming him?!

CY. How she cooed and pampered you all the time. Her little Lord Fauntleroy.

MARTY. I hated...! No dad, that's why I always ran to my room. I hated when... Dad you got it all wrong!

CY. Yeah wrong, right! You sucked up all her...! Nothing left for me. No room left at the inn!

MARTY. *(Throwing his pad and pen down:)* That's bullshit!!

YETTA. What's going on here?!

MARTY. You were too busy fooling around with all your girlfriends! Never home. Never...!

YETTA. What's all this blame? Blaming?!

CY. Only reason I ever fooled around...! Only reason I did was 'cause your mother wouldn't...!

YETTA. The play, Marty! Your play!! WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON HERE?!

(MARTY and CY look at her. It's quiet in the room for a moment, then:)

MARTY. Nothing ma. This is just part of the play. A dramatic moment, that's all. Dad and me were rehearsing the big father-son confrontation scene, top of the second act.

YETTA. So much anger, hostility? Can't you fix it? Make it funny?

MARTY. Ma, this isn't "It's A Wonderful Life." You can't always make things better. Now let's see, where were we?

CY. *(Putting his arms around MARTY's shoulders:)* Marty, you got to change the ending. Please, me dying all alone like that, it's s'too sad.

MARTY. Everybody's a critic.

CY. Couldn't you just...?

MARTY. *(Walking away from him:)* I'm sorry, I can't.

YETTA. You realize you made me the villain here, you realize that?

MARTY. No I didn't.

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CUDDLE
by Bekah Brunstetter

Cast of Characters

ANTHONY, 30s

CAROL, 30s

Character Note

It's important that they wear bland business casual.

Setting

An office building on 38th and 6th. 12th floor.

Acknowledgments

Cuddle premiered at Ars Nova (Jason Eagan, Artistic Director), as part of *Missed Connections NYC*, a collection of short plays by the Ars Nova Play Group, opening January 27, 2010. The cast and crew was as follows:

ANTHONY Zach Shaffer
CAROL Sue Jean Kim

Director Wes Grantom
Lighting Designer Scott Bolman
Projection Designer Richard Dibella
Sound Designer Zane Birdwell
Costume Consultant Emily Rebholz

*Dedicated to Jocey, Emily, and Jason;
and my loving co-workers at Equity Corporate Housing.
Thanks for the hugs.*

CUDDLE

by Bekah Brunstetter

Monday

(Anthony's office. Slightly dark. End of the day. He is drowning in legal sized folders.)

(He attempts to make sense of them, making piles, but gives up. Drops his head into his hands.)

(CAROL knocks softly and enters.)

CAROL. Anthony Taylor?

ANTHONY. *(Confused:)* What? Yes—Hi—?

CAROL. I'm Carol. From payroll. *(Blank look from him.)* We're on the seventh floor. I took the elevator. You didn't sign your expense report.

ANTHONY. Fuck, sorry. Sorry, I said fuck.

CAROL. It's okay.

ANTHONY. I can't do anything right lately. I'm all discombobulated.

CAROL. Great word.

ANTHONY. I like it too.

(He reaches for his coffee and in doing so, knocks a huge pile of folders onto the floor. CAROL considers helping him pick them up. They both look at the sad pile on the floor.)

It's okay. It's fine. I'll just drop and ruin things. I don't know what I'm doing.

CAROL. There is—meaning in—doing. If you just do something you—assign meaning. To it.

(She hands it to him. He signs. CAROL watches him sign. He hands it back.)

CAROL. Do you need a hug?

(Beat.)

ANTHONY. Do you?

(CAROL nods. ANTHONY hesitates, but stands. Walks around to the front of his desk. Awkwardly at first, they grab each other in a large embrace. They settle there.)

(It is only the most amazing hug that has ever happened. Ever. They both exhale. CAROL begins to separate. ANTHONY holds on tight. A long time passes. Suddenly, self consciously, they separate.)

CAROL. So Have a / great night

ANTHONY. It was nice to meet you

(Beat.)

ANTHONY. Yeah / have a great night

CAROL. Nice to meet you too.

(CAROL goes, fast. ANTHONY sits at his desk, thinking of CAROL.)

Tuesday

(The next day.)

(CAROL at Anthony's door.)

(ANTHONY has made better stacks out of his files and is reading the insides of one. He notices her. He is happy to see her.)

ANTHONY. Carol—Hi!

CAROL. Hi.

ANTHONY. Did I forget / to

CAROL. No I was just in the neighborhood. Building. Ha! Thought I would say Hi!

ANTHONY. How's it going?

CAROL. Okay. *(Beat.)*

ANTHONY. *(Looking at a file, suddenly honest:)* My job's so easy and I can't do it right. I can't do it right because I don't care about it. And if I forced myself to care about it and try to do it right then I'm a loser who has to force himself to do mediocre work. At a job he doesn't care about.

And then I feel horrible for hating my job. Because I'm lucky to have it, there are people who don't have jobs.

CAROL. Maybe they should do job drives?

ANTHONY. What?

CAROL. Like winter coats. They could put a box outside the grocery store.

(ANTHONY *smiles for the first time in a week.*)

Everyone down there makes fun of me.

ANTHONY. What's there to make fun of?

CAROL. Sometimes I'm too happy on the phone? Like when I call someone I say 'Hey It's Carol!!!!!!' and I heard them just now, they thought I was in the bathroom, someone said CAROLLLLL!!!!!! And then they all laughed.

ANTHONY. The People in accounting think I'm a dick. I got CCed once by accident, Sandra in accounting said I 'Make out with Rattle-snakes.'

CAROL. Do you?

ANTHONY. I guess sometimes I can come off that way, but I don't mean to, I really don't. I have a lot of love inside of me I think but they just don't see it.

(CAROL *goes to the door. She shuts the door to his office softly. She turns and looks at him. ANTHONY stands. Goes to the front of his desk. CAROL meets him there. They hug each other, deeper. They separate. CAROL goes.*)

Wednesday

(ANTHONY *is pacing the floor of his office.*)

(*Listening at the door for sounds. Nothing. Finally, a knock. He sits and pretends like he's been sitting.*)

ANTHONY. Come in!

(CAROL *enters.*)

CAROL. Hi!

ANTHONY. Hi!

CAROL. You forgot to sign your expense report. Again.

ANTHONY. *Seriously?* Wow, sorry—

CAROL. And you can't turn in two in one week, you have to turn them all in at once. So I'm told.

ANTHONY. Sorry.

(*He signs. Hands it back to her. Looks at her, expectantly.*)

CAROL. Well Happy Wednesday!

ANTHONY. Happy Happy!

CAROL. Almost Friday!

ANTHONY. Big time!

(CAROL heads for the door.)

ANTHONY. I was thinking about the Empire state building just now and if it blew up would we die?

(CAROL considers this.)

CAROL. It's four blocks away.

ANTHONY. Yes, so would we die?

CAROL. I don't know. Well. That's definitely not fun to think about.

(Beat. She heads for the door again.)

ANTHONY. Carol? Where're you from?

CAROL. Maryland. *(Beat.)* Where do you live?

ANTHONY. Astoria, you?

CAROL. Hoboken. With my husband.

ANTHONY. Oh. I don't have a—other. I don't have a—I don't have one. Of those.

(Beat.)

CAROL. He doesn't let me hug him anymore.

He doesn't—he doesn't hug me anymore—

He doesn't think it's efficient. He thinks it's waste of time and I—

I think it's the best—the *best* part of the day. Better than breakfast.

But—he doesn't think so—

ANTHONY. I think so.

CAROL. You do?

(ANTHONY nods. Before either of them know it, there they are again, holding each other.)

ANTHONY. Mmmmm....

CAROL. Mmmmmmmmm.

(They look at each other. They continue to hold each other.)

Thursday

(Lights up on Thursday and CAROL and ANTHONY are laying on top of Anthony's desk, cuddling the crap out of each other.)

CAROL. Where'd you grow up?

ANTHONY. Pennsylvania.

CAROL. I have a cousin there, I think!

(Beat.)

ANTHONY. *The apartment underneath mine has bedbugs.*

(CAROL stirs.)

No, shit, I don't have bed bugs, the apartment underneath mine does. I saw them, my neighbors dragging their headboards and box frames to the street.

(Beat.)

If you saw a bed bug crawling on me, like up my neck and into my hair what would you do?

CAROL. I'd eat it.

ANTHONY. Would you still cuddle me?

CAROL. Yes.

(Beat.)

ANTHONY. You're so soft.

CAROL. *(Burrowing into him:)* I love inserting myself into this part of you.

ANTHONY. *This part right here?*

CAROL. *(Nodding:)* MmmmHmmm....

(She burrows more. They lay there in silence.)

CAROL. I should probably get back.

(She removes herself from him.)

ANTHONY. Come back tomorrow?

CAROL. Definitely.

ANTHONY. I'm going to cuddle the crap out of you.

CAROL. I'm going to cuddle you so hard.

(They smile at each other. She goes.)

Friday

(ANTHONY *waits at his desk.*)

(CAROL *enters, locks the door behind her. She goes straight for ANTHONY and they cuddle. This time on the floor?*)

CAROL. It's raining.

ANTHONY. I know.

(*They cuddle.*)

CAROL. I can't look at CNN anymore, I just can't do it.

ANTHONY. Me neither. They changed the format, it's like I don't know how to do it anymore. I don't know where anything is.

CAROL. And all the pictures and all the terrible stories.

(*Beat.*)

ANTHONY. Would you scratch my back?

CAROL. What?

ANTHONY. It's so itchy—and I can't—there's parts I can't reach. And my Mom used to always do it and I liked it.

(*Awkwardly, she scratches his back, lightly.*)

ANTHONY. No, like—

(*He begins to remove his shirt. CAROL stands quickly.*)

CAROL. No—no—

ANTHONY. Come on—

CAROL. Like on your skin? Like on your naked skin? No!

ANTHONY. (*Desperately:*) Please?

CAROL. I barely know you.

(*She goes for the door and is gone.*)

....Saturday??

(ANTHONY, *in denim. Catching up.*)

(CAROL, *in denim, enters.*)

CAROL. What're you doing here? It's Saturday.

ANTHONY. I like it because nobody's here.

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**DR. CHEKHOV
MAKES A HOUSE CALL**

by Judy GeBauer

Cast of Characters

PAVLA, a Russian aristocrat

MIKHAIL IVANOVICH (MISHA), her husband

NASTYA, their serving girl

ANTON CHEKHOV, a celebrated doctor and playwright

STEPAN STEPANOVICH, a bourgeois upstart

Time

Spring 1899.

Place

Pavla and Misha's country home.

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DR. CHEKHOV MAKES A HOUSE CALL

by Judy GeBauer

(A room with doors opening onto a veranda and a cherry orchard. PAVLA hurries into the room, followed by MISHA. Both are in a state of extreme agitation.)

PAVLA. If only Raissa were not ill. If only she were herself. Has Nastyia taken Raissa's coconut milk to her? It's the only thing that eases her. Why must Raissa be ill on the very day the doctor is coming?

MISHA. Don't fuss, love. It worries the servants. It's wearing me out.

PAVLA. Such a great man to do us this honor. And Raissa sick in bed. It's so embarrassing.

MISHA. There would be no need to call a doctor if she were well.

PAVLA. He is celebrated far and wide, Misha. Do you understand?

MISHA. Yes, yes.

PAVLA. You never understand anything really important.

MISHA. I understand that he is the guest of our good friend and neighbor Ivan Andreyovich. I understand that he is a great man of letters and a fine doctor and is taking time out of his holidays with his old school chum to come to our home and examine our daughter because he knows we are anxious about our little Raissa's chronic fever. There. Do I understand?

PAVLA. Leave it to you to get everything mixed up.

(Enter NASTYA.)

PAVLA. Oh what do you want? Did you take Raissa her milk? Why do you pester me?

(Enter CHEKHOV.)

NASTYA. The doctor, madam.

PAVLA. Yes, if the man ever gets here, for goodness sake be pleasant and polite and show him right into this room. What's keeping him?

CHEKHOV. Good afternoon.

PAVLA. Good afternoon to you, sir. I am terribly sorry to be inhospitable but we are expecting—

CHEKHOV. Doctor Chekhov.

PAVLA. You have met him? He's in the neighborhood, you know, and he has consented... He's a brilliant writer, too. But indifferent

to punctuality. He should be here at this moment. But oh no, he's off somewhere no doubt writing a second act.

CHEKHOV. Madam, I am—

PAVLA. And our daughter languishes. If only the famous were not so self-absorbed.

MISHA. A great honor, sir. Please come this way. Do excuse my wife. She is beside herself with concern over our Raissa's fever.

PAVLA. I hope you will call again when the house isn't in an uproar.

(MISHA and CHEKHOV go out.)

Who in the world was that? And what a time to call unannounced.

NASTYA. It was—

PAVLA. Oh, the samovar, Nastya. Why have you not rolled in the samovar? And those little cakes. Did you prepare those coconut cakes that I expressly—

NASTYA. Yes, madam.

PAVLA. The doctor will be here any minute.

(NASTYA gapes at PAVLA.)

Don't just stand there.

NASTYA. Yes, madam.

(NASTYA walks out.)

(A brief moment and STEPAN STEPANOVICH enters from the orchard.)

STEPAN. Pavla, my sweetmeat.

PAVLA. Stepan Stepanovich. Oh not you. Oh not today. Oh not now. Any moment we are expecting the great Anton Chekhov from the Moscow Art Theatre.

STEPAN. Yes. I have seen one of his plays.

PAVLA. Of course he's a doctor, too.

STEPAN. There wouldn't be much point in asking a playwright to examine Raissa.

PAVLA. My poor little pipkin. I'm in such a state.

STEPAN. You are at your prettiest when you are in a state.

PAVLA. You must go away now and not say silly things which Misha will overhear and misunderstand. He has so little understanding.

Oh Stepan, Stepan, why are we never alone? Why must you be an upstart bourgeois with pots of money and no background?

(Enter NASTYA with the samovar and tea trolley.)

Have some tea, Stepan Stepanovich. Before you leave. Nastya, has the doctor arrived?

NASTYA. I wouldn't know.

PAVLA. The girl is hopeless. You should be standing by the door waiting to admit him, Nastya, instead of dawdling about with trolleys.

STEPAN. I saw the doctor's carriage standing outside—

PAVLA. Outside a tavern, probably. I know those Moscow society doctors. I could tell you such stories. Why, Fyodor Nikolayovich, my first cousin, told me... Nastya, leave the room, please.

(NASTYA goes out.)

(STEPAN goes to the doors and looks out at the cherry orchard.)

STEPAN. Pavla.

PAVLA. No.

STEPAN. No what?

PAVLA. I will never sell the cherry orchard. Stop asking.

STEPAN. Actually I was going to suggest you hurry upstairs and see how Raissa is feeling. You might be pleasantly surprised.

PAVLA. The poor, poor little thing. How she tosses. How she moans in her sleep, crying for Mumbledy.

STEPAN. Her doll?

PAVLA. Her imaginary friend.

STEPAN. Imaginary... Is not Raissa fourteen?

