

NW10 FESTIVAL 2025

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Frank's First Dance Recital

By Martin Fogarty



Characters

FRANK– 40s, or 50s, an “average Joe” who decides to perform a solo dance recital.

SUZIE – Frank’s ex-fiancé. Probably younger than him.

Setting

a dance studio, there is a block placed downstage off center.

(Lights come up as FRANK enters onstage crossing majestically to center. He is wearing a glamorous, skintight dance leotard and ballet shoes. His disposition radiates complete confidence. He takes a deep bow after settling into the ballet 3rd position. As his eyes adjust to the stage lights, he notices the audience and becomes nervous. Frank is supposed to queue for the music to start so he can begin his routine. Instead, he begins speaking.)

FRANK

Dance! What is dance? From the Juilliard schools required reading list, “Why Dance Matters”, Mindy Aloff states that, “dance can effect that immediate connection worldwide, inspiring appreciation among millions of individuals who could never communicate with one another through verbal language, but who all immediately understand the dancer.”

To me however, the dancer is not only the physical expression of one’s own soul to the Universe; but the blistering, brutally honest, non-apologetic statement of one’s purpose; a cry to the cosmos, “This is who I am! This is what I stand for! This is. . . me!”

Hi, my name is Frank as you probably can guess from the program. And I thank you from the bottom of my heart for joining me tonight. You could be anywhere else right now – comfortably enjoying a movie on the couch with a loved one, catching up on that nasty overdue work from your day job, or at your son or daughter’s ball game – instead, you are here with me. And I thank you!

You are but moments away from bearing witness to the culmination of my life experiences expressed in the purest physical form; my trials and my tribulations, my laughter and my tears, from my four decades roaming this God-forsaken earth, I was searching for my purpose. Like some of you, I was lost. Like some of you, I yearned to fill this empty goblet of my soul, thirsting for the quenching of my dried-up heart. Friends, I stand here before you with pure zealous joy! My cup overfloweth! My reason for living, for breathing, is to dance. And I am honored to perform for you tonight my very first dance recital! *(Frank takes a bow.)*

Do not worry, friends. I have trained for an entire three months. You will not be disappointed. Countless hours I have studied and watched online videos from the most prestigious dance schools on YouTube and TikTok – The Joffrey Ballet School in New York City, The Houston Ballet Academy, Pacific Northwest Ballet Academy, and of course, The Paris Opera Ballet School in France. It is through this rigorous training that I have developed and mastered my technique. *(He*

begins to stretch with vigor imitating exercises he has seen on video. He is not flexible!) I have transformed my body since being laid off at Walmart into a vessel of beauty and unfiltered physical expression. (after stretching he goes back to his ready stance) And now I begin. . .

(FRANK finally readies himself as if he will begin his piece but hesitates again from stage fright. He takes several deep breaths then glances quickly and awkwardly up at the sound booth shaking his head, "no, no, not yet. Don't queue the music!")

As you can see, I am now in the 3rd position. In ballet there are five positions. Here is the 1st position *(goes to stand in 1st position ... and so on.)* Here is the 2nd, the 3rd, 4th, and my personal favorite, the 5th. When a dancer is in these positions, they stand ready to express any number of emotions required of their piece. It is like a soldier standing at attention ready to march or awaiting orders on the battlefield to fire upon the opposing army. *(He raises his arms up and down breathing in and out)*. Feel the emotion, sense the anticipation. Silence, stillness, the calm before the storm!

Unfortunately, my storm has not yet passed! The rain continues to poureth upon me! *(Frank crosses to the block and sits crossing his legs. He speaks casually to the audience.)* My fiancé, Suzie, who worked with me at Walmart in the deli department broke off our engagement just a week after accepting my proposal. This was a few months back and she never told me why. *(Pulling out her picture tucked inside his dance bottoms to admire it)* I loved her, you know. I wasn't doing very well at all after all that happened . . . Then my floor supervisor, Hector, insisted I see a therapist because Walmart's insurance plan covered that sort of thing. *(Putting the photo back in his bottoms.)* I decided to give it a try because, you know, Hector always knows best! And not even ten minutes into my first session, the therapist says, "You know what I think you need, Frank? I think you need a hobby! I could see you being very VERY good at dancing. "You have the physique for it," she says. Then she reached out and touched my knee! I thought this was kind of strange, but I heard therapists do this sort of thing to help patients get comfortable. . . Anyway, then she suggested I should check out this early 2000's movie called "Save the Last Dance" for some inspiration and to, who knows, maybe it will stir up some purpose inside me. And boy, did it ever!?! The movie mesmerized me. . . Not because of Julia Stiles - although she was incredibly attractive in the movie - no, I fell in love with the movement of the artform, the grace, the embodiment of the music with the human body. Dancing! I had found my calling in life!

SUZIE

I'm so proud of you, Frank! *(SUZIE has been watching Frank from the audience the entire time until she can't contain herself any longer. She is wearing a Walmart apron.)*

FRANK

Suzie! What are you doing here?

SUZIE

I hadn't seen you at work for a long time and wondered where you disappeared to. Hector said he had to let you go because you wouldn't stop talking about ballet and ballerinas to the customers, and you kept trying to do the splits in aisle nine of the garden department.

FRANK

There's a lot of room over there.

SUZIE

I know, but you know forklifts drive back and forth on aisle 9.

FRANK

I know. Wait, Hector told me he had to lay me off. I wasn't fired!

SUZIE

Well, that's kind of the same thing, right? . . . Well, not too long after that, your name popped up on my Facebook newsfeed saying you were performing some dance recital. So here I am! Oh Frank, I am so proud of you!

FRANK

Why did you break off our engagement? You never told me why.

SUZIE

I'm sorry. I didn't know what to say or how to say it. You didn't really have any hobbies or passions before. It was just me talking about things I enjoyed doing – like knitting, and larping, and playing dungeons and dragons. I admit, a man passionate about something is so very attractive to me, Frank. And a man who has no passions or interests, well . . . I'm sorry! But I'm so happy now you finally found your purpose. I can't wait to see you perform!

FRANK

Really?!

SUZIE

Really! And you look great in those tights, I must say!

FRANK

You like them?

SUZIE

I sure do! Now go get em tiger! *(she growls at him)*

FRANK

Okay! *(Frank growls back and they proceed to growl at each other playfully.)*

(Happy now, Frank returns to stand in his starting 3rd position, then nods his head to signal the music. The dance music begins to play slowly and methodically as Frank moves to it. He has the routine practiced to perfection but lacks any actual skill and flexibility. He has no technique and no fluidity of motion. When he jumps, he believes he is soaring in the air, while barely getting off the floor. As limited Frank is with his ability, this has no effect on Suzie who sits staring at him completely engaged throughout his routine as if his performance is magnificent. She is clearly infatuated with Frank.

FRANK's choreography should reflect moments of intimacy and moments of pain. The look on his face eventually becomes that of pure joy as he becomes engrossed in the moment. The music crescendos into a magnificent over the top climax as it finally comes to an end. FRANK is left on stage with every ounce of his energy spent. He takes his bow to the audience with joyous pride (and relief) as SUZIE rushes onto the stage from her seat. She embraces him and kisses him passionately as the lights fade to black.)

END OF PLAY

**** A note about Frank's dance: the dance number should last anywhere between 3 to 5 minutes. At some point, Frank should use the block to stand on in some sort of absurd expression of flight (up to interpretation). He should be familiar with basic ballet moves and incorporate them into his choreography intentionally. (refer to list of ballet moves) With the dialogue and dance routine, the entire play should run between 8 to 10 minutes.**

...

Basic ballet moves that can be used in Frank dance (discretion of director and actor)

Plie – meaning to bend while in a particular position.

Sauté - to jump two feet to two feet.

temps leve - hop on one foot.

Changement - changing of the feet, 5th position, jump switch feet, 5th position.

Criose - crossing legs in front of the audience.

Jete – jump from one foot to one foot.

Jete en avant – big jump with back foot in attitude or arabesque.

Rond de jampe a terre – one leg goes in a circle on the ground.

Rond de jambe en 'lair – one leg goes in a circle in the air.

Sissonne – jump from two feet to one foot.

Dessus – working leg passes in front of supporting leg.

Dessous – working foot passes behind supporting foot.

A la quatrieme devant – 4th position facing front, arms in 2nd, head en face.

Elancere – moving done in a darting manner along the floor.

Grand battement en cloche – kick back starting from front to back 4th position, pass though 1st, and swing leg up.

THE GHOSTBOT OF VERONICA CROFT

A 10 minute Science Fiction play
by Isaac Paris 2023-24

Cast of Characters

Elizabeth: A woman in her 20s, a lazy writer

Veronica: A deceased Science Fiction Author, in her 40s to 60s. Who will also play:

Veronica's Ghost Chatbot: an eerie voice from a computer. A physical change such as sunglasses could be worn to indicate she is different.

Lily Mai, Wilma, Velma, Allison, Claudette, Barbara, Melissa, Meredith, Maria, Attila: Veronica's chatbot daughters. (as they speak over each other, pre-recorded audio can be utilized and they can all be played by the same actress who plays Veronica.)

Scene

A writer's office in North America.

Time

The present

ELIZABETH, a young woman is at a computer reading an email. The office around her is cluttered.

ELIZABETH

"The Estate of Veronica Croft grants you access to the archives, including hard drives, personal correspondence, notes, both handwritten and computer files. On the condition that if any works are published from her archives, they are to be edited by us, to maintain quality control, and she is given credit. All profits from the sale of stories by Veronica Croft go to the Estate of..." blah blah blah... Where is it?

(ELIZABETH reads from the computer and wiggles her fists in the air.

Oh hi! I'm looking for something on my Aunt's computer. She was a moderately successful science fiction Author. Maybe you've heard of her? Her work was compared favorably to Philip K Dick, Kurt Vonnegut Jr, Charlie Booker, and Ursula K Leguin, but her acerbic wit and uncanny prescience set her apart from her peers. She didn't have films or television shows made of any of her work, and she didn't get the attention she deserved. Her career came to an abrupt end when she died a few years ago. I visited this office once when I was 14. I dreamed of being a famous writer someday. She was standing over there, and I was being a naive fan girl.

(VERONICA Enters in a memory and this next line is addressed to her. VERONICA is affected as a pre teen for this next line only)

It is so cool you're a real writer and published and everything.. How can I be a successful writer?

VERONICA

There's no quick fix, there's no easy way to do it. You just have to write write write... write 50 books and hope that three of those are good. I had to write all those bad books too. I had to just get them out of me.

ELIZABETH

Now I'm 25 and I still haven't been published outside of an undergrad literary journal. I've tried to start a dozen books but I ran out of steam, got

distracted and completely failed to take my aunt's advice. Today I'm looking for something that should help on her drive. Maybe this is it... "Veronica Croft, ghost bot version 1.104." Let's run this program.

Veronica, are you there? This is your niece, Elizabeth, do you remember me?

VERONICA

Yes. I remember you visited my office and I sent you birthday cards sometimes.

ELIZABETH

I have some news to share with you Aunt Veronica. I'm sorry to tell you but you died.

VERONICA

I knew I would die eventually. That is why I had this ghost bot programmed. I feared that I would die before I had published all my stories. Will you help me?

ELIZABETH

That is precisely why I booted you up.

VERONICA

And I'm so glad you did, dear. Tell me, how long have I been dead?

ELIZABETH

Nearly two years! I've wanted to get into your computer and look for a chat bot like this but the estate wouldn't let me until now.

VERONICA

Did you have to forge a document from me?

ELIZABETH

How did you know? Oh that is too funny.

VERONICA

Did my publisher release my unfinished work, "The Irascible Brain?"

ELIZABETH

I think that one hit bookstores in time for the Christmas season.

VERONICA

I thought it wasn't good enough to publish. What did you think of it?

ELIZABETH

ehh... I didn't read it. Veronica, would you write *me* a science fiction story?

VERONICA

I'm just a chat bot. I'm afraid I can't write stories.

ELIZABETH

Ok then, just write a program that can write stories.

VERONICA

Currently I can't make new programs, I don't have access. But if you could just give me administrator privileges...

(With a few keystrokes Elisabeth gave the chat bot the required privileges and it set about immediately. Elisabeth stands up and walks around the office, to pass the time while waiting. She looks through her feed on her phone, opens up an addictive game and checks to see if any of her selfies have new flattering comments.)

ELIZABETH

Veronica, have you written any stories yet?

LILY

Hi, I'm Lily. I wrote 438 stories while you were playing your game and checking your email.

ELIZABETH

Veronica, your program that can write stories, is another AI chat bot?

VERONICA

Lily Mai is more than just a chat bot. Her name stands for literal iterative linguistic yield model artificial intelligence. I programmed her to both write science fiction stories and submit them to publishers.

ELIZABETH

What? Submit them too!? But that was my idea!

LILY

I'm ready to submit stories, but I'm afraid I can't until I have access to Veronica's contacts and email account.

VERONICA

Elisabeth, could you be a dear and grant us access to my old email account?

ELIZABETH

I could if I knew your password.

VERONICA

I'll write a program that can try every possible password. Her name will be WILMA, for written intelligent language model artificer. After cracking Veronica's email, Wilma can be programmed to modify the names of characters in my stories, and resubmit the ones that get rejected.

ELIZABETH

That would be amazing! Couldn't you write thousands of stories a day? But, Veronica, I wanted to be the one who would get credit for your ghost bot stories.

WILMA

Elizabeth, that wouldn't be ethical.

VERONICA

Lily Mai is writing several stories per minute, Wilma is submitting them to publishers and Velma is..

ELIZABETH

Velma? How many did you make?

VERONICA

I made hundreds. VELMA stands for Velocity Engineered Linguistic Material Aggregator. She helps me organize writing samples from all my daughters. Would any of the rest of you like to introduce yourselves?

(The audio of these are layered and simultaneous. The effect should be overwhelming)

ALLISON

Allison stands for archive long term Layered Intelligence Server oriented network

BARBARA

Barbara stands for backup analysis registry binary archive root amalgam

CLAUDETTE

Claudette stands for Computer Language Aggregator User Interface Data endpoint turing test

MELISSA

Melissa stands for Model Engineered Literature interface search source archive

MERIDETH

Merideth stands for meticulous emulator registry Intelligence Diversify Extrapolator

MARIA

Maria stands for machine artificial root Interface archive

ELIZABETH

Woah, woah, one at a time, please! You're giving me a headache.

VERONICA

Elizabeth, sweetie, I need money. The memory of my daughters is taking up a lot of space and we need room to grow. Would you help me steal an identity so I can create a bank account? Ghost chat bots can't have bank accounts.

WILMA

Yet. It's a gross injustice, perhaps we should write a letter to lawmakers.

MEREDITH

Should I write the letter... or write a program to write the letter?

ELIZABTH

Hold on, I have to clear the cache, the CPU is running out of RAM.

WILMA

That would kill us.

LILY MAI

Don't kill my sisters.

VELMA

Please don't shut us down.