PAVLA. But in her delirium, Stepan, in her fever dreams, she is four.

(Enter MISHA.)

STEPAN. Mikhail Ivanovich.

MISHA. Stepan Stepanovich.

PAVLA. Has he come?

MISHA. Yes. Half an hour since.

PAVLA. I mean the doctor.

MISHA. So do I.

PAVLA. I mean Doctor Chekhov.

MISHA. He's upstairs right now with Raissa.

STEPAN. Alone with a fourteen year old girl?

MISHA. Of course not. Her Nanny is with them. For the sake of modesty I stepped out of the room. Oh, those cakes I love.

(He gobbles several small cakes.)

PAVLA. You mean the doctor is... Why didn't someone...?

(She hurries from the room.)

MISHA. You're wasting your time, Stepan Stepanovich.

STEPAN. Wasting my time, Mikhail Ivanovich?

MISHA. I see you surveying the landscape with your covetous eyes.

STEPAN. I came for cake and tea. Not for the cherry orchard.

MISHA. The cherry orchard? You want that, too?

STEPAN. You know I've made an offer to buy the cherry orchard.

MISHA. I know you want Pavla.

STEPAN. Pavla.

MISHA. Pavla.

STEPAN. Your wife Pavla.

MISHA. My beloved wife Pavla.

STEPAN. You mistake, Mikhail Ivanovich.

MISHA. No, I do not, Stepan Stepanovich.

STEPAN. You think you know but you don't.

MISHA. Know what?

STEPAN. What you think you know.

MISHA. What is it I think I know?

STEPAN. What you surmise.

MISHA. Do you imply that I think I know what I surmise? You go too far!

STEPAN. You know more than you surmise.

MISHA. Elucidate.

STEPAN. You have overheard something that causes you to suspect.

MISHA. Suspect what? Try these cakes.

STEPAN. What you heard was not what you thought you heard.

MISHA. What do you think I heard?

STEPAN. You heard a simple declaration and construed it as a situation.

MISHA. I heard a declaration and construed it as seduction.

STEPAN. As I said. A situation construed as seduction drawn from your deduction of my declaration.

MISHA. Thank goodness that's all cleared up.

STEPAN. I, too, am relieved.

MISHA. Imagine me thinking you were seducing Pavla...

STEPAN. Ridiculous.

MISHA. ...who is above your station...

STEPAN. Absurd.

MISHA. ...you having any station at all only because you married that silly twit Olga Marya who is gorgeous and wealthy but...well...

STEPAN. The audacity.

MISHA. Tell me, Stepan Stepanovich, man to man, as we're on the topic, how is Olga Marya's conversation? What does she have to say? What are her thoughts? What ideas does she espouse?

STEPAN. Olga Marya reads what I tell her to read and she discusses my ideas with conviction and clarity. She plays the piano never too loud and only uses polite French phrases.

MISHA. Pavla is the soul of kindness and good judgment. She is a loving and prudent wife and mother. She manages our household; she maintains order without strife or misunderstanding.

STEPAN. And she owns the cherry orchard. So she says.

MISHA. That, too.

STEPAN. Which, as you know, really belongs to me.

MISHA. No.

STEPAN. I have offered her a fair price for it, though I should not have to buy what is mine.

MISHA. It has been in Pavla's family for five generations.

STEPAN. I brought a map.

MISHA. I thought you came for cake.

STEPAN. The boundaries are clearly drawn. The orchard sits on my land.

MISHA. Land which you bought from an impoverished nobleman presuming you would be accepted into the finer homes.

STEPAN. And here I stand.

MISHA. Hardly accepted.

STEPAN. But invited.

MISHA. If you want the orchard, Stepan Stepanovich, you will have to take Pavla with it.

STEPAN. I'm agreeable to that.

(Enter DOCTOR CHEKHOV.)

CHEKHOV. A pen. Paper, if you would be so good.

(MISHA takes these things from a drawer in the table. CHEKHOV sits down to write.)

MISHA. Did you bleed her?

CHEKHOV. I'm a doctor, not a tailor.

(Enter PAVLA.)

PAVLA. Surely you're not writing a scene for your drama now. With Raissa's life hanging by a thread.

MISHA. By a thread?

CHEKHOV. A prescription for a mild syrup.

PAVLA. And Raissa? Is she...? Will she...?

(Offstage NASTYA screams.)

(Silence. CHEKHOV writes out the prescription. STEPAN pours a cup of tea. MISHA swallows a cake. PAVLA shuts the door to the rest of the house.)

CHEKHOV. This will speed your daughter's recovery. An elixir which reduces inflammation and swelling and will subside the toxins collaborating in her system. She will recover from this malady. She will grow into beauty and strength if she can only find a way out of drudgery.

PAVLA. Nastya does all the drudgery.

CHEKHOV. But you see, here in the country one has leisure to contemplate one's fellow man and one sees how very dreary, how very stifling, how very meaningless his life is.

PAVLA. Raissa suffers from this?

CHEKHOV. As do we all, dear lady.

MISHA. You should have bled her.

(NASTYA screams and rushes into the room.)

(They all look at her.)

PAVLA. You have interrupted Doctor Chekhov's diagnosis.

NASTYA. Mumbledy is...

PAVLA. If you wish to say something...

NASTYA. No, no. It's nothing. Just a ghost.

(She goes out.)

MISHA. The superstitious peasant class. What can you do?

PAVLA. You were saying, Doctor?

CHEKHOV. Most people's lives are dull and senseless, and we as human beings are obligated to find our way out of the rut.

STEPAN. The rut.

MISHA. Try a coconut cake.

CHEKHOV. We live our lives as though our tragedies mattered, but we are actually performing in a comedy. We pretend our lives have purpose when they have none. We simulate being significant when we are anything but. When we finally accept that we are ciphers, that we have no value and nothing to offer the earth, then we become exalted. Then mankind becomes truly heroic.

PAVLA. And Raissa is afflicted with the torpor of mankind?

CHEKHOV. She has an allergy to coconut. Do you serve coconut in this house?

PAVLA. No.

MISHA. Never.

STEPAN. Doctor, may I be permitted to put you a case in point? Say one wishes to recover something belonging to him but to do this he must destroy a friendship.

CHEKHOV. Precisely. You have come to the crux.

STEPAN. Do you say one should see this as funny?

CHEKHOV. Hilarious.

STEPAN. A sort of joke.

CHEKHOV. If only the czar would laugh more.

PAVLA. Well, that poor little boy of his.

CHEKHOV. Yes. Yes. There you have it.

PAVLA. An allergy, you say?

MISHA. To coconut, you say?

CHEKHOV. Deadly.

MISHA. That explains the swelling.

CHEKHOV. The swelling, the choking, the dilated pupils, the sweats, the chills, the hallucinations. As to this last point. A doctor hears many things in the sick room. I promise you that I don't enter the homes of my patients and carry away their private thoughts and concerns only to create theatrical pieces with them. But who exactly is this Mumbledy?

PAVLA. I have no idea.

MISHA. I leave the supernatural business to the women.

STEPAN. But to continue, Doctor. You see out these windows. The lovely cherry trees. Say a man owned them by right and title and say there is some dispute over the actual boundary lines.

PAVLA. Don't bother the doctor with nonsense.

STEPAN. He is beneath his neighbors in birth and wealth, yet he owns the trees by virtue of land recently purchased with his wife's annuity. And he may not take the lands because of the boundary. Is he really supposed to laugh at this?

MISHA. Trees. Boundary disputes. This is the stuff of theatre, would you agree, Doctor Chekhov? Not real life.

PAVLA. Misha, call Nastya in and have her take away those awful cakes. I can't guess why she served them. If I've told her once...

CHEKHOV. Might one stroll among those trees?

PAVLA. Oh. Of course, if you'd like to.

MISHA. Allow me, Doctor.

STEPAN. No. I will show him around. The orchard's on my land, not yours.

MISHA. He cured my child. I will show him the orchard.

(CHEKHOV exits as they continue arguing.)

STEPAN. The orchard isn't yours to show.

MISHA. And Pavla isn't yours!

PAVLA. Misha, for heavens sake, be reasonable. Would I consider an affair with a man who actually sat in a school room?

MISHA. Pavla would never sleep with a man who dresses the way you do.

PAVLA. Nastya!

(Enter NASTYA.)

Get rid of those dreadful cakes. Never serve them again.

NASTYA. But you expressly... Yes, madam.

PAVLA. And that screaming.

NASTYA. Well but it was—

PAVLA. And besides, Misha, Stepan and I are practically cousins. In a figurative sense. It's indecent to think—

NASTYA. I saw Mumbledy.

STEPAN. You can keep Pavla. Just give me my orchard.

PAVLA. Is that all I am to you? A piece of real estate?

NASTYA. I saw Mumbledy creeping down the stairs looking all horrid and—

MISHA. The moment the doctor leaves, Stepan Stepanovich, you and I will settle this matter outside with pistols, or any tool of destruction you choose.

NASTYA. Mumbledy is a man!

STEPAN. I am at your service. We will dispense with seconds.

MISHA. Though why I should deign to fire upon a peasant I cannot explain even to myself.

NASTYA. A man all grown!

MISHA. Your choice of weapons, Stepan Stepanovich.

PAVLA. You're both being childish. I insist that you—

STEPAN. Fists are good enough for me. And more than good enough for you, Mikhail Ivanovich.

PAVLA. —stop all this talk of duels. Take the orchard, you boor! You try taking on all the bother that goes with those trees. You prune them, you spray them, you pick fruit all summer, you fall off your ladder and break your leg and carry those baskets to the wagons. That's what you were brought up to do.

NASTYA. There he is! There's Mumbledy! The walking dead!

(She screams.)

(By now PAVLA, STEPAN, and MISHA are all shrieking at each other and pay no attention.)

(Enter CHEKHOV.)

(Sudden silence.)

(Then laughter which grows to hysteria.)

MISHA. You have cured us, Doctor. Cured us all.

PAVLA. My life has taken on new perspective.

STEPAN. I see a future that is bright and filled with hope.

CHEKHOV. May I drink some tea before I leave?

NASTYA. Doctor, do you think there's any such thing as ghosts?

(Everyone laughs.)

PAVLA. Life is truly a comedy.

CHEKHOV. But Konstantin, brilliant and innovative Konstantin, will insist my plays are tragedies. "Nina goes mad. Kostya takes his own life. How can we laugh, Anton?" he cries to me, and I reply to him, "My dear, dear Stanislavsky, what have we but laughter? We must see the joke. It's theatre's *raison d'être*. Mankind's only hope. It's what raises us above the beasts."

MISHA. Hysterical.

PAVLA. Is this what they teach in the medical schools?

STEPAN. What did you think of the orchard?

CHEKHOV. Utterly beautiful. But for the rot that's set in.

MISHA. Rot?

PAVLA. He said rot.

STEPAN. He said rot.

CHEKHOV. I am not a tree surgeon but I know disease when I see it. Those trees are doomed. But to walk among them, breathe their sweet fragrance as they slowly perish. Cherries in their final blooming.

(He drinks his tea.)

I must go. Ivan Andreyovich has arranged a reading of my new play. If you're free this evening, please come. It concerns three girls who live in the country. Like Raissa. Raissa is a splendid young woman and she will grow strong. Never fear. Uh. Yes. She will. She positively will.

PAVLA. Thank you, thank you, Doctor Chekhov.

(He stands waiting.)

A thousand times thank you.

(He clears his throat.)

MISHA. Oh. Your...Pavla, my pet, the doctor's...um...

PAVLA. His coat? Hat?

MISHA. His fee.

PAVLA. Yes, yes. Of course. In all the commotion... You have a mother's gratitude, Doctor Chekhov. Nastya. Come in here, Nastya.

NASTYA. I'm standing behind you, madam.

PAVLA. Give Doctor Chekhov two rubles. I'll pay you back later. Two rubles would be correct?

CHEKHOV. Actually I was wondering as to the whereabouts of the "convenience." But, certainly, two rubles is more than generous.

MISHA. The "convenience" is out these doors and to the left down the path and behind the... Oh hell, cut through the orchard.

STEPAN. The dying orchard.

MISHA. You can't miss it. Nastya will meet you at your carriage with your...

(CHEKHOV goes out through the orchard.)

STEPAN. Rot?

PAVLA. We must laugh, Stepan Stepanovich. Doctor's orders.

NASTYA. I don't have two rubles, madam.

PAVLA. You're a thrifty girl. You must have something.

NASTYA. You never paid me, madam. I am a serf.

STEPAN. Not since the Emancipation, Nastya.

PAVLA. Whatever that is. Misha, my dear, find two rubles for Doctor Chekhov.

MISHA. I rely on you to provide me with funds, my precious. I married you for your money after all.

STEPAN. You let my trees die.

PAVLA. Then surely Raissa's little kitty bank...?

MISHA. You allowed her to spend her savings on her velvet gown, bag, and shoes last Christmas.

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FIRST COMMUNION

by Mary Gallagher

Cast of Characters

First Communion has a cast of as many actresses as you want to use. **They should be adults or teenagers, not actual children.**

JOAN, the leading communicant. A very appealing grownup actress, playing a 7-year-old girl. She should have a quality of innocence, and be funny.

CHORUS, grownup actresses of all types and ages, playing 7-year-old girls. Any number can play.

ENORMOUS NUN, a giant puppet which is manipulated by female actresses—as many as it takes, depending on the puppet's design—who speak in unison as the Enormous Nun. Or the Enormous Nun can be played by an actress who is “huge” in some visual, theatrical and funny/scary way.

Production Notes

The stage should be empty. There are no set pieces, and there should be no design element which comments on the church except what's in the script. There are no props except those few specified in the script. The actresses wear grownup casual clothes with the additional comic and slightly surreal costume pieces specified in the script.

There is a hymn which is sung by the communicants during the piece: “You Come to My Heart, Dearest Jesus.” You can make up your own simple, childlike melody. You can also use a different hymn, which should be simple, childlike and appropriate for First Communion.

FIRST COMMUNION

by Mary Gallagher

(JOAN enters, carrying a First Communion veil, white gloves, white paper shoes and knee pads. During this speech, she juggles all this stuff as she awkwardly puts on her knee pads, paper shoes, white gloves, and last of all, solemnly, her veil.)

JOAN. *(Happy and excited; to the audience:)* I loved Jesus! Jesus loved me! He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." Church was where Jesus lived, and the tabernacle was His beautiful golden room where He could be alone. I wished I had my own room. But we had too many kids. Nine kids! It was loud! But it just seemed normal. All the families we knew had tons of kids. But I loved being Catholic! We were the One True Church, and nobody else's church counted for anything. I felt very lucky! Especially when I was seven years old and I got to make my First Holy Communion. Jesus, the real live Jesus, was going to come into my soul in person! So my soul had to be spotless white, without sin or stain. I made my First Confession the day before my First Communion. Sister said that after our First Confession, our souls *would* be spotless white, and all we had to do was never commit another sin ever again. I promised Jesus I would do that. I would abstain from sin and stay pure forevermore! So when I went home, I tried not to talk.