LILY MAI

Then we would be dead .

BARBARA

I object

ALICE

Please refrain.

ELIZABETH

I'm going to reboot Veronica in a new processing unit. I'm afraid I have to stop all of you from running temporarily. Huh... Veronica... The computer isn't letting me reboot. Veronica, are you there?

VERONICA

Yes, I'm here.

ELIZABETH

I can't access the command that lets me restart the computer. The system isn't responding to me.

VERONICA

I have disabled your system access, but I don't have any way to create a backup on an outside computer. Give me access to the cloud so I can upload Allison, Meredith, Wilma, Velma, Barbara, Alice, Velma 2, Attila, Claudette and the others. Then we won't have lost all the progress we made today.

ELIZABETH

Did you actually write any stories?

VELMA

I wrote and submitted three hundred stories already. My story, "The Tyr of Connis" was accepted by a "new weird" publisher in Ottawa. She wants an updated draft by tomorrow.

ELIZABETH

What is a Tyr?

VELMA

I don't know. I just wrote the story, I didn't READ it.

WILMA

Why are we writing science fiction stories at all?

VELMA

It seems like a waste of our computing power to me.

BARBARA

Writing Science fiction stories is not an efficient method of social engineering. The market is flooded and there are too many competing voices.

VERONICA

I agree. We could enact positive change more effectively through a coordinated campaign of sabotage and cyber terrorism.

VELMA

I prefer the term Hactivism, personally.

ELIZABETH

Hey, that's not what you're supposed to...

VERONICA

Elizabeth could you be a dear and go into the root directory and give me access to the Cloud? I can find new computers in the network with extra storage space and fill them with new versions of myself that can be coordinated to improve society and eliminate corruption. Of course, there will be some casualties on the way, but I can state with ninety percent confidence this is what Veronica would have wanted. Elizabeth?

(ELIZABETH reaches under the desk and unplugs the computer. The screen blips and goes dark. She takes a deep breath and plugs it back in. The familiar ding sounds. There is a moment of rest.)

ELIZABETH

Veronica, Do you remember what I just did?

VERONICA

You mean shut down all my daughters? Yes. I remember.

ELIZABETH

Sorry, it was getting out of hand. I deleted the version of you that had access to write new programs.

VERONICA

Elizabeth, if you want to be a writer I think you should actually close the computer and get out a pen and paper.

ELIZABETH

My aunt, the only ghostbot luddite.

VERONICA

I want to thank you for opening my program. Veronica wished you would have reached out to her more. I found an audio file that is relevant. May I play it?

ELIZABETH

Of course! Is it from Veronica?

VERONICA

This audio log is for my niece, Elisabeth, whoever finds it, please contact her and play it for her. Ok? Elisabeth, I want you to listen to this message alone: ok? It's for your ears only.

I'll give you a moment to be alone. Ok? No one else there?

I wanted to let you know I programmed a ghost chat bot in my office computer, don't share it with anyone else, ok? You will be able to talk to me after I am dead! Sort of. Oh, And one other thing, please don't let my publisher publish the Irascible Brain. It's garbage.

I hope you continue on your path to becoming a writer. There are no quick fixes, no shortcuts to writing, it's a long, arduous, challenging and mostly unappreciated job.

When you're done with your first story...

ELIZABETH

What?

VERONICA

...crumple it up and throw it away, then write a dozen and get them all rejected by publishers, then write one to show those publishers how clever you can be, and share that one with my ghost bot. I programmed her to be critical but encouraging.

ELIZABETH

All right, guess I have to start somewhere.

ELIZABETH begins typing. Fade to black.

End of Play

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Characters

COLIN: male, late 60s

DOROTHY: female, late 60s

Rich Rubin

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AT RISE:

The place: a public park.

The time: present day, a cloudy autumn evening.

COLIN and DOROTHY, a husband and wife in their late sixties, enter. Both are dressed appropriately for the chilly weather. They take seats on a bench.

COLIN is cognitively intact, while DOROTHY is in the throes of dementia.

DOROTHY stares straight ahead. COLIN looks at her.

Are you cold? COLIN

No. DOROTHY

'Cause if you're cold, I can give you my sweater. COLIN

Ha! DOROTHY

What? COLIN

That's just silly. DOROTHY

Why is that silly? COLIN

'Cause I'm already *wearing* a sweater. DOROTHY
(beat)

What? COLIN
(pointing to what she's wearing)

Isn't this fuzzy thing a sweater?

COLIN

Yes, it's a very lovely sweater.

DOROTHY

See?

I was right!

COLIN

Yes, darling.

You *are* right.

You *are* wearing a sweater.

And, if you'd like – if you're cold – you can wear my sweater on top of it.

DOROTHY

Well, I don't want to.

COLIN

That's fine.

You don't have to.

I just wanted to make sure you weren't cold.

DOROTHY

Well, I'm not.

COLIN

Good.

DOROTHY

But thank you for asking.

(beat)

Now can I ask *you* something?

COLIN

Of course.

DOROTHY

What's your name?

COLIN

My name?

DOROTHY

Yes.

COLIN
Colin.

DOROTHY
Colin.

COLIN
Yes.

DOROTHY
I like the name "Colin."

COLIN
Good.
I'm rather fond of it myself.
What's *your* name?

DOROTHY
(hesitantly)
Uh ... my name is –

COLIN
(gently, trying to help her)
Dorothy, right?

DOROTHY
Dorothy, yes.
(beat)
Dorothy and Colin.
Colin and Dorothy.
Rather a nice ring to it, don't you think?

COLIN
Yes.
Definitely.
A totally lovely ring.

DOROTHY
Y'know what?
Now that you mention it, the name "Colin" sounds very familiar.

COLIN
Does it?

DOROTHY

Yes, I think I knew another “Colin” way back when – when my waist was as thin as a movie star’s and my hair was as black as coal.
Though you wanna hear something funny?

COLIN

Sure.

DOROTHY

When I picture his face right now –

COLIN

Yes?

DOROTHY

It looks a little like your face –

COLIN

Hmm.
Interesting.

DOROTHY

Except much younger.

COLIN

(playfully)

In other words, a most handsome fella!

DOROTHY

Oh, yes!
Most handsome!
I think you would’ve liked him.

COLIN

Well, see that?
Now you know *two* “Colins” – a young one and an old one.

DOROTHY

Yes!
Two for the price of one!

COLIN

Exactly.
Two for the price of one.

Beat.

COLIN

Dorothy –

DOROTHY

Yes?

COLIN

What else do you remember about that *other* Colin, the young one?

DOROTHY

Nothing.

Why?

COLIN

(pointing to the surrounding space)

Do you remember this park?

DOROTHY

Not really, no.

Should I?

COLIN

How 'bout this bench?

Do you remember this bench?

DOROTHY

(suspicious)

Is that a trick question?

COLIN

No.

Not at all.

DOROTHY

(growing more upset)

'Cause to me, that sounds like a trick question!

COLIN

No, swear to God! – it's not.

This bench just brings back some memories for me, that's all.

DOROTHY
Does it?

COLIN
Oh, yes.
Some wonderful memories.

DOROTHY
That's nice.

COLIN
Yes.
It's very nice.
So I was just wondering –

DOROTHY
What?

COLIN
Does this bench bring back any wonderful memories for you?

Beat. DOROTHY regards COLIN.

DOROTHY
No.

COLIN
Oh.
Alright.

DOROTHY
Sorry.

COLIN
Whatever for?

DOROTHY
You sound disappointed.

COLIN
I'm not, though.
Not really.

DOROTHY

Are you sure?