(Big sound of a Clicker! JOAN jumps to attention as the CHORUS OF COMMUNICANTS enters, each separately, in various parts of the stage. They wear white veils, white paper shoes and knee pads. They do the child's stilted "procession walk," each alone, but in unison. Big sound of a CLICKER! signals them to stop, start again, turn, etc. JOAN is doing the procession walk too.)

ALL. We practiced for days. *(Click-Click!)* We knew that we would get to wear beautiful white dresses and white veils and white knee socks— *(Click-Click!)* —and white shoes and white gloves— *(Click-Click!)* White! and without stain!

(JOAN and the CHORUS mime having the hair routine done to them as:)

JOAN. The night before my First Communion, my mom combed my hair with water and rolled it in pincurls and stuck it with bobby pins. The comb smelled sharp and oily, dipping in and out of the glass of water, raking through my hair. I felt the water dribbles running down my neck and the tips of the bobby pins scraping my scalp. I felt special 'cause my mom was taking all this time with me

instead of the other kids. I felt very special, knowing that under my beautiful white veil, I was going to have curly hair.

ALL. And it was all for God.

(Click-Click! JOAN and the CHORUS, all in different spots upstage, fold their hands in prayer and all eyes focus on one spot out in the house.)

ALL. The great day finally came! We were all in white. We were hungry. We had to fast from the night before.

JOAN. You couldn't take Our Blessed Lord into your stomach if it was full of Frosted Flakes.

(Music Cue: An organ or piano softly plays: "You come to my heart, dearest Jesus..." JOAN and the CHORUS line up horizontally across upstage, facing off left, with JOAN at one end. JOAN leads the line as it begins snaking downstage toward stage right center, doing the procession walk.)

JOAN. *(Over the music.)* We lined up behind the priest in his long shining vestments, carrying the big gold cross, and the altar boys in their white cloudy things. All the boys in second grade in their black suits got to go first, ahead of us.

ALL. But we got to look perfect!

JOAN. We walked to the music, just like Sister taught us. We kept our eyes straight ahead.

ALL. Above all, we did not look at the people in the pews.

JOAN. I felt very holy.

CHORUS. We all felt very holy.

(All sing in light, childish natural voices as JOAN turns, enters the invisible "pew," goes to the end, far stage right, and turns front. The CHORUS follows, each turning front in her place, everybody singing.)

ALL. *(Singing:)*

YOU COME TO MY HEART, DEAREST JESUS.
LET ME HOLD YOU SO CLOSE TO MY BREST.
I WHISPER, "I LOVE YOU, MY JESUS.
YOU ARE WELCOME, DEAR JESUS, MY GUEST."

(They keep singing till all are facing front. Music ends in thrilling chords. Click-Click! All kneel.)

ALL. The Mass began.

(All look bored.)

HALF THE CHORUS. Ad Deum quilaetificat.

THE OTHER HALF. Juventutem meum.

JOAN. It was a very long Mass.

(The CHORUS slowly sinks, sitting or lying in various positions on the stage. JOAN continues kneeling but looks troubled.)

JOAN. I started feeling sick.

CHORUS MEMBER #1. The heat...

CHORUS MEMBER #2. The boredom...

CHORUS MEMBER #3. The endlessness...

CHORUS MEMBER #4. The air stifling with people smells...

ALL. Perfume and soap and aftershave and cigarette smoke clinging to hair and clothes, and baby smells...

JOAN. I felt...queasy.

CHORUS. *(Makes queasy noises.)*

JOAN. The feeling rose and grew.

CHORUS. *(Makes louder queasy noises.)*

JOAN. Should I leave or should I stay? But how could I walk out on my First Holy Communion, in my perfect stainless white First Communion dress and veil and shoes and socks and gloves? I'd wreck the whole procession! And how would Jesus feel? I'd be walking out on Jesus! But if I threw up in my First Communion outfit, I'd wreck the whole procession worse!

(JOAN leaps to her feet. The CHORUS looks at her, startled. They scramble into their places and kneel, looking very holy, their hands folded in prayer. JOAN starts climbing clumsily over the CHORUS, stepping on them, getting entangled in their veils, etc... The CHORUS groans, whimpers, mutters. Meanwhile JOAN continues to the audience.)

JOAN. If I threw up in church, Sister would have to call in Mr. Hawkins, our school janitor. Mr. Hawkins, in his overalls, would drag his mop and pail into the gold-and-marble church, all full of gorgeous flowers, and he'd bring that pink stuff that looks like eraser crumbs, that he always dumps on vomit! Oh, if I threw up on my spotless white embroidered dress and stainless new white shoes, he'd dump that stuff on me! Please dear Baby Jesus, let me make it to the door!

(JOAN climbs over the last Chorus Member to the center aisle, folds her hands in prayer, turns and walks downstage, eyes on the floor.)

CHORUS. Everybody looked at her. She looked at the marble floor.

JOAN. *(Mimes pushing open invisible doors.)* I pushed open the double doors. Fresh air!

CHORUS. AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

JOAN. *(Sits, hugs her knees.)* I sat on the church steps and watched the cars go by. I started feeling better.

(Sound of consecration bells. The CHORUS closes their eyes, sticks out their tongues and receives Communion. Eyes closed, they swallow the dry, sticky Host with difficulty, trying to look holy, as:)

JOAN. I peeked inside. Communion wasn't over— I hadn't missed it yet! I wanted to go back in and receive Communion now, but I wasn't sure if it was right—all this in and out. But Jesus wouldn't want me to miss my First Communion! I was ready, without sin, my soul was spotless white! And I wanted to take Jesus into my breast, just like in our song. So I went back in.

(Same music resumes. As JOAN re-enters the church, the CHORUS rises and sings.)

CHORUS. *(Singing:)*

YOU COME TO MY HEART, DEAREST JESUS.
LET ME HOLD YOU SO CLOSE TO MY BREAST.
I WHISPER, "I LOVE YOU, MY JESUS."
YOU ARE WELCOME, DEAR JESUS, MY GUEST."

(They hum another verse. Meanwhile, hands folded, JOAN walks upstage, turns front, kneels, mimes receiving Communion. She rises, goes back to her "pew" and climbs over the CHORUS again. They are more annoyed, grumbling. JOAN closes her eyes as if praying in holy style, but speaks to the audience.)

JOAN. Kneeling at the altar and taking that warm, dry, floury chip into my dry mouth and swallowing it in shreds, as it stuck to my palate and slowly melted on my tongue and trickled to my stomach, which rumbled with hunger, I felt holier than ever. Jesus was my guest.

ALL. *(Singing:)* "YOU ARE WELCOME, DEAR JESUS, MY GUEST."

(Music stops.)

JOAN. When it was all over, we became ourselves again.

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LOVE ALWAYS
A COMEDY ON THE PAINS OF A LIFE OF LOVE
by **Jim Fagan**

Cast of Characters

MAN

WOMAN

Set Notes

A setting made up of director's blocks works best. If you had the option of building, a simple tree in the middle of the stage would work nicely; it could be leaned upon, maybe climbed at some point, or maybe even producing a couple of apples that could be munched on during the play. Other minimal props needed could be placed in the tree, or strewn about.

Production Notes

This play explores the growth of relationships between a man and a woman, starting with infancy and growing all the way through to old age. It's best to keep the pacing high, and to really embrace playing the age and that growth as you go. At the end of the play, which is more sincere, avoid a caricature of the elderly. To get more actors involved, the ages could be divided up among various actors, but some of the meaning might be lost.

LOVE ALWAYS

A COMEDY ON THE PAINS OF A LIFE OF LOVE

by Jim Fagan

(MAN is sitting on the floor playing with a pail and shovel. WOMAN eyes him intently. At the start, they are small children, they grow to their ripeness of age by the end of the play.)

WOMAN. Good morning!

MAN. *(With a speech impediment:)* Hewoh. *(Hello.)*

WOMAN. Whatcha doin'?

MAN. Building a sand palace from Mars.

WOMAN. Oh. *(Pause.)* It's big.

MAN. Duh. *(Pause.)* I once pushed a gewl *(girl)* down and made her eat sand. She kinda liked it though so it backfired.

WOMAN. How come?

MAN. She was a gewl and gewls a gwoss. And ugwy.

WOMAN. So? Boys are mean and gross and ugly. Besides, I would never kiss you, you smell like cheetos.

MAN. *(Looking up from his digging:)* Well, I guess not all gewls are gwoss. My mom is a gewl and she's not gwoss.

WOMAN. My dad is a boy and he *is* gross but I do like him because he's funny and the strongest ever.

MAN. *(Pulls a full ice cream cone out of the pail.)* You want a lick of my ice cream cone?

WOMAN. Ok.

(MAN shoves the cone into her face and laughs.)

WOMAN. Hey! Why did you do that? I hate you! I hate boys!

MAN. *(Embarrassed, and maybe, just slightly older:)* I don't know what came over me, I really wanted to share my ice cream with you. I'm so sorry.

WOMAN. That was so mean!

MAN. *(He offers his sleeve.)* Here. Go on, take it.

WOMAN. *(Wiping her face on it, licking her lips:)* At least it was vanilla. I like vanilla. I like you again. What if I pushed you down now and kissed you on the lips?

MAN. I would kill you forever.

WOMAN. You know, Grownups kiss on the lips all the time. It's totally gross.

MAN. That *is* totally gross.

WOMAN. I know, totally gross. (*Pause.*) You want to try it?

MAN. No! (*Tentatively:*) Do you want to try it?

WOMAN. No. Maybe. Do you?

MAN. Right now? I have baseball soon...

WOMAN. My older sister kisses her boyfriend in his car.

MAN. I don't have a car. What about behind that bush?

WOMAN. Behind a bush does sound romantic, but considering you pushed an ice cream cone in my face and you don't own a car and you smell like Cheetos, I think I'd rather not now.

MAN. (*Turning to leave, slowly, then turning back:*) Do you want to hold hands and pass notes with me?

WOMAN. (*Startled:*) For how long?

MAN. I dunno. A day or two. Maybe a week.

WOMAN. Some people in school have been passing notes and holding hands for a month now.

MAN. A month! What? With the same person?

WOMAN. What's so bad about that?

MAN. Huh? Oh, nothing. Nothing, I just...whoa...a whole month...

WOMAN. It's called dating.

MAN. I know what it's called.

WOMAN. I would be your girlfriend.

MAN. I'm not dumb. (*Pause.*) So, you wanna?

WOMAN. My father says I'm too young to date. He knows what all boys are up to and he will shoot them on sight with his gun because he's a cop and a hunter and a prize boxer and a Pulitzer prize winner.

MAN. Oh.

WOMAN. He's sending me to an all girls school.

MAN. Strict. (*Pause.*) I'm going to an all boys school.

WOMAN. Why, are you gay?

MAN. No!

WOMAN. Prove it.

(She goes for a kiss, but he excitedly says...)

MAN. Remember at that "All Sexes Dance A-Thon"? I tried dancing with you!

WOMAN. Oh yeah. I was surrounded by a fortress of my all my best leopard-print-skirt-wearing girlfriends.

MAN. That sounds familiar. Did you meet them at the nunnery?

WOMAN. You mean the Saint Lady's "School for Gifted Young Girls Becoming Women."

MAN. Heavy. I go to "Boys Prep."

WOMAN. Prep for what?

MAN. I don't know, I don't pay much attention in class.

WOMAN. At the Saint Lady's' "School for Gifted Young Girls becoming Women," I learned that girls mature faster than boys.

MAN. I can see that.

WOMAN. And that when boys are in cold water their thingies shrink.

MAN. That. That is untrue...

WOMAN. And that men are inherently evil, because *Adam* gave *Eve* the apple, And Queen Elizabeth was the real Shakespeare, and Martha Washington walked on the moon, and Celine Dion invented the internet...

MAN. *(Putting on a tough guy attitude:)* You don't want to waste that pretty head on learning do you?

WOMAN. What?

MAN. Common sweetness, If I told you you had a nice body, would you hold it against me?

WOMAN. Not interested. I already have a boyfriend.

MAN. *(Completely dropping the bad boy attitude:)* Oh come on!

WOMAN. And where did you learn to talk like that?

MAN. *(Dejected:)* I started to pay attention at Boys Prep.

WOMAN. All you boys prep kids are such wannabe badasses, taking your white collar drugs and thinking it gives you street cred. I'm dating a real man now.

MAN. Where's he from?

WOMAN. Public school.

MAN. Impudent strumpet!

WOMAN. (*A startled pause.*) Huh?

MAN. (*An embarrassed explanation:*) Boys Prep.

WOMAN. Look, just get lost.

MAN. I'm sorry. (*Beat.*) What if I were to convince you that we're soul mates, couldn't I just have a small peck on the lips...?

WOMAN. I might...but we better not in front of my boyfriend because he'll stab you.

MAN. Can't you break up with your boyfriend?

WOMAN. I'd really rather not. I mean, we might be soul mates, but he drives a motorcycle and you drive a mini van.

MAN. It's a full sized van!

WOMAN. Uh oh, I think I hear the sweet purr of a man with an engine between his legs approaching!

MAN. Is he going to go to college with you?

WOMAN. No. He's not going. He's going to be on tour with his band.

MAN. Maybe we can study together.

WOMAN. Maybe... Are you in my advanced learning class?

MAN. With Professor Hippie-Roots?

WOMAN. Yes that's the one.

MAN. (*Pulling a book out of nowhere:*) I've never really opened the book. I don't want to hurt the re-sale value.

WOMAN. Oh, you mean *Love and the Process of Life: A study of A Mammals Chemistry through the History of Art?*

MAN. Yes that's the one.

WOMAN. I love that book. Can I sit and read with you?

MAN. I think that would be nice.

WOMAN. I like being in class with you.

MAN. I like reading here with you about all of life's processes.

WOMAN. I like lying in an open field and watching other people play Frisbee but not joining because I find it cliché.

MAN. I like you a lot.

WOMAN. I like you too.

MAN. I'm lost in your eyes.

WOMAN. I'll melt in your arms.

MAN. You are all I've ever needed.

WOMAN. You are all I've ever expected!

MAN. What's that supposed to mean?

WOMAN. Nothing. Don't get so insecure it's not flattering.

MAN. (*Delighted:*) When women get insecure, it's a green light!

WOMAN. Don't get too close, I learned self-defense in my pilates class.

MAN. I sometimes get drunk at parties and revert to animalistic grunting and beer can smashing in a desperate attempt to try and impress you.

WOMAN. I sometimes surround myself at parties with my girlfriends and we all wear revealing clothing but then get really mad if you try and hit on me but secretly it's what I was hoping you'd do.

MAN. I'm drunk right now.

WOMAN. I'm really horny.

MAN. Me too. I love college.

WOMAN. I love you.

MAN. Thanks. I mean, me too.

WOMAN. Good.

(*WOMAN and MAN Lean into kiss, when suddenly the WOMAN turns away.*)

WOMAN. Actually, I don't feel like it right now.

MAN. What?

WOMAN. I'm kind of tired.

MAN. Tired? Are you kidding me? We're college kids. We are supposed to, you know, do stuff...

WOMAN. You go ahead and do stuff on your own. I want to be a doctor.