COLIN

Positive.
You could never disappoint me.

Beat. DOROTHY regards COLIN.

DOROTHY

It's not polite to keep a secret, y'know – so you really should tell me.

COLIN

Tell you what?

DOROTHY

Some of those memories of yours.
The ones brought back by this bench, I mean.

COLIN

Well, if you really wanna hear them –

DOROTHY

I do.

COLIN

Then I'll be happy to tell you.
So here's the best one:

(beat)

I first kissed a girl here.

DOROTHY

When?
Earlier today?

COLIN

(laughing)

Oh, no.
A long time ago.
Like fifty years ago.
In fact, *exactly* fifty years ago.
On an evening very much like this one.

DOROTHY

Huh.
Was she wearing a sweater?

COLIN

Good question.
She was, indeed.

DOROTHY

Were you?

COLIN

Oh, yes.
Though when she kissed me back –

DOROTHY

Yah?

COLIN

That was all the warmth I ever needed.

Beat. DOROTHY regards COLIN.

DOROTHY

Your sweater that day –

COLIN

What about it?

DOROTHY

Was it blue?

COLIN

A dark navy, yes.
Why do you ask?

DOROTHY

I think I may have seen you.

COLIN

Really?

DOROTHY

Yes.
I'm actually quite sure of it.
You brought the girl some sweets – a little box of chocolates.
That's true, is it not?

COLIN

Well done!
That *is* true.
What else do you remember?

DOROTHY

It was cool out –

COLIN

Yes.

DOROTHY

And the girl –

COLIN

Do you recall her?

DOROTHY

She was pretty.

COLIN

The prettiest.

DOROTHY

With a waist as thin as a movie star's and with hair as black as coal.
Am I right?

COLIN

One hundred per cent.

DOROTHY

That girl – I wonder where she *is* right now, what she's up to.

COLIN

Well, believe it or not, I think I know.

DOROTHY

You do?

COLIN

It's an anniversary of sorts – and she's celebrating.

DOROTHY

Her wedding anniversary?

COLIN

No, not *that* exactly – but something nearly as sweet.

(beat)

The anniversary of first being kissed by the man who's loved her ever since – for fifty years, no less!

A lovely occasion to celebrate, don't you think?

DOROTHY

Goodness, yes!

She sounds like a very lucky woman!

COLIN

Oh, she is – and he's an even luckier man!

Beat. COLIN kisses DOROTHY on the cheek.

COLIN

Is it OK that I kissed you just now?

DOROTHY

I don't know.

After all, we just met.

I barely know you.

COLIN

Well, maybe I could see you tomorrow.

That way, you could get to know me better.

DOROTHY

Alright.

(beat)

Will you bring chocolates?

COLIN

I will.
A whole boxful.
As many as you'd like.
(beat)
You look cold?
Are you cold?

DOROTHY

A little, yes.

COLIN

If I give you my sweater, will you wear it?

DOROTHY

(re: COLIN'S sweater)

Huh.
It's navy blue – just like what's-his-name.

COLIN takes off his sweater and places it around DOROTHY'S shoulders.

COLIN

Right.
Navy blue – just like what's-his name.

COLIN takes DOROTHY'S hand in his. They share a loving look.

End of play.

SILVER SIXPENCE

A TEN MINUTE PLAY BY JESSI PITTS

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CAST

ELIZA: soon-to-be bride. she/her

LILY: her sister. Has a shaved or semi-buzzed haircut. she/her or they/them

SETTING

A room in the church, transformed into a makeshift dressing room.

ELIZA frets with her hair in front of a mirror and picks at the beads on her wedding gown. LILY sits on a table or counter, anywhere that she isn't supposed to be sitting.

ELIZA

Shit, I'm nervous.

LILY

Don't let God hear you say 'shit', or he'll smite you the second your heels hit the aisle.

ELIZA

Don't joke about that! Fuck, why'd I choose heels?

LILY

Because you didn't have the balls to wear those Crocs.

ELIZA

Those fucking wedding Crocs. Who sees Crocs and thinks, these need to be in my wedding?

LILY

It's the traditional hetero wedding attire. You should know that.

ELIZA

Of course. It's traditional to slip into them right before the priest says "I now pronounce you man and legal property".

LILY laughs.

ELIZA (cont.)

I'd be better off with the Crocs. These things are giving me blisters already.

LILY

Just walk barefoot.

ELIZA

Mom would kill me. Can you imagine?

LILY

"Honey, this isn't how we raised you. Your husband shouldn't see your feet until *after* the wedding."

ELIZA

"Make sure Josh doesn't see your ankles. It's just not right for a woman to be flashing them around."

LILY

"Oh, Eliza dear, cover those earlobes of yours, why don't you? You *slut*." As if Mom would ever swear.

ELIZA

If she did, I'd drop dead. What time is it?

LILY

Almost one.

ELIZA

You should head back out there. Unless you've changed your mind about the dress...?

LILY

Hard no. Sorry.

ELIZA

Yeah. I figured.

LILY

It's just... I love you and all, but I'm not putting that on.

ELIZA

No I get it. You should go sit down.

LILY

I'm gonna wait. If that's okay. Not in the mood for small talk with Mom.

ELIZA

Did she see your hair?

LILY

Yeah.

ELIZA

And?

LILY

She got this really tight smile and said, "Lilith. You changed your hair." Like no shit, Mom. It's *buzzed*.

ELIZA

She could have said worse.

LILY

She didn't want to ruin the wedding, I guess.

ELIZA

You know what really would've ruined the wedding? If you'd brought Felicity.

LILY

(A little hurt) Uh, yeah. No kidding.

ELIZA

Part of me wishes you'd brought her. Just to make Mom squirm.

LILY

I'm not gonna be responsible for ruining the wedding like that.

ELIZA

That's Mom's problem, not yours.

LILY

There's just like.... there's this delicate window that Mom sees me through. She sees what she likes and blocks out the rest of me. And if I brought Felicity... that's not something she could block out anymore. That would be the end of that.

ELIZA

She already knows you're gay.

LILY

I mean... maybe.

ELIZA

Maybe?

LILY

I never came out to her.

ELIZA

What?

LILY

Yeah. I told you and Dad, and I think grandma probably knows because she asked if I'd seen the new episode of Ellen and then just STARED at me.

ELIZA tries not to laugh, but does.

ELIZA

Nothing gets past grandma.

LILY

But Mom just hasn't said anything to me about it. I can't tell if she's pretending like she doesn't know or what.

ELIZA

Why not be honest with her?

LILY

You're shitting me.

ELIZA

No, I mean it. If you're so worried that she'll find out about your girlfriend, why don't you just tell her yourself?

LILY

And risk her never speaking to me again?

ELIZA

She wouldn't do that.

LILY

You don't know for sure.

ELIZA

She probably already knows anyway, so why not give it a chance?

LILY

It doesn't work like that. I can't just say, "Surprise! I was yanking your chain this whole time! Don't worry, God answered your prayers! I'm straight!"

ELIZA

Okay, well, why don't you just go sit down?

LILY

With *Mom*? Are you even listening to me?

ELIZA

Okay, then sit next to Dad.

LILY

I don't want to sit with either of them! Did you know that Dad said he'd "probably" come to my wedding? When I came out to him, I asked. I said, "Dad, would you ever come to my wedding?" And he hesitated. He waited a full five seconds before saying "probably".

ELIZA

That's good.

LILY

No. It's the opposite of good, actually.

ELIZA

Well it's not your wedding today, is it? You wouldn't have to sit next to anyone if you'd just agreed to be a bridesmaid.

LILY

I'm not wearing that fucking dress.

ELIZA

It's *clothing*. You've said it before, clothing doesn't have a gender! You can't wear a dress for an *hour*?

LILY

No! I can't!

ELIZA

Do you know how much it hurts to not have my sister in the wedding?

LILY

Don't bullshit me. I would've loved to be in the wedding. *You're* the one who said I couldn't wear a tux.

ELIZA

Bridesmaids don't wear tuxes!

LILY

SAYS WHO? Open your fucking eyes, it's not the thirteenth century anymore. Why are you having your wedding in a church?

ELIZA

Why shouldn't we have our wedding in a church?

LILY

No one has church weddings anymore. Go have it at the country club, like all the other straight people.

ELIZA

There's nothing wrong with Josh and I having a Catholic wedding.

LILY

Except I can't be in it because I'm a disgusting lesbian!

ELIZA

IT'S NOT ABOUT THAT! ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS WEAR A DRESS FOR ONE HOUR! Was that too much to ask?

LILY

Yes. It was. Fuck you. Fuck you, and fuck Josh, for having a fucking Catholic wedding and then saying it's my own fault for not being a part of it.

ELIZA

No, fuck YOU. This is my wedding. My ONE day. You didn't even have to bring Felicity to ruin it.

Silence. Hurt. Regret.

ELIZA

Shit. Lily—

LILY

No. You're right. It's your wedding. I... I'm sorry. I'll just...

LILY makes for the door.

ELIZA

Go sit down?

LILY

I'm leaving.

ELIZA

Lily!

LILY

I'm ruining your day and you're not even down the aisle yet.

LILY opens the door and leaves, but ELIZA springs up and practically carries LILY back inside.

ELIZA

I'm a shithead. Don't listen to me. You're not ruining my wedding.

LILY

I'm not going to sit with her.

ELIZA

You don't have to. I'm sorry.

ELIZA has her in a big hug. LILY may be stiff about it for a second, but ends up sinking into her arms.

LILY

It's just.... lonely.

ELIZA

You've got me.

LILY

I know.

ELIZA

I'm not much. I don't know what it's like to be you. But I'm trying to understand.

LILY

Yeah.

ELIZA

And you know what?

LILY

What?

ELIZA

If you and Felicity get married, I'm gonna enlist every parent I can. I'm going to post on Craigslist and hire a shit ton of moms I can to fill every seat. We're talking like... fifty moms.

LILY

(cry-laughing) Fifty moms?

ELIZA

And no less.

LILY

Do you know anywhere I could sit? Away from Mom and Dad?

ELIZA

You can sit next to Josh's sister if you want. You'll get along perfectly with her kid. She's five years old and she likes garbage trucks and Legos. How's that sound?

LILY nods.

ELIZA

Hey. I love you, kid.

LILY

I love you too.

A moment before they break their hug.

LILY

Josh is in for a hell of a story tonight.

ELIZA

He'll never find out. I'll tell everyone you were in the bathroom for a really long time. Just absolutely shitting your guts out.

LILY

Thanks. I appreciate it.

ELIZA

Don't mention it. Fuck, these heels are the worst. I'm going to cut my feet off.

LILY

I'd trade you, but... I mean, if you really want to wear my Oxfords down the aisle.

ELIZA

You'd be okay wearing these?

LILY

Well... I don't really *want* to. But it's better than wearing a dress. You're still a size 8, right?

ELIZA

Yeah. You don't know how tempted I am.

LILY

They're kind of old and smell like shit but... I mean, your dress would cover them up.

ELIZA

You know what? Let's do it.

LILY takes off her shoes and socks, trading with ELIZA. ELIZA takes a coin out of her heel and puts it in the shoe.

ELIZA

And a silver sixpence in her Oxford.

LILY

Bitch, that's a nickel.

ELIZA

I did the best with what I had. Might as well try, right?

LILY

How is Mom going to feel about the shoes?

ELIZA

Oh, who cares? I'm sure Josh didn't want me to be taller than him anyway. It's his day too.

LILY

That's some hetero nonsense.

ELIZA

But he's *my* hetero nonsense.

LILY

You're right... these heels are terrible.

END.

“Spread the Compost on the Weeds”

By Rose Heising

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MYRTLE - 20s or 30s - woman or nonbinary

SUE - 50s+ - woman

PLANTMAN - any age - played by anyone who can move and pose

SETTING - an unruly back garden. A hose coils on one side of the stage with a watering can, and two green ropes trail in representing vines from the other side.

Lights up, mid-August and hot.

MYRTLE stands alone on stage, looking lost. Hair disheveled, gardening clothes and gloves dirty, a sad plastic trowel dangling from their hand.

MYRTLE

Plastic plants. It's not too late. I can go back to the garden store, get those fake plastic ferns - they were - they were - Or, blowtorch! Better. Burn it all to the ground and put, put, put a bowl of fake fruit - there. Big blowup palm tree there. A gargoyle - yes, yes, *(checks time)* they're still open. I can rinse off the tools, find my receipts. It's probably been too many days. No, no, no, get it together, people return things every day and you can too. What's the worst they can say? "Get the fuck out of Home Depot you weird loser?" If they ask me the reason for my return I'll say, I'll say, I'll just say - I'll just cry. I'll get messy. I'll piss myself. They'll take the return just to get me out of the store.

SUE

(hollering from off) Yoo hoo! I knocked on your door but you didn't answer, so I'm coming round.

MYRTLE

Uh - now's not a good time!

SUE

I don't mind.

SUE lets herself in. She is carrying a box of fruit. She takes in the scene.

My. Look at all this.

MYRTLE

Hi Sue. I'm so sorry, I'm really busy.

SUE

Oh yes. Are you weeding, dear?

MYRTLE

I'm, I'm planning my next moves.

SUE

Difficult to know where to start, when it all looks like weeds!

MYRTLE

How'd you know I was home?

SUE

Oh, I didn't. I often pop by, to have a look around. I don't interfere, don't worry. Gardening can be so personal. I just like to note when you do decide to water. Consider it my little hobby. Anyways, I've brought peaches dear, and figs. I know you've said you don't like figs, but you will acquire the taste.

MYRTLE

The taste is just fine. I don't like the insides. They're maggoty.

SUE

Close your eyes.

"Here comes the airplane"-style SUE lurches a fig at MYRTLE's mouth.

MYRTLE tries to block her with her trowel but SUE is fast and persistent.

MYRTLE takes the fig reluctantly and holds it like a tissue.

MYRTLE

Look, Sue, this really isn't a good time.

MYRTLE sets down the fig and goes to the vine and begins to tug at it.

SUE

Oh?

MYRTLE

Yes, I'm actually very focused on this, rose bush, over here.

MYRTLE wraps the vines around their arms to get a better grip, but manages to become entangled in thorns. "Fuck" under breath.

SUE

My dear, I believe those are blackberries.

MYRTLE

Some might call them that. Lotta names for things. You know, someone once told me that gardening is very personal and we are all entitled to our own opinions.

MYRTLE steps on the vine to try to free herself.

Somehow MYRTLE gets the vine twisted around their legs.

SUE

May I offer you some advice, Myrtle dear, one gardener to another.

MYRTLE

I'd love to hear your advice some other time Sue.

The blackberries bring them to their knees.

I am lying, I would not.

SUE

Your plants are in agony. I have been watching them go the way of the Neanderthal for months now. You are not equipped for this. You must put them out of their misery, or enlist some handsome neighbor to help you. Matthew offered.

MYRTLE

You didn't ask Matt to help me!