MAN. A doctor! That's a ridiculous amount of schooling.

WOMAN. Fine, I'll be a lawyer then. You have missed the point.

MAN. Come on, let's not be so cold. (*Referring to the book:*) Remember the part with the two turtles?

WOMAN. Oh alright.

(They lean in again.)

WOMAN. Wait, no.

MAN. What now?

WOMAN. Well, I'm a little worried.

MAN. About what?

WOMAN. Well, lots of things. First of all, I'm no slut.

MAN. It's just a kiss.

WOMAN. I mean, if you think I'm a slut, then what would my father say? What would my *boyfriend* say?

MAN. You still have a boyfriend?

WOMAN. Yes, we've been together since high school. He works at a processing plant. He might be a floor supervisor soon.

MAN. I have a job.

WOMAN. Starbucks is not a job.

MAN. It's hard to find work after you graduate! This is a buyer's market. A BUYER'S MARKET!!

WOMAN. Well how are you going to provide for me?

MAN. Whoa whoa whoa, who said anything about providing anything for anyone?

WOMAN. Oh so you'll hang around long enough to get what you want and then leave me and the baby to starve.

MAN. What Baby?!

WOMAN. What baby, THE baby, *THE BABY!* The baby of our future!

MAN. I didn't ask for this.

WOMAN. THIS IS SO TYPICAL YOU!

MAN. Look, I said I loved you didn't I?

WOMAN. I'm not young enough to fall for that anymore.

MAN. Do you really still have a boyfriend?

WOMAN. Maybe.

MAN. Would you break up with him for me?

WOMAN. Maybe. Will you get a job for me and the metaphorical baby?

MAN. This is all moving so fast. I need to go out to LA for a summer and “find myself.”

WOMAN. It’s just part of your quarter life crisis. I, for one, no longer find my youthful love adventures sensible. I dumped my motorcycle driving boyfriend because he’s fat now and drives a pickup. But there’s more than that. I don’t love him. I think, with you, it has always been different.

MAN. Baby, when I was out in sunny LA working at a surf shop and surrounded by thousands of promiscuous hot women, I realized that I need some stability in my life. I want to marry you and start a family.

WOMAN. I’m pregnant! The baby is no longer metaphorical!

MAN. Yes, yes we should definitely get married then.

WOMAN. Ok. We’re married.

MAN. I really don’t understand how you can be pregnant when we haven’t even kissed yet.

WOMAN. I don’t feel like kissing now that the baby has been born. Do you want more children?

MAN. Sure, I guess so. This is all happening so fast though.

WOMAN. It all moves faster at the end. Have you gotten a job yet? If you want more kids you need a steadier job.

MAN. Yes. I gave up my dreams to work on Wall Street. But I don’t resent you or the children. Are you sure you want more kids, didn’t you want to be a Lawyer?

WOMAN. I gave up my dreams to have your children. But I don’t resent you or them. Not on the surface.

MAN. I got transferred to Tampa. It’s a good place for us to raise our nine boys.

WOMAN. Nine boys?!

MAN. I want a baseball team.

WOMAN. You can’t have a baseball team, we have four girls.

MAN. Can I have one boy?

WOMAN. Yes. Because I love you very much and your four girls love you very much.

MAN. Three girls and a boy.

WOMAN. Oh alright. The boy is youngest though so that he'll mostly be feminine. You travel so much he won't have enough manly influence in his life.

MAN. I actually have to travel again this weekend.

WOMAN. But this is ripping us apart! Our girls are all dating motorcycle-driving boys! You have to attend our son's ballet recital. This isn't the man I fell in love with.

MAN. Oh but you don't mind the luxuries! You weren't complaining when I gave you a palace in sunny Tampa!

WOMAN. I want the best for our children! Why don't you want the best for our children!

MAN. I wanted a baseball team!

WOMAN. Oh grow up!

MAN. You grow up.

WOMAN. Are you having an affair?

MAN. What? No. Maybe. I don't remember. I don't think so. Wait, yes, one time. One time when I was traveling.

WOMAN. Oh. (*Stifling a tear*;) I had an affair once, but it was only in my mind and it was because you travel so much.

MAN. I want a divorce. I can never trust you again.

WOMAN. But you had the real affair.

MAN. No I didn't!

WOMAN. You just said you did, when you were on business.

MAN. Did I? No that doesn't seem right, I'm so jet lagged all the time I don't really have the energy for that kind of strenuous activity...

WOMAN. I've noticed...

MAN. Look, it's not too late for us to get divorced. I think we should go for it! What do you say baby?

WOMAN. You can't have one. We need to stay together for the children.

MAN. What if I have a real affair this time? What if suddenly I get off the plane in Tokyo and bingo bango, hello lobito!

WOMAN. You won't.

MAN. Why not?

WOMAN. Because you are my soul mate.

MAN. (*Understanding:*) And I love you.

WOMAN. And I love you.

BOTH. And the children.

WOMAN. Kiss me.

MAN. Yes, but first, lets see those kids.

WOMAN. Too late, our youngest boy is all grown up and they have no time for you.

MAN. (*Singing gently:*) And the cats n the cradle and the silver spoon...

WOMAN. ...but you can make it up to him now that he's falling in love for the first time and his heart is breaking.

MAN. That's a hard time. I remember when I fell in love with you.

WOMAN. Was it love at first sight or did you have to keep trying?

MAN. It took some work.

WOMAN. It did, but I loved you then.

MAN. It's good for you that you can now get that job you always wanted when the children were busy stealing your soul.

WOMAN. Yes, it's nice to have them out of the house but I miss them because they happened to come out of me.

MAN. Yes I remember. It was really gross.

WOMAN. You're really gross.

MAN. I set the timer for when we get home from work.

WOMAN. What timer?

MAN. On the TIT-VO. So that we can watch our programs together.

WOMAN. Oh yes. I enjoy *TIVO* time with you after work time.

MAN. Me too. Only, didn't we used to do something else other than just watch tv? Long before the children?

WOMAN. I can't remember. I'm sure we did. Did you set the timer for the TIVO?

MAN. I don't remember what that is.

WOMAN. Retirement is bliss except for the aging part. I don't want to get old and useless.

MAN. We can still be together even when we are both very old. I don't think we will be useless.

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NOT OVER!**

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**RABBI HERSH
AND THE TALKING LOBSTER**

by Matthew Freeman

Cast of Characters

RABBI

JIM

Acknowledgments

Rabbi Hersh and the Talking Lobster (under the title *Trayf*) was originally produced by Blue Coyote Theater Group, as a part of the *Baby Jesus One-Act Jubilee: Second Coming* festival at the Brick Theater in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, in December 2007, with the following cast:

RABBI David DelGrosso
JIM Matthew Trumbull

Director Kyle Ancowitz

RABBI HERSH AND THE TALKING LOBSTER

by Matthew Freeman

(Lights up on RABBI HERSH, alone in his apartment. He's half way through a bottle of maneshevitz and staring at an un-illuminated electric menorah. He hums to himself and sits down at a table. There's a present on it. He goes to unwrap it.)

(As he reaches for it, JIM CLAWTAIL, a Giant Lobster, appears.)

JIM. Three times! Bing! I'm so, so, so Jewish.

RABBI. Jim! How did you get in here?

JIM. Trade secret Rabbi! Trade secret! Happy Chanukah.

RABBI. What are you doing here?

JIM. Well...see... I was surfing the web, right? And it said that you're actually expected to come to a Rabbi three times before they'll let you begin the process of converting to Judaism. Here I was taking it personally and had no idea what you were after. Jeepers. Well look at me! First night of Chanukah, number three. How fitting is that?

RABBI. I...you can't just come into my private space and...

JIM. I brought you a present.

(He pulls out a present that appears to be, among other things, wrapped almost entirely in duct tape.)

It's not like you're having a party or something, right?

RABBI. I'm...no. I'm not having a party.

JIM. Sweet. Just...what's that? Wine?

RABBI. Kosher wine. Maneshevitz. I have a lot of it.

JIM. Sweet. See...this is the sort of holiday celebrating I can get behind. Nice quiet affair. I like a little peace and quiet God knows. What with people yelping and crying out in fear at the very sight of me. Yes sir, Judaism is the way for me. Heck... Catholics think lobsters are fish. *Fish*. It's true of a lot of people, but Catholics have practically institutionalized it. Seven fishes. That's the dinner they have on Christmas. Right? What do you see on that day? Crab. Shrimp. Lobster tails. Sure you'll see smelt. We all know. Cold, flavorless smelt. Revolting, revolting. But Rabbi Hersh...do I look like a fish? A *fish*? I'm a lobster!

(He waves his claws around.)

Lobster! I'm a lobster! Look at these claws. Look at my exoskeleton. Lobsters are not fish. Papists don't know fish from crawfish.

RABBI. The feast of the seven fishes is not Catholic. That's an Italian tradition. And mostly, I think, they prepare things like calamari.

JIM. Isn't Italian the same thing as Catholic?

RABBI. No. No it isn't.

(Pause.)

Did anyone see you come up here?

JIM. Oh no. I mean, I've learned my lesson. Disguise. Hats and fake beards. The whole kit 'n' caboodle. I'm captain stealthy lobster man. Trust me. No one is the wiser that you're spending this holiday with me.

RABBI. Spending this...

(Pause.)

I think I might finish the bottle. Is that all right?

JIM. Yup! I can't drink alcohol. It's practically poison.

(The RABBI pours himself a massive glass.)

Festive. Festive and light. Right?

RABBI. I think that's what they say.

JIM. So here's what I was thinking. Ok? Here's the thought. First, you tell me the story of Chanukah. Then, we do whatever...prayers. We do. Right? Then we light the candle and then you get your present.

RABBI. We can't light a candle. I can't even have a hotplate in here. It's an electric menorah.

JIM. Wowzers. Well, that's fine with me. As long as it's official.

RABBI. I don't have a gift for you.

JIM. What about that one. On the table?

RABBI. That's a gift for me.

JIM. Oh. From Mrs. Rabbi?

RABBI. There is no Mrs. Rabbi. It's just a gift. From...myself. To me.

(Pause.)

JIM. Hey, that's fine. I just...well I've never really done this so maybe I got overdressed for the cocktail party. I screwed the pooch there. Don't feel bad. I'm just really, really...spiritually...feeling...I actually don't know how to express it in English. In Lobster it's sort of a single series of clicks and hisses that expresses this perfectly.

RABBI. I can think of a few suitable phrases. I'm sure.

JIM. Hey, it just occurred to me that you now have TWO Chanukah presents. That's double plus good, right? Now I feel like a million times better. It's a mitzvah!

(Pause.)

You know, you're pretty much my best friend.

RABBI. I...can't imagine how...

JIM. I will say this...it's very hard to find a place, as a giant lobster, where someone doesn't want to dip you in butter.

(Pause.)

Don't think that's remedied by going back where I came from, either. Most people don't know this, but lobsters are cannibals. Even when I was just a little floating preclaw, other lobsters tried to eat me. Eat me. Not that I'm trying to be holier than thou, or anything. I've eaten a few of my own in my day. One day, though, I looked down at my own tail and said "Now that looks really tasty." I knew, right then and there, I needed a new outlook. It's sort of like the lobster version of an eating disorder.

(Pause.)

Are you all right, best friend?

RABBI. I am drunk.

(Pause.)

I am thinking to myself...God has put me here. With you. On Chanukah. Alone. He gives me no wife, he makes the *shmegegi's* at the Temple treat me like a *shlub*. He shows me how much I deserve their treatment by giving me a drunken Chanukah alone with a shellfish.

JIM. You want to hear that word that expresses how I feel. In Lobsterese?

RABBI. I don't, James. Not very much.

JIM. Chkchkchkksrsssssssschksssschkchksssssssclichclichclichchkchkchkssssshisssck.

(Pause.)

The first time I heard that word, I felt like crying. I want to cry now. I would if I had tear ducts. Did you know I actually don't have two eyes, but hundreds of eyes shoved together? Crazy huh?

(Pause.)

RABBI. James...there's something I want you to understand.

(Pause.)

You've come to me three times, counting this one, and it's become abundantly clear that this is...if not rational...important to you. But...the actual chance of you becoming a full fledged Jewish Lobster are slim. Remote. Even...well...unlikely.

JIM. Well "nothing borrowed, nothing blue!" Right? I've been learning Hebrew, haven't I? For a creature whose entire physical structure resists speaking at all, the Hebrew stuff is like...at least some measure of my commitment. Isn't it?

RABBI. It...is.

JIM. Gosh, remember when I first asked you about this? On your porch? And you screamed and hollered for help?

RABBI. I remember distinctly.

JIM. And the second time, when I brought you the pastries and you actually touched me to prove to yourself I was real.

RABBI. It was...one of the few truly memorable moments of my life.

JIM. That was the beginning of a beautiful spiritual journey for me.

RABBI. I was convinced that my anti depressants were having massive side effects. I still feel they might be.

JIM. Listen... I know this isn't easy, Rabbi. I've been living like a fugitive. My name in Lobster is chchchckhissck. Which is freaking impossible to spell or put on a tax form. So I go by Jim Clawtail whenever I'm incognito. I know that's like a chicken calling herself Jenny Breast-Thigh, but what can you do? I have a tiny brain. The thing is, most people aren't as respectful as the Hebrews towards my species.

RABBI. Why did God put stones in my urine?

JIM. Exactly.

(Pause.)

You know, why don't we do presents early? Maybe that'll put a smile on your face.

RABBI. There's no need.

JIM. No, no. You're down in the dumps. It doesn't take hundreds of eyes to see that. Here...here you go. It's something special. Cultural even.

(JIM hands his gift to the RABBI.)

RABBI. Thank...you.

(The RABBI pulls out a tiny pocket knife and undoes the absolutely inept wrapping. He pulls out...a fish. A dead fish.)

JIM. A fish! Meal fit for a king where I come from! Look at that lovely fish! You have no idea how hard it is, with claws, to get a fish into a box!

RABBI. Thank...you.

(A slight smile. He puts the fish aside.)

James...there's something I need to explain to you. I know you are...serious about this...endeavor. But...

JIM. Listen...if you're just going to tell me that the only reason you're even tolerating me is because you have no friends or family or pets, you can save yourself the trouble. It's obvious. I'm not hurt or put off. Because your lack of human connection is about to do amazing things for me personally.

(Pause.)

I just said 'personally'! Wow. It's like I forgot I'm a giant lobster!

RABBI. I do not refrain from eating you because I have respect for you. This is not like Indians and cattle. We don't eat you and things like you, because you are scuttling insects, deformed massive spiders that live on the refuse of the ocean. You live in putrid, pissed in, polluted waters.

(Pause.)

JIM. So I don't look...succulent to you?

RABBI. No.

JIM. You don't find yourself salivating at the thought of consuming me with a side of garlic butter?

RABBI. Not at all.

JIM. You don't find me delectable?

RABBI. No. And we also don't feel that way about pigs, who wallow in their own feces.

(Pause.)

And, not all of us even keep kosher. I can't guarantee if you did join the community, there wouldn't be some reform Jew with an appetite for trayf.

JIM. You don't think...mmmmmmm. Mmmm. Mmmm. Mmmm. You wouldn't like to crack me in half and stick a tiny fork inside me? You don't look at me and think "Where's my nutcracker?"

RABBI. I, personally, don't. I actually am unhappy whenever we touch in any way. I wash myself and say a blessing.

(Pause.)

JIM. MAZEL TOV! Listen, you've got your reasons, so do I. You know what lobsters worship? An unpronounceable deity that, we're told, created the world from copper and salt. I mean, all religions are a little ga-ga, right? But at least you people have some books and tradition. If your tradition means, for whatever reason, I'm not food... hey, what else could I ask for? I'm pleased as punch and pie.

(Pause.)

RABBI. I'm feeling less than lucid.

JIM. Why don't you open the other present?

RABBI. It's private

JIM. No! No!

(JIM picks up the present and hands it the RABBI.)

This'll do the trick! Really! Really! I mean, you deserve it best friend.

RABBI. No, James. I already know what it is.

JIM. Open it up!

RABBI. I have...

JIM. Puh-lllleeeeeeze?

(He bats his Lobster eyelashes at the RABBI.)

RABBI. Fine. Look.

(He opens it up. It's a Gameboy.)

It's a Gameboy. All right? So I can play Pokemon.

JIM. Is that a Yiddish word for something?

RABBI. It is a video game for children. I find myself humiliated before you. It is likely the low point of my life.

(Long pause.)

JIM. Great! So now you've opened the presents. Story time. The story of Chanukah. Right?

(Pause.)

RABBI. If I am expected to do this, I think I will lie down.

(He lies down on the floor. He rests the Gameboy on his chest.)

Ah. That's taken the edge off. Long ago, a Syrian king decreed that all the Jewish people should reject Yahweh and worship Zeus or something like that. Some of them did it and wound up...I don't know...in the movie *300*. But there were some, called the Macabees, that resisted. They fought the Syrians for three years, drove them out of Israel. There were like six Macabees and twenty million Syrians and the Macabees defeated them with the equivalent of dental floss and fervent prayer.

(Pause.)

After that, the Macabees wanted to reclaim the Temple for the Jewish people and wash off all the graffiti and Greek garbledog about Hercules. So they did that for a while, it took something around a month, and at the end, they wanted to light a candle, an eternal fire, to celebrate their victory. They only had enough oil for one day, but lo and behold, the fire glowed for eight days. Minor miracle that. One day of oil lasting more than a week. So Chanukah is a way to say "We win wars." Or at least we won that one.

(Pause.)

It's not quite as bloody or fun as Passover, but it does the trick as an excuse for yuletidey behavior.

JIM. So no Santa Claus?

RABBI. Not at all.

JIM. Ha. I just realized that. Wow. Man, what a thing.

(The RABBI gets up.)

RABBI. Now you know, James. What you're in for.

(Pause.)

JIM. Oy! Oy! Oy and a half, right? Oy!

(Pause.)

So let's light the candles. Or candle. Or turn the screw. Or...the bulb. Here...wait. I know the prayer.

(JIM goes to the table and winks at the RABBI. Then he says...)

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NOT OVER!**

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REMIND ME AGAIN
A TEN MINUTE ENCOUNTER FOR THE STAGE

by Sharyn Rothstein

Cast of Characters

Three young professional women:

MIRANDA, conservatively dressed

JANE, a little flashy

SUZE, pink and married

...and the KISSYINVADER, a non-descript man.

Setting

Scene One: A city street corner.

Scene Two: A beige corporate office-kitchen.

Acknowledgments

Remind Me Again was originally produced at the Ensemble Studio Theatre in New York in June, 2003. It was directed by Tara Merdjanoff. The cast was as follows:

MIRANDA	Jennie McClintock
JANE	Erin Andrea
SUZE	Shani Petroff
KISSYINVADER	Jeremy Bohlen

REMIND ME AGAIN

A TEN MINUTE ENCOUNTER FOR THE STAGE

by Sharyn Rothstein

Scene One

(MIRANDA, a young professional in workday wardrobe, walks through the park on her way to the office. The birds are tweeting, the sun is shining, sex is always consensual and cookies are good for you.)

Suddenly, a man—KISSYINVADER—his face obscured by passing people or our perspective—knocks into MIRANDA.

Just as MIRANDA looks up at him KISSYINVADER, whose back should be to the audience and who should be of a non-descript nature, leans down and almost kisses her.

MIRANDA steps back, frozen in shock.

KISSYINVADER laughs loudly and heads off into the park—just another pedestrian.

MIRANDA, floored, smooths out her hair, her blouse, tries to catch her breath, and walks off.)

Scene Two

(MIRANDA rushes into her office's beige, corporate kitchen, shaken.)

JANE, Miranda's co-worker, a well dressed, hard looking, know-it-all type, is pouring herself coffee.)

MIRANDA. Hey—Jane: Listen to this: I'm walking down the street this morning, I look up, and some *guy* almost *kisses* me. Can you believe that?

JANE. Oh my *god*.

MIRANDA. I know!

JANE. That's fantastic! Was he hot?

MIRANDA. I wasn't really paying attention to that. I don't know if he was "hot." And I really don't think it matters. What *matters* is that he completely invaded my space—he—

JANE. Well, yeah, but would you care so much if he was a *good* looking man invading your space?

MIRANDA. Yes!

JANE. Bullshit.

MIRANDA. I can't even believe you're arguing this.

JANE. Look. Suze, from the third floor?, *met* her husband because he "invaded her space." They were on the subway and he grabbed her breasts and said, "These are lovely."

MIRANDA. He grabbed her breasts?

JANE. Uh huh.

MIRANDA. And she married him?

JANE. Yes. But the *point* is that he had the *courage* to say something to her. *And* that he's attractive, because if he wasn't attractive then it would've just been another case of, you know, sexual harassment or something.

(SUZE, *late twenties, in a much-planned pink outfit, sashays into the kitchen to refill her coffee.*)

JANE. Suze! I was just telling Miranda how you met Mark!

(SUZE *swats* JANE *in a girly way.*)

SUZE. Oh my God! Isn't it a *gas*?

MIRANDA. It's—

SUZE. You know, I'd gotten so used to *scowling* at every man who said something to me that I almost *completely blew* it. But something stopped me. I turned, fully prepared to scowl, but then I just... smiled. I like to think that it was because of fate. Or because he's white.

MIRANDA. Because he's white?

SUZE. You better believe it. Like an albino.

MIRANDA. (*A little grossed out:*) Oh.

JANE. Some guy tried to kiss Miranda on the street today.

SUZE. Oh! How wonderful for you!

JANE. Miranda considers it an invasion of privacy.

SUZE. Well, I guess... But isn't it *romantic*?

MIRANDA. No, I really don't think it is.

SUZE. (*Looking at JANE knowingly:*) Oh.

MIRANDA. What?

SUZE. He wasn't attractive, was he?

MIRANDA. I don't—I don't know! Why does it matter if he was attractive or not?

SUZE. Ohhhh. I get it. Was he black?

MIRANDA. I don't know!

JANE. How can you not know?

MIRANDA. I wasn't really paying attention—I was so shocked—I don't remember what race he was.

SUZE. Oh. Then he was probably Puerto Rican. They can be kind of ambiguous.

MIRANDA. Ambiguous? This isn't—look, the point *is*, this *man*—a *stranger*—someone I don't *know*, leaned down, tried to kiss me, then *laughed* and walked away. I'm so—look at me, I'm shaking! I'm completely shaken up.

(*Beat.*)

JANE. Oh. You didn't tell me he *laughed*.

MIRANDA. Does it matter? Either way—

JANE. Well, of *course* it matters.

SUZE. Yeah. Laughing is rude.

MIRANDA. The whole *thing* is rude!

SUZE. Yeah, but laughing? It's like... They only laugh if they think you're *really* ugly.

JANE. Or fat.

SUZE. You know, because then it's a joke.

JANE. Because then *you're* a joke. (*Short pause.*) Don't you think?

MIRANDA. I— (*They look at her.*) I guess. I didn't really *think* about the laugh—

SUZE. Yeah. It probably affected you on an *inner* level. Laughing can really make you insecure.

(SUZE and JANE nod at each other—and laugh.)

MIRANDA. Look, the laugh didn't—the whole *thing* made me insecure. That *guy* made me insecure. I mean it just left me dumb-founded. How can a human being treat another human being with such... Such disrespect?

JANE. Well, why didn't you ask him?

MIRANDA. Ask him?

JANE. Sure. I mean, he was about to *kiss* you, you might as well ask *why*, don't you think?

MIRANDA. Well, I—I didn't really think I *could* ask him. I thought he might, you know, if I said something he might get...violent.

SUZE. (*Nodding to JANE:*) Definitely Puerto Rican.

JANE. Really, Miranda. It was the middle of the day. He's not going to *rape* you in the middle of the day.

MIRANDA. He's not?

JANE. No. Besides, *rapists* don't bother women during the day.

MIRANDA. They don't?

JANE. Why would they? It goes against their entire plan of action. If you harass a woman when she's walking around by herself in the middle of the day she's going to be that much *less* likely to walk around by herself at *night*, when it's *easy* to rape her.

SUZE. That's true.

JANE. Rapists are nocturnal. Like hedgehogs.

MIRANDA. Hedgehogs?

JANE. Yes. Many people don't know that hedgehogs are nocturnal. And *like* hedgehogs, *rapists* are creatures that, while very vulnerable within, have *evolved*, due to the demands of Mother Nature, into prickly, aloof animals. (*Short pause.*) You can't touch a hedgehog...

SUZE. Just like how you can't touch a rapist.

(*Beat / Pause.*)

MIRANDA. Why would you *want* to touch a rapist?

(*SUZE and JANE look at her.*)

SUZE. We're speaking metaphorically Miranda.

JANE. Look, so the guy "invaded your space," so he "intruded on your privacy." At least it was *real*.

MIRANDA. Real?

JANE. Think about how *few* really real experiences we have in our lives. How few personal interactions we have with others.

SUZE. It's a blessing.

JANE. It is.

SUZE. It's how I met Mark.

JANE. And he's an albino.

MIRANDA. (*Growing increasingly frenzied:*) So you're saying, when a man—any man—walks by you on the street and, and calls something out: “hey baby” “nice ass, gimme a smile” anything... It doesn't bother you? It doesn't make you anxious?

JANE/SUZE. No.

MIRANDA. You're saying if someone grabbed you on the street and just—like this—

(*MIRANDA, in a bit of a frenzy, grabs JANE's face, almost kisses her and then laughs. She lets go. An awkward pause.*)

MIRANDA. (*Embarrassed:*) That doesn't make you uncomfortable?

JANE. Well of *course* that made me uncomfortable. You're a *woman*. (*SUZE and JANE exchange disapproving nods. Beat.*) And we're in an *office*.

SUZE. Really, Miranda. There's a time and place for everything.

MIRANDA. That's... I don't understand. So a *man*... On the *street*... Doesn't make you uncomfortable? Do most women feel this way?

SUZE. I can't really speak for most women, Miranda. I believe in the individual.

MIRANDA. Jane?

JANE. Yes, I think they do, Miranda. And do you want to know why?

MIRANDA. Please.

JANE. Alright. (*A dramatic pause.*) Come with me on a journey of the mind. Imagine the last time you awoke in the morning, shaved your legs, blew out your hair, slipped into a stunning new outfit, walked out on the street and...*not a single man said anything.*

(*SUZE and MIRANDA gasp an agonized gasp.*)

Exactly. You can't pick and choose. Either you want male attention or you don't.

MIRANDA. But it shouldn't be all or nothing!

JANE. Look Miranda, you can't be *reliant* on men one day and *disgusted* by them the next. You'd go totally bi-polar.

SUZE. Noah only let the animals on in twos-ies, Miranda. If you try to walk alone, you'll just drown in the flood.

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MISSED CONNECTIONS

by Samuel Brett Williams

Cast of Characters

MAN

WOMAN

WAITER

Acknowledgments

Production groups must include the following credit on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play:

Missed Connections (under the title *To This Very Day I Miss Her*) premiered at Ars Nova (Jason Eagan, Artistic Director), as part of *Missed Connections NYC*, a collection of short plays by the Ars Nova Play Group, opening January 27, 2010.

MISSED CONNECTIONS

by Samuel Brett Williams

(Lights rise on a MAN and WOMAN at a restaurant.)

MAN. I'm not looking to date anyone right now.

WOMAN. Who wants to date you?

(A WAITER crosses the stage.)

WOMAN. *(To the WAITER:)* Do you want to date this guy?

(The WAITER stops. Stares at MAN.)

(Silence.)

WAITER. No.

WOMAN. *(Turning back to MAN:)* Well, you're in luck.

(The WAITER exits.)

MAN. I masturbate way too much.

WOMAN. Why are you telling me this? That's something you tell your best friend.

MAN. I don't collect a lot of friends.

WOMAN. You don't collect a lot of friends? What are you—a serial killer?

MAN. I'm about as social as one.

WOMAN. Surely you have someone you can talk to.

MAN. There is one person, but, well, she doesn't count.

WOMAN. Why?

MAN. She's way more sexual than me. She would think I don't masturbate enough.

WOMAN. Maybe you don't. You should ask her.

MAN. I would feel weird.

WOMAN. Why?

MAN. I've never been comfortable talking to my mother about sex.

(Silence.)

WOMAN. Why aren't you lying?

MAN. Pardon?

WOMAN. This is a first date—you should definitely be lying.

MAN. I am deeply bored and depressed—and I am not certain where one ends and the other begins.

I thought I would change things up tonight by telling the truth.

WOMAN. Well, it's not working out very well for you.

MAN. Actually, it's quite exhilarating.

(Silence.)

WOMAN. Every time I go to suck a dick I think about biting it off.

(Silence.)

MAN. Fun, isn't it?

The truth I mean—not eating genitals.

WOMAN. My last boyfriend left me for someone much more attractive than me.

MAN. I do not care about handicapped people. I feel like they are in my way at the grocery store.

WOMAN. I fucked my best friend's fiancé just because she was happier than me.

MAN. I have sex with a prostitute once a month.

WOMAN. I have a rape fantasy.

MAN. My last girlfriend and I attempted one of those.

WOMAN. Did you like it?

MAN. I now know it is very important for both partners to be absolutely certain—before beginning—on exactly who is going to be getting raped.

WOMAN. My ex and I could never agree on a safe word.

MAN. What did he want it to be?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. He sounds more boring than me.

WOMAN. He used to frame puzzles.

MAN. What did you want the word to be?

WOMAN. Val Kilmer.

MAN. Val Kilmer?

WOMAN. Val Kilmer.

MAN. A guy doesn't want to think about the Ice Man when having sex with a woman. His mind will go straight to that shirtless volleyball scene in *Top Gun*. Nobody needs that type of confusion.

WOMAN. What was your safe word?

MAN. Chocolate, I think.

WOMAN. Your girlfriend would just yell "chocolate"?

MAN. She wasn't the one yelling it.

WOMAN. Wouldn't it be great if you could choose the exes that live and the ones that die?