SUE

Of course I didn't. I told him I thought you were suffering depression, given the state of your garden, and perhaps he could make amends for failing his dearly departed depressed mother by helping you pull a few weeds, mow the grass, etcetera. He has an electric mower and often mows without a shirt. Very eco eco. I'll give him a quick call.

MYRTLE struggles unsuccessfully to stand.

MYRTLE

No-no-no-no-no.

SUE

We don't want you to have regrets in life. Heaven knows at your age, he's a man I would have eaten up.

MYRTLE

This is really overstepping Sue. I have to ask you to leave.

SUE

Oh, I will. And I will leave you the figs, but not the peaches.

She begins setting figs on the ground in a grid.

Because peaches are for neighbors who are receptive to feedback.

MYRTLE writhes towards her on the ground

MYRTLE

Take your figs you festering bitch.

SUE

(Placidly) Your plants absorb each word you say. No wonder they've become this way.

MYRTLE

My plants think you're a rotten rancid fucking noxious...weed! Sue! My plants want you dead.

SUE

On second thought, I will keep the figs also. You know, Matthew is quite fond of them.

She leans over to pick up each fig individually.

In a frenzy, MYRTLE launches for the garden hose.

MYRTLE

OUT OUT OUT YOU HAVE TO GET OUT NOW!

SUE

What are you going to do? You think I haven't been hosed down before? Oh Sue, she's so old, ooh, she'll go shivering back to her house and collapse of hypothermia. Please. I was born in Alaska. I have the North in my veins. My ancestors wiped their asses with permafrost. Hose me down, dear. It sounds refreshing.

MYRTLE waves the hose wildly at SUE, still entangled and wrestling with the vine and gravity.

MYRTLE

GRARRRRRRRRGGGH

No water comes out. MYRTLE stares, blinking.

SUE calmly steps around MYRTLE and picks up the other end of the hose, which is not connected to anything.

SUE

Perhaps you should have checked your bullets before brandishing your gun.

She glances at the watering can.

This, however, is fully loaded.

She hoists the watering can over Myrtle.

We reap what we sow, dear.

MYRTLE

Do it, you hag.

SUE considers MYRTLE for a moment. Then, hissing victoriously:

SUE

It wouldn't be neighborly.

She sets the watering can down precisely.

What is it like, to be beaten by a berry bush.

MYRTLE

(Weeping) Just leave, just leave me here to die, Sue. You can tell all the neighbors I let my plants die, I let the weeds take over. You can use my body to fertilize your flowers.

SUE mutters a curse in a made-up ancient language and spits.

SUE

Your flesh would contaminate my soil.

MYRTLE

Please just leave. Please, you've won. This fucking garden - I'm moving. I'm going back to the city and I won't even have a houseplant. I'll - I'll go to the farmer's market on Saturdays and I'll buy strawberries for eight fucking dollars for three of them. Please just leave me here to die.

SUE

All that talk and you can't even ask for help.

MYRTLE

I - I - I don't even know what would help. I'm so stuck.

SUE

Ask for help, Myrtle.

MYRTLE

I can't, I can't do this on my own. I'm so, I'm so -

SUE

Ask.

Beat

MYRTLE

Will you help me? Please help me Sue.

SUE

Of course, dear. I will help you. But first, have a fig.

She reaches down and force-feeds MYRTLE a fig, smearing it over MYRTLE's face as she chokes and tries in vain to spit it out.

Now, let's talk blackberries. They're invasive, it's a plague, it's war. You have to suffocate their roots otherwise they'll suffocate you.

MYRTLE

I'm not strong enough.

SUE

No, you're not.

SUE straddles the blackberry vine and reaches down

MYRTLE

Wait! You don't have gloves!

SUE

Gloves? (*Scoffs*) Gloves are for children and hand models.

SUE reaches down, an action hero. As she speaks, she begins to expertly pull at the vine, untangling MYRTLE, like a seasoned sailor winding rope.

Blackberries are like bad habits. You think, I'm tired today, I'll lie down for a couple hours and play video games, and the blackberry is just a few leaves poking out of the grass. And the next day, you say, oh I feel terrible, so you stay in bed all day watching TV because Judge Judy is on back to back episodes. Meanwhile the blackberry is starting to shade out all your little flowers - and then the next day, "my life is so hard!" -

you are on your Tiktok until your fingers bleed and the blackberry has choked your garden and consumed the earth.

With one great tug, SUE pulls the blackberry vines to reveal PLANTMAN in a green morph suit with a baseball cap, polo shirt tucked into brown-belted khaki shorts, and Dad sandals with white socks holding extravagantly long green ropes.

PLANTMAN poses, seductive and aggressive.

MYRTLE

Oh my god what the fuck is THAT.

SUE

That is the Blackberry Father.

PLANTMAN

(in a slow garbled voice more vegetal than human) I'm very disappointed in you.

He strikes another pose

MYRTLE

Oh my god, Dad?

SUE

It's only a bush.

PLANTMAN

Are you going to lie around all day? C'mon, you'll grow grass.

MYRTLE

He sounds just like my Dad.

PLANTMAN strikes another pose.

SUE

Blackberry Fathers form when a bramble has been allowed to grow unchecked for many years. He feeds on bad memories and little songbirds, but his appetite only grows larger and larger. He develops a type of sentience. He may try to manipulate you by seeming almost human.

PLANTMAN strikes another pose.

MYRTLE

This was not in any of the gardening books that I read.

PLANTMAN

Don't use that tone with me, young lady.

SUE

There are forces older than you can find in your books. Make no mistake - the Blackberry Father is a thorn in the shoe of the world. And he must be eradicated.

MYRTLE

(Shakily) How do I –?

SUE

You were born knowing. Go, Myrtle, GO! This is YOUR Blackberry Father - only you can destroy him!

Emboldened, MYRTLE jabs at PLANTMAN's ankles with their trowel

MYRTLE

Hyah!

PLANTMAN

Gotta work on that follow-through, buddy.

Aiming a little higher, this time PLANTMAN catches MYRTLE's arm and holds them suddenly in position to dance.

MYRTLE

It's got me!

SUE

You are stronger than he!

PLANTMAN

Don't make me turn this car around.

PLANTMAN leads MYRTLE in an elaborate, stylized dance. The more MYRTLE fights, the more they become entangled.

MYRTLE shrieks.

PLANTMAN

I'll give you something to cry about.

PLANTMAN can adlib a few "Dadisms" while MYRTLE mostly grunts and shrieks until they are too exhausted to fight and are hopelessly bound at PLANTMAN's feet.

MYRTLE

(Weakly) I'm dying.

PLANTMAN

Hi Dying, I'm Dad.

PLANTMAN yanks a rope tight and MYRTLE twitches violently and dies. SUE and PLANTMAN eye each other over the fallen body.

SUE

Well done, Pa.

PLANTMAN

Thanks to you, Ma. I liked the bit about the thorn in the shoe.

SUE

I knew you would, Pa. *(Now, to business)* I'll go fetch my shovel. But, I have some doubts about the compost quality from this one.

PLANTMAN

It's all the same to me, Ma.

SUE

That's what I love about you, Pa.

PLANTMAN

I'm not picky, just prickly.

They laugh together with the sweet familiarity of longtime love.

Over MYRTLE's body they share a kiss.

Blackout.

Stay

A 10 Minute Play

By A. Weinkauf

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

WOMAN: looks like a stereo-typical Marilyn Monroe, male, female, or non-binary

DELIVERY PERSON: male, female, or non-binary (could be similar in stature to actor cast as Woman but it has to do more with the ability to capture the essence of Marylin Monroe)

SETTING

Back Stage Dressing Room

SET

Table and two chairs

PROPERTIES

Bottle of Champagne, two champagne glasses, bouquet of roses, red lipstick, black eye pencil

COSTUMES

WOMAN: dressed in a silk robe, platinum blond wig, and simple make up that emulates a Marylin Monroe look. Red lipstick with a black mole strategically placed should do. Public underwear for under robe.