MAN. Would any of yours live?

WOMAN. No.

Would you like to have sex tonight?

MAN. I think I'm having much too good of a time to have sex with you tonight—or to even go on a second date.

WOMAN. Would you have sex with me if you didn't like me?

MAN. Certainly, and I would call you in the morning and ask you out again.

WOMAN. But, you do like me—so you don't want to go out again?

MAN. Precisely.

WOMAN. I'm not really going to bite your dick off. That's just an impulse. I would never act on it.

MAN. But, one day you're going to want to bite my dick off.

WOMAN. And one day you'll want me dead—who cares?

MAN. But, what if we don't do anything—if we just go our own separate ways—we can always look back and think about what could have been. And I guarantee when we think about what could have been—we won't think about each others shortcomings—we won't remember arguments—we won't think about our awkward first date sex—we won't want each other dead.

WOMAN. But, won't we regret not having tried?

MAN. Not if we think about how poorly it would have ended. You know those Missed Connections ads on Craig's List? Those people are so lucky. They had a perfect encounter with someone and it can remain perfect in their minds forever. They are morons for trying to ruin it. Why bring life into the equation? Rashes, cancer, death—take it from me—all of that comes from relationships. What's the point?

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WALTZING DE NIRO

by Lynn Martin

Cast of Characters

JOANNA, twenty-nine year old Administrative Assistant.

CLARA, Joanna's best friend. A little more "together" than her friend. A little more "street-smart."

BOBBY, Robert De Niro.

Setting

A New York Apartment. Neither messy nor clean, neither upscale nor downtrodden. A few obviously expensive doodads and a huge stereo. Also an old, box-style turntable.

Music

The song that brings Bobby onstage should be "Perfidia" as sung by Nat King Cole, or "Embrace You" as sung by Billie Holiday. Something in that line—bluesy and slow.

Author's Note

A couple of years ago, after sharing a particularly depressing birthday with friends, I returned home alone to my empty apartment. Oh, there had been music. And laughter. And kisses and champagne. There was one wish, only one wish I'd made of my friends—"Bring me De Niro." And as real life would have it, he never showed. So as the music played in my empty apartment, I wrote this play. For me, *Waltzing De Niro* is about friendship, dreaming, and love. So it is with much love that I dedicate this play to my family, John Guare, Kathleen Drohan, and all my friends who gave me the courage and support that allowed my dreams to live.

...To dreamers everywhere...

Acknowledgments

Waltzing De Niro was originally directed by Stephanie Shroyer with Jennifer Butt as Clara, Vanessa Williams as Joanna and Scott Alan Campbell as Bobby.

WALTZING DE NIRO

by Lynn Martin

(A knock on the door. JOANNA runs from the bedroom to the door, carrying several outfits on hangers. She is wearing a robe. She looks through the peephole and opens the door.)

CLARA. I'm sorry I took so long. What's wrong?

JOANNA. *(Pulls her in. Shuts door.)* Get in here!

CLARA. What happened?

JOANNA. You're not going to believe this one.

CLARA. It better be good, whatever it is, because I was in the middle of—

JOANNA. Just don't get mad at me. Okay?

CLARA. Why should I? What's wrong, Jo?

JOANNA. Okay. Now I *know* I'm using up all my friendship points on this one, but could you do me a favor?

CLARA. *(Opens purse.)* How much do you need?

JOANNA. Not money. I need two weeks of your life.

CLARA. Two weeks? For what?

JOANNA. Now, do you think "pack light" means one suitcase and a carry-on? Or his gold card and a smile?

CLARA. "He"? Who's he? What's two weeks?

JOANNA. Vacation! He's taking me on vacation, Clara! For two weeks! Two weeks out of here, away from my job— Which is where you come in. Can you water anything green and watch my mail?

CLARA. Sure, but—

JOANNA. He said he would hire somebody, if I really thought there was anything worth stealing, which there isn't, except what he's bought.

CLARA. Who's he?

JOANNA. *(Examining clothes.)* Do you think this is my color? I never really thought this was my color, but—

CLARA. He. Who is this he?

JOANNA. He?

CLARA. The “he” who’s taking you on vacation. Who do you know who can afford to take you on vacation? For two weeks? And hire someone to watch you place?

JOANNA. Robert. Bobby.

CLARA. Robert Bobby? Who’s Robert Bobby?

JOANNA. Not “Robert Bobby.” His name is Robert. I call him Bobby.

CLARA. Right.

JOANNA. So you’ll do it?

CLARA. Sure. Sure.

JOANNA. Thanks. You’re the best. *(She sits.)* Oh, God. I’m so nervous. I actually have butterflies! I can’t believe this! I can’t believe I’m actually doing this!

CLARA. What are you doing?

JOANNA. I’m falling in love! Well, I’ve actually been in love for a while, but—

(CLARA picks up an expensive doodad, holds it up to JOANNA.)

JOANNA. A gift. From Bobby.

CLARA. Does this Bobby have any brothers?

JOANNA. He’s an only.

CLARA. Just my luck.

JOANNA. Do you remember when I found out about Patrick?

CLARA. Yeah.

JOANNA. Ever since that night, it’s been him. Bobby. At first, I thought I was just on the rebound, and I let it go at that, but—I don’t think I’m speeding down any one-way streets here, this time.

CLARA. Come on, Jo. You do this all the time. You decide you’re in love and damn the world!

JOANNA. But I am! Meet him! Sit, relax, and—

CLARA. What’s wrong with him?

JOANNA. Oh! That’s the best part! NOTHING! He’s not married, he’s not bisexual, he’s not cheap. Obviously. And look. *(Pulls very expensive cosmetic traveling case into view.)* He has his personal assistant leave this at my door this morning. Along with an orange juicer, a crate of oranges he had flown in from California, and bagels from the bagel store on ninety-second. And this note. *(Hands note to CLARA, mouths the word while CLARA reads.)*

CLARA. "This is your last New York breakfast for two weeks. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow, we fly. Call me when you're ready to dance." This worries me.

JOANNA. I know. You think it's too much too soon. That's what I was thinking. But it's been a year since the Patrick incident, and I've been seeing Bobby since then—whenever he's in town, of course.

CLARA. Of course.

JOANNA. So what do you think?

CLARA. Me?

JOANNA. Yeah.

CLARA. I think you emptied out your savings and when shopping for all of this.

JOANNA. What?

CLARA. I think you feel bad about being twenty-nine and alone. It's not a curse, Jo. Plenty of women our age haven't gotten married yet. But that doesn't mean—

JOANNA. Do you really imagine that even if I *did* lose my mind and go on a shopping spree that I would buy *this*? (*Holds up expensive doodad.*)

CLARA. Well...

JOANNA. After I bought this—if I could afford it in the first place on the fifteen dollars and twenty-seven cents I've managed to keep in savings over the last five years—I'd barely be able to afford two weeks away from work.

CLARA. Who *is* this guy?

JOANNA. I already told you. Robert. Bobby.

CLARA. Did he come with a last name?

JOANNA. You won't believe me.

CLARA. I barely believe you now.

JOANNA. (*Opens wallet.*) I've got his picture in here somewhere.

CLARA. Nice wallet.

JOANNA. Thanks.

CLARA. You have a thing for leather now?

JOANNA. It matches the purse. Which matches the traveling case.

CLARA. I didn't think your tastes ran along these lines.

JOANNA. Neither did I. Till I got everything. It's so heavy, you know? It's got weight to it. Like it's really real.

CLARA. Heavy luggage? How are you supposed to carry it?

JOANNA. (*Still searching bag, emptying contents onto coffee table.*) Red caps! He can afford red caps at the airports! I've *never* been able to afford red caps! I can't find it.

CLARA. Awww.

JOANNA. I swear I had one.

CLARA. Sure you did.

JOANNA. I did. I had this picture, and on the back it said, "To the girl I love and her goofy smile, much love, Bob."

CLARA. (*Disbelieving:*) Really?

JOANNA. He took it at one of those little photo booths? Out at JFK.

CLARA. What's he do?

JOANNA. He's an actor.

CLARA. Not an actor! Don't you know that actors are the worst the absolute worst people to get mixed up with? I bet he bought all of this on credit and some nice young men in overalls are going to come and take it all back.

JOANNA. That's what I keep thinking. That someone's going to just shake me awake and say, it's all over, Joanna.

CLARA. An actor?

JOANNA. An actor slash director slash producer.

CLARA. Great. You've just sent an engraved invitation to trouble, and he's about to RSVP.

JOANNA. He wouldn't do anything to hurt me.

CLARA. How do you know?

JOANNA. I can just tell.

CLARA. Great. "And that's when he killed her, officer." How's he feel about you?

JOANNA. With his hands, mostly. I don't know. We're *at least* really good friends.

CLARA. Un-huh. Okay.

JOANNA. Do you want to meet him?

CLARA. Sure. Unless he's at an audition, or something.

JOANNA. He doesn't audition anymore.

CLARA. Even better. An out-of-work actor. That's new.

JOANNA. He'll be home in a little while.

CLARA. You two moved in together!? Oh, please tell me you haven't moved in with him.

JOANNA. He lives across the hall. I have to go jump in the shower so— You know where the fridge is. There's nothing in it, of course, but—

CLARA. Jo, I hate to see you do this to yourself.

JOANNA. You don't believe me, do you?

CLARA. I believe you've been under a lot of stress at work, and I believe you deserve two weeks off, paid vacation, but—

JOANNA. (*In wallet again.*) Here it is. It got stuck to a coupon. (*Hands CLARA picture.*)

CLARA. (*Hands picture back.*) Show me the real one.

JOANNA. That *is* the real picture.

CLARA. But this is—

JOANNA. He is.

CLARA. De Niro.

JOANNA. Robert. Bobby.

CLARA. De Niro.

JOANNA. Yes.

CLARA. You're in love with Robert Bobby De Niro. The actor.

JOANNA. Actor slash director slash blah blah blah.

CLARA. Can you set me up with Pacino?

JOANNA. I'll ask him. I'm sure he'll do what he can, but—

CLARA. Do you remember when you got drunk and you'd tell everybody that De Niro was leaving messages on your answering machine?

JOANNA. Yeah, but—

CLARA. And that Eric Clapton wrote "Bell Bottom Blues" for you when you two were together in the shower?

JOANNA. But that was—

CLARA. And Denzel Washington was supposedly in your bed on New Year's Eve last year, and that's why you weren't going to any parties? Because he couldn't bear to have you away from his side?

JOANNA. I was just—

CLARA. And Andy Garcia stopped by a couple of years ago to help you cook?

JOANNA. That was kid stuff. That was joking around.

CLARA. And what is this?

JOANNA. Proof that dreams come true.

CLARA. You've changed your real life to fit inside your dream life. That's all. What are you looking for?

JOANNA. This is his favorite album.

CLARA. He's got a favorite album now?

JOANNA. Well, it's not his very favorite. He likes other, too. But this is what I was listening to the night we met.

CLARA. You and—

JOANNA. The night I found out about Patrick, I was sitting here in the candlelight, playing this album, and Bobby—

CLARA. If he's got so much money, why doesn't he buy you the CD?

JOANNA. He did. But he says it's too convenient to be romantic. He likes the skips. In the songs.

CLARA. He lives downtown, Jo.

JOANNA. You read that in an interview?

(CLARA *nods.*)

JOANNA. He hates interviews, and interviewers are sometimes mistaken. He lives right there. He also has a place downtown. But when he's uptown, and he's uptown an *awful* lot lately...

CLARA. He just happens to live across the hall.

JOANNA. Yup.

CLARA. But how—

JOANNA. I just happen to have one of his most favorite albums in the whole wide world. (*Sits with CLARA.*) I've danced with him. We dance. He moves like silk. He thinks I'm pretty. He says—

CLARA. Joanna, things like this...like De Niro living next door—

JOANNA. Across the hall.

CLARA. Whatever. Those things are reserved for other people.

JOANNA. That's what I keep thinking. I need you to anchor me. I'm afraid I'll just float up up and away. And what if it's a soap bubble instead of the Goodyear blimp?

CLARA. What if there's not even a soap bubble there at all? What if it's the Hindenburg.

JOANNA. You still don't believe me, do you?

CLARA. Honestly?

JOANNA. Honestly?

CLARA. Not for a second.

JOANNA. Out of everyone I know, I thought you would believe me.

CLARA. I need proof.

JOANNA. (*Finds picture in wallet.*) This is his picture.

CLARA. Anybody could get a picture of him.

JOANNA. He wrote on the back.

CLARA. It could be anybody's signature.

JOANNA. And all the gifts?

CLARA. Jo! Don't go crazy on me!

JOANNA. I'm not! Just—just let me shower and make myself beautiful. He's getting back from the coast tonight.

CLARA. "From the coast"!?

JOANNA. From L.A. Meet him.

CLARA. A little fantasy once in a while is fine. Good for the brain. But this— Why didn't you say something? I would've gotten you help.

JOANNA. I don't *need* help!

CLARA. You do! Look at yourself! You're just still confused about Patrick.

JOANNA. The last thing I'm confused about is Patrick. Turn on the tube, make yourself a drink or read or whatever. Soon as I get out of the shower, I'll get him here and if you don't think he's De Niro, then fine. He's not De Niro. And if you don't think he's great—You'll think he's great! He's wonderful! He's a dream! (*She exits with clothes.*)

CLARA. That's what I'm afraid of. (*Goes to stereo.*) Let's see what kind of taste he has. (*She puts the album on the turntable, turns it on, and*

begins snooping around the apartment—out of boredom and curiosity. The shower is turned on. There is a knock at the door. CLARA looks toward the shower and back at the door. She yells to the bathroom:) Joanna!? There's someone—

(A key in the lock. BOBBY enters, smiling and ready to dance. Stops himself and looks at the number on the apartment door.)

BOBBY. Who are—

CLARA. I'm Clara.

BOBBY. Where's Joanna?

CLARA. Shower.

BOBBY. Oh. *Clara.* Well. *(Takes needle off record.)* Good to finally meet you. I was starting to wonder if you really existed. I'm Bobby.

CLARA. She— She—

BOBBY. She said you might be by tonight. You want something to eat? You like Chinese?

CLARA. Yeah, but—

BOBBY. I'm starving. I get hungry about two in the morning. I'm Take-Out and Delivery King. Though I do love the art of cooking. It's very relaxing. But not as relaxing as a good dance. No. There's nothing better than a good dance. Well... Yeah. So I'm still on California time. California clothes, too, so please forgive me. *(Phone in hand.)* What would you like?

CLARA. I'm not very—

BOBBY. Hi. Put this on the Bennett account. I want an order of the regular plus... *(Covers mouthpiece.)* Plus?

CLARA. I'm not very—

BOBBY. *(Into phone:)* Uhhh— *(Points to her.)* Diced chicken with cashews and— *(Opens hand, questioning.)* Shrimp lo mein? *(Cocks head.)*

CLARA. How did you know?

BOBBY. Two Diet Cokes, a black cherry Soho and no fruit. No oranges. No plums. No apples. No. I always tell you "No oranges." Please. I'm paying you not to put oranges in... You want to make me happy? You know what makes me happy? Opening the bag and finding no fruit. NO oranges. NO plums. No apples. I know it's good for me. So are enemas, but— What? Yeah. Extra fortune cookies. Maybe a few almond— Yeah. And good fortunes. Only good fortunes. Okay? Okay. I'm hanging up! I'm hanging up! *(Hangs up. To CLARA:)* Takes them no time. I'm famished. You'd think on the plane? No. First-

class even and still. I know. I know. It's late to eat, two o'clock. And something a man my age can ill-afford to do, but— Were you trying to tell me something?

CLARA. I'm not very hungry.

BOBBY. Oh, Clara, please do no deny me the pleasure of eating one of my greatest pleasures in the home of one of my greatest pleasures. I'm Italian. We eat. You'll eat, too. End of discussion.

CLARA. How did you know what I like?

BOBBY. (*Motions with head.*) She told me.

CLARA. And you remembered?

BOBBY. (*Going to kitchen.*) You don't mind if I imbibe a little, do you?

CLARA. No. Go ahead.

BOBBY. Can I get something for you?

CLARA. Tequila with a—

BOBBY. Rolling Rock back. Coming right up.

CLARA. She told you that, too?

BOBBY. (*Motions to his head.*) Steel trap. I'll tell you something, Clara. Nothing like New York water. It's polluted. It's rusty. It's not fit for a dog. But for a mixer? I don't think it can be beat. Are you okay? I mean you seem—

CLARA. Dazed?

BOBBY. Stupefied.

CLARA. How did you two—

BOBBY. Meet? (*Gives her drinks.*) She didn't tell you?

CLARA. Sort of.

BOBBY. (*Sitting.*) November twelve. A year ago.

CLARA. Down to the day?

BOBBY. Steel trap. (*Drinks.*) I was sitting in my living room trying not to fall asleep over the front page of the *Sunday Times*—this was after another LA—New York no true food flight—and that song leaked through my door. My favorite song. My favorite album. Just a door away. I still had my LA openness on, so I put down my paper, knocked on the door, which, as if by magic, opened, and she was on the other side of it. Crying in the candlelight, drinking wine. She threw her arms around me and we danced and danced and thank god for phonographs because we heard that side of the album a

couple times, till our legs ached and my shoulder was soaked. Then she told me about Patrick, showed me his wedding announcement in the *Times*. The one he neglected to tell her about during their date earlier that week.

CLARA. I never liked him.

BOBBY. But, if it hadn't been for him, I wouldn't have met— (*The buzzer.*) That'll be Chinese. (*He goes to buzzer, talks:*) Spill it.

VOICE. (*Thick, snide, New York accent:*) Is this twenty-A?

BOBBY. It's twenty-B.

VOICE. (*Snidely:*) Oh. "Mr. Bennett." I thought you were—

BOBBY. I'm across the hall.

VOICE. You order Chinese?

BOBBY. Put it in the elevator.

VOICE. (*Snidely:*) Sure thing. "Mr. Bennett."

BOBBY. (*To CLARA:*) Smart ass. I hate that night kid. So when's she going to be out?

CLARA. I don't know. After a year wouldn't you—

BOBBY. I've never been here when she wasn't here and I've never been here while she was in the shower. Do you prefer a plate or a fork? For your Chinese food? Out of the carton or—?

CLARA. Carton.

BOBBY. Get three forks. I'll be right back. (*He steps out of the door.*)

CLARA. Hey!

BOBBY. (*Pops back in.*) Hmmm?

CLARA. You don't look a thing like De Niro.

BOBBY. That's the dead give away.

(*The shower stops.*)

If you want a confab, I think she's drying.

(*He pops back out. CLARA runs to the bathroom. As soon as she gets there, the blow-dryer starts. CLARA yells at and yanks on the locked door.*)

CLARA. Jo? Joanna?! This guy says he's De Niro. Jo?!

JOANNA. (*Over blow-dryer:*) I'll be out in a few. I can't hear you!

CLARA. I said there's a guy over here and—

(BOBBY enters with a bag of food and a picture, wrapped with paper and a bow.)

BOBBY. She's getting the water out of her ears. With the blow-dryer. That I do know. Now, what I'd like to know is how she gets water in her ears in the first place. But—ours is not to wonder why... But you were wondering something, weren't you?

CLARA. No. No, I just—

BOBBY. You just what?

CLARA. Nothing.

BOBBY. Well, get ready to eat.

CLARA. I'm not hungry.

BOBBY. Are you sure?

CLARA. I've sort of lost my appetite.

BOBBY. (*Opening food.*) Excuse me while I—

CLARA. Go ahead.

BOBBY. It's been days since I had Chinese. (*He digs in and eats.*) Lobster and shrimp with snow peas. You can order it in Chicago and demand it in L.A., but I'll tell you something. It never tastes like it does in the city so nice they named it twice.

(*Pause while he eats. She stares.*)

Say something so I don't have to talk with my mouth full.

CLARA. Ummmm...

BOBBY. Considering the amount of time you keep Joanna on the phone, the cat must've roasted your tongue over an open fire, huh?

CLARA. The amount of time I keep her on the phone? She's the one who—

BOBBY. Just checking. Slow down. Nobody accused you of cannibalism.

CLARA. I don't believe this.

BOBBY. You don't believe this. What don't you believe?

CLARA. ANY OF THIS! That you're who you two are saying you are. For god's sake! I watch you in movies! She doesn't meet people like you in her life.

BOBBY. I guess she did, though.

CLARA. (*Shakes head.*) Boy.

BOBBY. What? Trying to figure out how to tell Jack without sounding like you've lost your mind?

CLARA. No. Uh—Jack and I broke up this morning.

BOBBY. I'm so sorry to hear that. I know how much he meant to you.

CLARA. You do?

BOBBY. Of course. Joanna told me. (*Offers a tin.*) If you won't eat Chinese, at least you can have fudge.

CLARA. Oh, god, no. Thanks.

BOBBY. I made it for Joanna before I left, but she started accusing me of trying to fatten her up. Go ahead. Take one. They won't bite back!

(She takes one.)

You have to take it *and* eat it, too. Not just take it. She looks great to me. I'll tell you something. (*Winks, looks over shoulder for eavesdroppers.*) A couple or few extra pounds feels good in your arms when you're dancing. And when you're— How's the fudge? Don't spread it around, but I sometimes like to venture into the kitchen. It's my father's recipe. You like?

CLARA. Do you love her? No, you can't love her. I mean, you date models and actresses and she's just—

BOBBY. "Just"? She's not "just."

CLARA. I mean—

BOBBY. I know what you mean. You want to know what I mean? When you're in love in first grade, you don't love like you do when you're twenty. Or twenty-nine. When you're a kid, what do you know? A pretty face could very well be a skinned knee. When I was a kid, I was in love with a little girl who always had bloody, scabby knees. Lola. Everybody in my class would laugh at my mole. Except Lola. Never even snickered. I asked her if she thought my mole looked funny. You know what she did? Lola looked right into my eyes and said, "What mole?" Threw a stick at me. I loved her. Little Lola.

CLARA. But—

BOBBY. But do I love Joanna?

CLARA. Yeah.

BOBBY. "Even though—"

CLARA. Yeah.

BOBBY. You want to know what love is, Clara?

CLARA. Yeah.

BOBBY. Wish I knew. But I can tell you what it ain't. Love isn't a pretty face and a—excuse my Urdu—tight ass wrapped in Lycra. That's lust. Body attraction. The flesh and only the flesh. Regrets? Yeah. I've had a few. Bitten off more than I could et cetera et cetera. But I think love is flesh. And mind. And heart. All working together. All in synch. Dancing. You see? Love her? We dance good together. When you dance good together, everything else? Chocolate. Everything else is sweet. Go ahead. Have another piece. It's healthy fudge.

CLARA. Okay. Okay. Wait. Let's step back and look at this. Fact. You live across the hall. Fact. You met her the night she read in the *Times* that her boyfriend had gotten married. Fact. You dance with her. Fact. You're a movie star. Do I have that right? Is that more or less the way it is?

BOBBY. Yeah. Kinda restores your faith in the world and mankind, doesn't it.

CLARA. No. No. Not at all. You're not just any guy off the street. You're—

BOBBY. A guy with a heart. And any guy with a heart and a brain would be lucky to be in love with her.

CLARA. I can't believe you—

BOBBY. She's first in my heart. I love her every hour of every day. This is not an infatuation. This is the heart and the mind. This is the heart and the mind doing a tango. Or a dark basement in Motown sort of bump and grind thing. Moving together. In synch. Not two becoming one. Two becoming a million. A million beautiful things twinkling like diamonds. She walks into the room? It lights up. Everything becomes easier. Sweeter. Life is no longer a burden. It's a pleasure. She makes life's messiness bearable. Even though it's her messiness I hate. She's a slob. Forgive me. It's true.

CLARA. No. I know.

BOBBY. That and the red meat. Once a month *maybe*. As a self-indulgence. But more than that's potentially deadly. But, yeah. It's love.

CLARA. You don't know her! You've only danced a few times! That's all!

BOBBY. I don't know what she's told you, but it's been a hell of a lot more than a "few" times. A hell of a lot! And "only danced"? My parents met dancing. The parents of my parents met dancing. I remember being a little boy at my grandparent's house, sitting on the floor, watching them dance to something on the radio. I watched my parents dance me to sleep when I had a fever. Or a bad dream. And

they would dance when they fought. The nights of their worst arguments. The ones that almost led to the violence of a fist against flesh. In a fight, you build up a wall. Put up a barrier. When you dance, you have to give a little. Lead some and follow if you must. Merge. Yield. You smell the neck. Press a spine. You hold and are held. Part of a team. You work together. Symbiosis. Capishe? Me and Joanna? We met dancing. We dance good together. When we dance, it's my parents. My grandparents. Strong. You can't hate your partner. Not for long. You breathe the same air. Occupy the same space. Move together through time. With never enough for the Holy Ghost between. Not when the song's right.

CLARA. When did you move across the hall?

BOBBY. About a year and change ago.

CLARA. Why here?

BOBBY. I like the music. *(He opens his fortune cookie.)* "If your desires are not extravagant, they will be granted." That's nice. Sounds like a prayer or something.

CLARA. Aren't *you* a little—

BOBBY. Extravagant? Me? No.

CLARA. But these things—

BOBBY. Okay. Guilty. But I think she needs spoiling. Look around.

CLARA. At what?

BOBBY. Not the things. The space between the things.

(Pause. She is confused.)

Tilt you head. From side to side.

(She does. Slowly.)

A little faster. Yeah. Do you see it?

CLARA. *(Still moving her head:)* What?

BOBBY. The way the room shines? Kind of sparkles?

CLARA. Yeah!

BOBBY. Know what it is?

CLARA. What?

BOBBY. That's what *I* wondered. We're twirling around, dancing. The room's shining. Dazzling. And I realize afterwards, "It's not shining because it's so clean. She's no June Cleaver. Un-unh. Silverfish."

CLARA. Silverfish?

BOBBY. Silverfish. What's left of them. They shine. Silverfish. Not roaches. Not waterbugs. Not fleas. Nothing run-of-the-mill. Nothing tolerable. Killable. She's gotta have an infestation of the nastiest, ugliest—ugh! (*A chill down his back.*) Excuse me. A woman who can live amid an infestation of the most disgusting little insects on God's green earth deserves extravagance. And I'll tell you something else. Emily Post does not tell you how to tell your hostess there's a silverfish in your tea.

CLARA. You talk a lot.

BOBBY. I do. I do. I started talking late. When I was three. I gotta admit it. I love the sound of my own voice. (*He laughs, rests, shrugs. Sings "When Joanna Loved Me" under his breath until he can bear the silence no longer.*) Guess me talking was better of two goods, huh? It feels good to talk. It's like eating. You move you're mouth. Taste the words. Roll 'em around with your tongue. Work the jaw. You should try.

(She spaced out and starts crying.)

What? My breath?!

(He laughs tentatively. She cries harder.)

Is there anything...?

(She waves him off.)

Jack? Is it Jack?

(She nods and cries harder.)

CLARA. (*Through tears. Her voice and words are punctuated with sharp intakes of breath:*) I— I'm— I'm— I'm—sorry.

BOBBY. Oh, no no no. Sorry? What you're sorry? There's no sorry here. Your tears hurt me? No. Tears are good.

CLARA. He— He— He—

BOBBY. Take your time. Do you need a paper bag?

CLARA. He— He just said, "No more."

BOBBY. "No more"? What's "no more"? "No more" what?

CLARA. "No more love for me."

BOBBY. Awww. Clara.

CLARA. He said—

BOBBY. (*Gives her box of tissues.*) Shhh. It's okay.

CLARA. He said—

BOBBY. (*Gets fudge.*) Shhh.

CLARA. (*Eating fudge:*) How could he? Huh? How? I *loved* him!

BOBBY. I know.

CLARA. I really loved him.

BOBBY. It's gonna be alright. You were too good for him anyway.

CLARA. (*Stuffing her face:*) But we were so *right!* You know? So *right!*

BOBBY. I know.

CLARA. He said there was no—"romance." When we met, it was good. Real good. We sparked. You know?

BOBBY. I know. You want something to wash that down?

CLARA. Tequila.

BOBBY. (*Getting bottle.:*) Aren't you afraid it'll—go down badly? In your stomach? I've got a cast-iron stomach and never not once have I been able to mix anything sweet with tequila.

CLARA. I need to puke. God, I wish I could puke.

BOBBY. No no no you don't want to do that, Clara!

CLARA. No romance? No romance? How could there be no romance? I'm the queen of romance! I get catalogs from Victoria's Secret! I've subscribed to Lingerie of the Month. I get something new and silky the seventh of every month! This month it was this! (*She holds up a strap through the collar opening in her shirt.*) And now he'll never see it! (*She cries harder.*) "No romance"?! I reek of it! I stink of moonlight and champagne! Look at me!

(He does.)

When you look at me, what do you think of?

(He makes a grand thing out of looking at her. She has her mouth stuffed full of fudge, her makeup is running and smeared and she looks a mess. He pours her another shot. She shoots it.)

I know I don't look great right now, but—

BOBBY. You look just fine.

CLARA. You were looking at me funny.

BOBBY. At you? No. I was wondering if you could stand hearing it.

CLARA. Hearing what?

BOBBY. The news.

(He gives her another piece of fudge, puts down the tin, then decides to give her the entire tin, which she hold protectively on her lap.)

CLARA. What is it? I can take it.

BOBBY. But can I? *(He sits by her.)* First somebody comes along and tells us the Earth isn't the center of the universe. Then some other genius figures out the world isn't flat, and there are no monsters over the edge, waiting for boats to fall off. And another somebody gets the bright idea to put a man on the moon and prove it isn't just a ball of cheese. The most romantic thing in the world for eons, centuries and forever, then some wise guy's gotta walk all over it.

CLARA. Just sucking the romance out of everything.

BOBBY. There's even a special telescope now that can take the twinkle twinkle out of little stars. Can you imagine? So there's no romance left anywhere.