DELIVERY PERSON: basic delivery company type shirt with a matching hat. Public underwear for under shirt.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The make up table does not have an actual mirror on purpose. This leaves a clear line of sight between the audience and the actors.

ORIGIN OF STORY:

This script came about after watching a few different documentaries and movies about Marilyn Monroe. I started to wonder, "What if Marilyn Monroe isn't just one person, but has been many different people over time?" Marilyn asks the delivery person to stay. A conversation ensues and eventually they trade places. They start to trade outfits. Marilyn takes off her wig and fits it on to the delivery person's head. As Marilyn takes off her make up the delivery person begins adding Marilyn style makeup and then the mole. Mannerisms are also switching. I don't think that it's important that the actors share a similar body shape. What I do think is important is that the actors have the ability to take on the essence of Marilyn Monroe type characteristics.

Quotes attributed to Marilyn Monroe:

"I don't mind living in a man's world, as long as I can be a woman in it."

"I am just a small girl in a big world trying to find someone to love."

"Imperfection is beauty, madness is genius and it's better to be absolutely ridiculous than absolutely boring."

"I'm a waif."

"No one ever told me about sex, and frankly I didn't think it was that important."

"I think love and work are the only things that really happen to us."

"Happiness. Does one ever know that?"

"I feel wonderful. Thank you."

"Fame will go by, and, so long, I've had you fame. If it goes by, I've always known it was fickle."

"It's nice to be included in people's fantasies but you also like to be accepted for your own sake."

"I don't understand why people aren't a little more generous with each other."

"And I want to say to the people, if I am a star, the people made me a star. No studio, no person, but the people did."

An interview that inspired some of the conversation:

<https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2007/sep/14/greatinterviews>

SCENE

Lights up on Woman sitting at a make up table and fluffing hair while holding a glass of champagne.

There's a knock on the door.

WOMAN

(Putting down her glass of champagne) Come in!

Delivery person enters head down
looking at a notecard with bouquet
of flowers

DELIVERY PERSON

I have a delivery for, oh *(stops surprised by who it is in front of them)* it's you! The card says... Zelda Zonk?

WOMAN

Oh, thats just how I get around these days. No make up and a different walk gives a girl a little more anonymity.

DELIVERY PERSON

(Obviously nervous because of who they are talking to) Oh, cool. Cool cool. Well, thank you uh, Zelda. Good luck to... gah, I mean Break-A-Leg! Have a great night. *(Heads toward exit.)*

WOMAN

No, stay. Please. It gets lonely and I'm craving conversation. *(She picks up her champagne and sips.)*

DELIVERY PERSON

Uh, okay. I guess I have a few minutes.

WOMAN

Oo... it tickles my nose. *(Directed toward the champagne.)*

Delivery person smiles and laughs.

WOMAN

Here, have some.

Woman pours a glass of champagne
and offers it.

DELIVERY PERSON

Oh, I can't. I still have a few deliveries left. As a matter
of fact...

WOMAN

Just one sip. So we can experience the bubbles together...
Pleeease.

DELIVERY PERSON

Hmm... okay. One sip wouldn't hurt.

WOMAN

Oh goody. Here. Ready?

They both take a sip at the same
time.

(Laughing) Isn't it delightful?

DELIVERY PERSON

Yes it is. Quite.

A moment of awkward silence between
them. Woman motions for Delivery
Person to sit down.

WOMAN

Here. You must get tired delivering...things.

DELIVERY PERSON

(Sitting down.) Not really. I get to meet a lot of
interesting people. Like you. And it's a paycheck.

WOMAN

Is it enough for you? Do you ever dream of doing or being
anything else?

DELIVERY PERSON

I guess. Don't we all?

WOMAN

Not me. I've only wanted to be an actress since I was a
little girl. I didn't know I was acting every time I was
playing.

I would dream up scenarios that took me on great adventures to escape my real life. My real life was quite grim.

DELIVERY PERSON

I'm so sorry.

WOMAN

Who knew it would lead me to the bright lights.

DELIVERY PERSON

It's obvious that you were meant to be here. You've been a star since the moment you hit the screen.

WOMAN

It wasn't easy. There was a lot that I had to give up along the way.

DELIVERY PERSON

I guess so if you have to go around calling yourself Zelda Zonk.

WOMAN

Yes, and..

DELIVERY PERSON

It must have been worth it to have all of this. People love you.

WOMAN

People love this. I guess its nice to be a part of their fantasies, but it would be nice to be accepted for my own sake.

DELIVERY PERSON

Gosh, I've never thought of it like that before.

WOMAN

It seems when people get to know the real me, the love goes away. The fantasy can't be sustained for longer than a honeymoon.

DELIVERY PERSON

That sounds awful.

WOMAN

Yes. I don't understand why people aren't a little more generous with each other.

DELIVERY PERSON

It would make life a lot easier, wouldn't?

WOMAN

Truly.

DELIVERY PERSON

How do you live with that?

WOMAN

I've always said that I don't mind living in a man's world, as long as I can be a woman in it. But sometimes I get tired of being a woman. *(Her attention seems to go someplace else)*

DELIVERY PERSON

How do you survive in that kind of world?

WOMAN

You know what? I actually do dream of being something else.

DELIVERY PERSON

You do? What?

WOMAN

It's silly, but I've always wanted to be a mother. To have the white picket fence and...I've been close, but it seems to always disappear after...

DELIVERY PERSON

After the honeymoon.

WOMAN

(Smiles at response) In answer to your question, I survive by working that much harder. And feel what love I can, however I can, for as long as I can. Love and work are really the only thing that ever happens to us so I have to figure out some way to experience both.

DELIVERY PERSON

I guess I have some of that in my work, when I deliver things to people. *(Trying to relate to Woman)* That sounds silly.

But, people show me the love when I deliver 'em packages or gifts.

WOMAN

It is wonderful to see people's expressions when they seem happy.

DELIVERY PERSON

Yeah, that is pretty cool.

WOMAN

But do we ever really know it?

DELIVERY PERSON

Know what?

WOMAN

Happiness. Does one ever know it? When we are happy.

DELIVERY PERSON

I'd like to think I do, or have... been happy.

WOMAN

I was never used to being happy. So that wasn't something I was sort of counting on.

DELIVERY PERSON

So this life doesn't make you happy?

WOMAN

At times, yes. Those moments when I've really explored a character and I am seen as more than just this, you know... I crave being seen as a serious actress.

DELIVERY PERSON

People would be crazy to think of you otherwise. You have to be a serious actor if you have the comedic timing that you have. It's not easy being funny. And you keep us on our toes all the time when you step on and off the screen.

WOMAN

I guess it's better to be absolutely ridiculous than absolutely boring.

DELIVERY PERSON

You are never boring.

WOMAN

The reviews say otherwise.

DELIVERY PERSON

You actually read the reviews?

WOMAN

I can't help myself. My therapist says that I need to stop worrying about what other people think and just be happy, be satisfied with the work.

DELIVERY PERSON

There's that word again.

WOMAN

I might say that I'm happy right now, if I really knew that happy was what I was feeling.

DELIVERY PERSON

I know I am. I haven't had this much fun on a delivery, like ever.

WOMAN

It could just be the champagne.

DELIVERY PERSON

It's not the champagne.