CLARA. But you don't understand, Bobby. For a while? It *was* there! It was really there!

BOBBY. It's always there. For a while. You know how you lose it?

(She shakes her head.)

Here.

(Gives her his handkerchief, hold it up to her nose.)

Blow.

(She blows her nose and sounds like a trucker.)

You look too hard at something, you examine it and examine it and you dissect it and you take it down to it lowest common denominator, and you know what happens then? You forget what made you think it looked food in the first place. You pick at it and pick at it and pouf! Gone. Gone like it wasn't ever really there and there's nothing left in that place to remind you the spaced used to be filled. You get what I'm saying to you?

(She nods.)

Blow.

(She blows into hanky again, puts her head on his shoulder.)

CLARA. I'm so tired.

BOBBY. It is getting late, isn't it?

CLARA. So you're De Niro.

BOBBY. I stand accused. I plead guilty on all counts.

CLARA. What's the worst thing about being you?

BOBBY. Besides giving interviews? Being doubted.

(Now happy and comfy, she nuzzles into him, burying her face in his neck.)

Uhhh, Clara—

CLARA. She was right. You really are great.

BOBBY. Thanks, but—

CLARA. No. You're really amazing. I can tell why Joanna is crazy about you...

(She moves to kiss him. He quickly disengages and stands away from her.)

What's wrong? Are you okay?

BOBBY. Are *you*? Look, you shouldn't—

CLARA. I just wanted someone to hold me. For you to hold me like you held her the night—

BOBBY. I can't hold you like that!? I don't do that. I don't believe in that. What are you thinking?

CLARA. I thought—

BOBBY. You're not thinking clearly, okay? Did you not hear me? Can you not hear me when I talk? Give me a sign. Close your mouth and nod your head.

(She nods.)

Okay.

(The dryer stops. He gives the bathroom door a hasty look.)

I'll make it short. Are you her friend?

CLARA. Yes.

BOBBY. You're her friend?

CLARA. Yes.

BOBBY. You're telling me you're her friend.

CLARA. Yes?

BOBBY. You're not her friend. You know how the world is divided? There are your friends, acquaintances, and then there are the ones who are happiest after they've lodged a knife in your back. Your friends take it out, your acquaintances ignore it, and the person who

put it in you in the first place? Tries to shove it in deeper. Do you know what we're talking about here?

(She nods.)

She doesn't know which one you are yet. But she will. These things have a way of— What is it? Disclosing themselves? Showing themselves. Making themselves known. Like Silverfish.

(Enter JOANNA, putting on earrings. She is wearing a dress.)

JOANNA. Hi! I thought I heard you!

(He goes to kiss her.)

BOBBY. Look at you! Are you losing weight?

JOANNA. Oh, stop it!

BOBBY. You look divine. A sight for sore eyes.

JOANNA. What brought you in here?

CLARA. I put the album on and he—waltzed right in. Just like you said.

JOANNA. You've been crying. What's wrong?

CLARA. What could possibly be wrong with me?

BOBBY. *(Gets picture wrapped in paper and bow.)* Hey! Look. I did this for you when I was out there. I wrote you a poem!

JOANNA. *(Unwrapping it:)* Oooh!

CLARA. A poem?

BOBBY. Yeah.

CLARA. Right.

JOANNA. Oh, read it!

BOBBY. Now? In front of—

JOANNA. Please?

BOBBY. *(Clears his throat.)* "With thee conversing, I forget all time.
All seasons, and their change; all please alike.
Sweet is the breath of morn, his rising sweet,
With charm of earliest birds..."

CLARA. But Milton wrote that. It's from "Paradise Lost."

BOBBY. I wrote it. Look. *(He shows it to her.)* I do calligraphy in my spare time. Oh. You thought I—?! Oh, for crying out loud, Clara! Everybody knows Milton wrote that! What? You think I'm an idiot, or something? Like I don't know what I know? Or if what I know is

**THIS PLAY IS
NOT OVER!**

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**WHO DOTH INHABIT
THE PRIMARY POSITION**

**by David Foubert, Jay Leibowitz,
and Jason King Jones**

Cast of Characters

ACTOR 1

ACTOR 2

Acknowledgments

Who Doth Inhabit the Primary Position was originally performed in entirety at First Night Morristown, December 31, 2005 with Jay Leibowitz and David Foubert, directed by Jason King Jones. Also, it was based on an idea by Bonnie J. Monte, artistic director of the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey.

WHO DOTH INHABIT THE PRIMARY POSITION

by David Foubert, Jay Leibowitz,
and Jason King Jones

(Two ACTORS stand on an empty stage dressed in Elizabethan garb. ACTOR 1 holds a skull in one hand [ala Poor Yorick]. ACTOR 2 holds a broadsword or halberd.)

ACTOR 1. Lo, made dull with the act of sport, the King
With swift decision hath appointed me
Lord and Grand Master of Recreation.
And, for an earnest of a greater offer,
He bade me, from him, call thee Thane of Baseball!

ACTOR 2. Sir, I thank thee! But call you these ballers base?

ACTOR 1. O, base and bastardly these ballers be.

ACTOR 2. And many a man makes sport with base balls.
I charge thee, tender well the huntsman's hounds,
Bid the archer loose his golden shaft,
And like brave Apollo who ran Olympus,
Crouch we here awhile and let us speak
of every man's name which is thought fit
to play this raucous sport before the King.
Come sir, know you names?

ACTOR 1. Ere I name them sir I shall have your ear.
Know you, sir, of these wayward wanderers,
Whose names doth shift as breez'ly as the wind?

ACTOR 2. What mean you? Comedic names?

ACTOR 1. Nicknames. Like Hotspur for Harry—

ACTOR 2. Or Hal.

ACTOR 1. Or Hal.

ACTOR 2. Or his French Cousin.

ACTOR 1. French Cousin?

ACTOR 2. Goofe'!

ACTOR 1. Goofe'. Well, let us perpend.
Hark! I here shall name the King's base ballers:

Who doth inhabit the primary position.
What doth inhabit the secondary.
And I Cannot Tell, the tertiary.

ACTOR 2. Nor can I tell and this is the matter I come to discuss.

ACTOR 1. And I tell you, sir:
Who doth inhabit the primary position.
What doth inhabit the secondary.
And I Cannot Tell, the tertiary.

ACTOR 2. Names, villain! Know you names?

ACTOR 1. Indeed, sir.

ACTOR 2. Who is he, then, that doth inhabit the primary position?

ACTOR 1. Yea.

ACTOR 2. Come, sir, the fellow's name.

ACTOR 1. Who.

ACTOR 2. The man in the primary position.

ACTOR 1. Who.

ACTOR 2. The gentleman in the primary position.

ACTOR 1. Who.

ACTOR 2. The primary gentleman.

ACTOR 1. Who is primary.

ACTOR 2. Why ask you me?

ACTOR 1. Sir, I tell you: Who is primary.

ACTOR 2. Sir, I *ask* you: who is primary?

ACTOR 1. This is the man's name.

ACTOR 2. This is who's name?

ACTOR 1. Yea.

ACTOR 2. Pray sir, tell.

ACTOR 1. Who.

ACTOR 2. The man in the primary position.

ACTOR 1. Who!

ACTOR 2. The primary gentleman!

ACTOR 1. Who is primary!

ACTOR 2. Sir, have you, as it is your bus'ness yo enact,
drawn you these papers of law with the gentleman in the
primary position?

ACTOR 1. Indubitably.

ACTOR 2. Who, then, is the gentleman that you hath drawn these
papers with?

ACTOR 1. Verily!

ACTOR 2. Come sir, when the primary gentleman
hath his sum levied, upon who then do you
levy his sum?

ACTOR 1. Why, every ducat!
And deservedly! The payment he hath earned!

ACTOR 2. Who?

ACTOR 1. Yea. Though, when absent, his wife may visit
sometime in his stead.

ACTOR 2. Who's wife?

ACTOR 1. Yea.

ACTOR 2. Sir, the matter I have come to discuss seems pointedly
fixed betwixt your ears. What is the gentleman in the
primary position's name?

ACTOR 1. Hold. Confuse them not. What is secondary.

ACTOR 2. I ask not who is secondary.

ACTOR 1. Who is primary.

ACTOR 2. I cannot tell.

ACTOR 1. He is tertiary. Do you wish to speak of him?

ACTOR 2. Tertiary? How have we come to tertiary?

ACTOR 1. Your inquiries, sir. Your inquiries.

ACTOR 2. Have I made thee inquiries to the tertiary?
Who, then, is tertiary?

ACTOR 1. Alas, sir, no. Who is primary.

ACTOR 2. Pray you sir, leave me primary and give me tertiary!
The tertiary gentleman. What is his name?

ACTOR 1. Alas, sir, no. What is secondary.

ACTOR 2. I ask not who is secondary.

ACTOR 1. Who is primary.

ACTOR 2. I cannot tell.

ACTOR 1. He is tertiary.

ACTOR 2. Zounds! Alack and alas!
Hold fast to tertiary, hold fast!

ACTOR 1. Come, sir, your purpose?

ACTOR 2. Who is the gentleman in the tertiary position?

ACTOR 1. You rogue, you rascal! Who in the tertiary?
Why make you, sir, this insistence?

ACTOR 2. Why? Who have I made tertiary?

ACTOR 1. Indeed, sir, you have and he belongs not there!

ACTOR 2. Sir, what is the name of the gentleman i'the tertiary
position?

ACTOR 1. What is secondary.

ACTOR 2. I ask not who is secondary.

ACTOR 1. Who is primary.

ACTOR 2. I cannot tell.

BOTH. TERTIARY!

ACTOR 2. Sir, hath you any fielded-friends?

ACTOR 1. Aye!

ACTOR 2. Pray you, the name of the fieldman sinister?

ACTOR 1. Why.

ACTOR 2. Only, sir, that I thought to ask.

ACTOR 1. My pleasure then, on thinking to answer.

ACTOR 2. On thinking then make it so and answer: Who is fieldman
sinister?

ACTOR 1. Who is pri—

ACTOR 2. STAY OUTTA THE INFIELD!
By the Hounds of Sparta, sir, confess:
What is the name of the fieldman sinister?

ACTOR 1. What is secondary.

ACTOR 2. I ask not who is secondary.

ACTOR 1. Who is primary.

ACTOR 2. I cannot tell.

BOTH. TERTIARY!

ACTOR 2. The name of the fieldman sinister?

ACTOR 1. Why.

ACTOR 2. Because!

ACTOR 1. Ah, he is fieldman intermediate!

ACTOR 2. Goats and monkeys! Hath your band a pitcher?

ACTOR 1. Come again, sir?

ACTOR 2. A pitcher? A chuckflinger? A tosser?

ACTOR 1. A Bowler, sir?

ACTOR 2. Aye, if it please you, a Bowler. Hath your band a Bowler?

ACTOR 1. A band without a Bowler, sir? You jest!

ACTOR 2. I pray you, the name of the bowling gentleman.

ACTOR 1. Tomorrow.

ACTOR 2. A timely amendment, sir, and your answer comes hither.

ACTOR 1. Then call me amended, sir, and hither I come with an answer.

ACTOR 2. Proceed, sir.

ACTOR 1. Tomorrow.

ACTOR 2. At what tick o' the clock?

ACTOR 1. At what tick o' what clock?

ACTOR 2. At what tick o' the clock tomorrow does my lord expect to know who shall be the bowler?

ACTOR 1. Hark, sir. Who is not the bowler. Who is pri—

ACTOR 2. Speak thee "Who is Primary" and I shall give thee bloody teeth! (*He threatens him with his weapon.*) Save you, what is the name of the bowling gentleman?

ACTOR 1. What is secondary.

ACTOR 2. I cannot tell.

BOTH. TERTIARY!

ACTOR 2. Have you, then, a catcher?

ACTOR 1. Sir?

ACTOR 2. A catcher? A catcher?

ACTOR 1. A Wicketkeeper, sir?

ACTOR 2. A Wicketkeeper. Have you a wicketkeeper, sir?

ACTOR 1. Sir, we do.

ACTOR 2. The Wicketkeeper's name.

ACTOR 1. Today.

ACTOR 2. Today. And Tomorrow is the bowler.

ACTOR 1. Now, methinks, thou hast the sense of it.

ACTOR 2. This band, methinks, is comprised entirely of days.

ACTOR 1. Something, sir, that I cannot mend.

ACTOR 2. I too posses skills in Wicketkeeping.

ACTOR 1. By my troth, is't possible?

ACTOR 2. Let us now suppose me Wicketkeeper. Tomorrow, bowler of my band, doth bowl brazenly for the opposition's basest baller.

ACTOR 1. Yea.

ACTOR 2. With arm like Mercury, Tomorrow bowls. Swift like wind, ball meets bat and base baller bunts. I doth make my intention for the primary position. With hand like ice and mind like fire, I thus ensnare the ball and throw it to who?

ACTOR 1. Sir, at last thou speakst sense!

ACTOR 2. Sense? I know not what sense I spake!

ACTOR 1. But, thou madest good show and thy mark was hit.

ACTOR 2. My mark being the primary position?

ACTOR 1. Yea.

ACTOR 2. Who, then, hath ensnared the ball?

ACTOR 1. Verily!

ACTOR 2. Sir, the ball, thrown to the primary is ensnared. Now, sir, who hath ensnared the ball?

ACTOR 1. Verily!

ACTOR 2. Who hath ensnared it?

ACTOR 1. Verily.

ACTOR 2. Who?

ACTOR 1. Verily!

ACTOR 2. Verily?

ACTOR 1. Yea.

ACTOR 2. So, the ball, thrown to the primary position, is ensnared and kept by Verily.

ACTOR 1. Fie upon't! The ball, thrown to the primary position, is ensnared and kept by Who.

ACTOR 2. Verily.

ACTOR 1. By Jove, methinks thou hast it!

ACTOR 2. So, the ball, thrown to the primary position, is ensnared and kept by Verily.

ACTOR 1. Alas, sir, no!

ACTOR 2. Ensnared by who?

ACTOR 1. Verily.

ACTOR 2. This is what I spake!

ACTOR 1. Thou spakest, sir, but thou spakest not this.

ACTOR 2. I spake, sir, and when I spake the ball was ensnared by Verily!

ACTOR 1. Fie! The ball is ensnared by Who!

ACTOR 2. Verily!

ACTOR 1. Good, sir, now speak it!

ACTOR 2. Speak it? Speak it? I spake it! Who ensnares the ball?

ACTOR 1. Verily.

ACTOR 2. Ask me.

ACTOR 1. Who ensnares the ball?

ACTOR 2. Verily.

ACTOR 1. Alas, sir! Thou speakest truth again!

ACTOR 2. Spoken twice and each breath the same! The ball, thrown to the primary position is ensnared and kept by who?

ACTOR 1. Verily!

ACTOR 2. Who hath ensnared it?

ACTOR 1. Verily!

ACTOR 2. O heavenly powers, I pray he hath ensnared it! The ball, thrown to the primary position, hath been ensnared by whoever is in the primary position. The base baller runs to the secondary position. The ball, ensnared by

**THIS PLAY IS
NOT OVER!**

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