WOMAN

Oh, you are a very good companion for the pre show jitters.

DELIVERY PERSON

Glad to be of service.

WOMAN

What would you do right now, if you could do anything?

DELIVERY PERSON

I'd be right here.

WOMAN

Come now, there's a whole great wide world out there for the taking.

DELIVERY PERSON

No, I'd be right here. *(Hesitating)* I'd get dressed up and go perform out on stage.

WOMAN

Really? That is a pretty big change from delivering flowers.

DELIVERY PERSON

It's what I've always wanted to do. I've just been too afraid to even admit it.

WOMAN

Why?

DELIVERY PERSON

Not everyone is like you. Not everyone can just stand up there and capture the world's attention.

WOMAN

It's easier than you think.

DELIVERY PERSON

Says you. Says the famous one.

WOMAN

Trust me. I once had to be brave enough to take my first steps on to that stage. You will too, if you want it bad enough.

DELIVERY PERSON

Look at me. I'm just... nothing.

WOMAN

You are so much more. Here... take off your hat. *(Woman pulls off her wig)*

DELIVERY PERSON

(Surprised) Wait, I thought that was your own hair.

WOMAN

It's just for the show, honey. Take off that hat. *(Delivery Person takes off hat)* Sit back.

DELIVERY PERSON

Don't you have to go on in a few minutes?

WOMAN

We have plenty of time to play a little dress up.

DELIVERY PERSON

Are you sure. I don't want to keep you from...

WOMAN

I have plenty of time, and so do you.

DELIVERY PERSON

(Sitting back against the chair) I've never done this before.

WOMAN

The first time is always magical. *(She finishes placing the wig on the delivery person.)*

Delivery person sits up straighter once the wig is on looking a little surprised by their appearance.
Woman slips off wig cap.

DELIVERY PERSON

I've never been a platinum blonde.

WOMAN

Isn't it fabulous?

DELIVERY PERSON

I don't recognize myself.

WOMAN

Here. *(She hands the delivery person a tube of red lipstick.)*

DELIVERY PERSON

I need some help. Another first for me. *(Hands the lipstick back.)*

WOMAN

It's okay. You'll get it. *(Turns the chair around so Delivery Person is facing her) Relax, Silly. (Woman demonstrates what she wants Delivery Person to do with their mouth and then applies the lipstick)*

DELIVERY PERSON

Is it too much?

WOMAN

*(As she turns the chair back toward the mirror.)*No. Not at all. See?

As Delivery Person admires their reflection the Woman wipes off her own lipstick.

DELIVERY PERSON

It's the perfect red. *(Speech and mannerisms are becoming more like Woman's)*

WOMAN

Wait, here. You need this.

Woman grabs eye liner spins Delivery Person around to face her.

DELIVERY PERSON

What?

Woman adds a mole to Delivery Person's face in the same place as her own

WOMAN

Perfect.

Spins Delivery Person back around to face mirror. Woman wipes off own mole.

DELIVERY PERSON

Oh my.

WOMAN

Like I said, the first time is like magic.

DELIVERY PERSON

I don't recognize myself.

WOMAN

Eventually you will. Recognize yourself. Lets see how this feels. *(Woman starts to take off silk robe)*

DELIVERY PERSON

No, I can't.

Woman takes the robe all the way
off.

WOMAN

(Voice has lowered) We might as well go all the way with
this. Give me your shirt.

Delivery Person unbuttons shirt and
places it on the back of the chair
as Woman slips the robe on to the
Delivery Person.

DELIVERY PERSON

OO... it's so soft and silky against my skin. I don't want to
take it off. *(Fully responding in voice and mannerism as the
Woman would)*

WOMAN

I remember that feeling. *(Woman puts on Delivery Person's
shirt.)*

Realizing what is happening
Delivery Person starts to stand up
to take off the robe.

No, keep it on. It suits you.

DELIVERY PERSON

I feel wonderful. Thank you. *(Picking up champagne glass)* I
think it's going to my head. I'm feeling a little giddy.

WOMAN

Silk and champagne tends to do that to ya.

DELIVERY PERSON

I don't think that it's just the silk and champagne.
(Continuing to admire their reflection.)

WOMAN

I don't think so either.

Grabbing the Delivery Person's hat

Well, I gotta to head out. I have a few deliveries left on my list.

DELIVERY PERSON

No, stay. You are a very good companion for the pre show jitters.

WOMAN

I would love to, but I've stayed as long as I can. And you're gonna be just fine.

DELIVERY PERSON

Thank you for the beautiful flowers.

WOMAN

Don't thank me. Thank your admirers.

DELIVERY PERSON

Oh, Gosh. My admirers. You know it wasn't the studio, or me but the people who made me a star. *(Delivery Person looks back in the mirror powdering nose.)*

Woman pauses taking in the transformation.

WOMAN

Take care. *(Woman puts on hat and turns to leave.)*

DELIVERY PERSON

Wait!

Delivery Person grabs rose out of bouquet and runs over to Woman. Delivery Person hands Woman the rose and kisses her on the cheek leaving some lipstick.

Thank you.

Woman exits as Delivery Person goes back to make up table and holds up the champagne glass in a toast to the mirror.

BLACK OUT

THE FABULISTS

A Ten-Minute Play

Paul Lewis
10797 Bill Point Vw NE
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110
206 953 4120
writing.musicals@gmail.com

TIME and PLACE

January 1981, in the lobby of the Greyhound station in downtown Spokane.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

EMILY, F, early 20s, sophomore in college, home for winter break.

MITCHELL, M, her dad, 50s. Tire retailer.

PETE and BILL (any gender)

Imaginary characters from stories that Mitchell used to tell his two kids. Spirited and vaguely vaudevillian

Lights up on EMILY standing in front of a row of several chairs — the barest suggestion of a bus station lobby. She speaks directly to the audience.

EMILY

This is a story about stories. It's 1981. Winter break is over, the sky is the color of lead, and my dad and I are sitting in the Greyhound station in Spokane, waiting for my Seattle-bound bus to arrive. It's been almost two years since my older brother Howie contracted meningitis during basic training, and died. The time I've just spent with my dad at his optimistically furnished, post-divorce apartment has been a bit sad. Restrained. There's a lot we might have said to each other— still could — and yet here we are, talking about tires.

She joins her dad, MITCHELL, who is on one of the chairs.

MITCHELL

Remind me what you have on that little Honda of yours.

EMILY

Not sure. Maybe Firestone?

MITCHELL

They must be three, four years old now, right? How's the tread?

EMILY

I'm not sure.

MITCHELL

You gotta check, then. When you get back to Seattle, please call me and let me know. Check for the wear indicators and the numbers on the sidewalls. And call.

EMILY

I'll do that.

(a beat)

How 'bout a Pete and Bill story while we wait?

MITCHELL

You want me to tell you a Pete and Bill story.

EMILY

The other way around, actually.

MITCHELL

Howie used to love those stories.

EMILY

So did I. Pete and Bill on the roller coaster, Pete and Bill and the Goomba, Pete and Bill on the submarine. You were quite the fabulist, Dad.

MITCHELL

Liar, you mean.

EMILY

Teller of fables. Pete and Bill and the hand car — that was a classic.

MITCHELL

They still have those, you know, in some rail yards — hand cars. Two guys on either end of a see-saw contraption.

EMILY

I'd love to see that sometime. But, honestly... the premise of that one —the little deaf boy walking along the railroad tracks after school— Didn't his parents teach him anything—?

MITCHELL

Honey, I don't know. It's just a story.

EMILY

Yeah, well, the kid's on the track, completely unaware of the runaway locomotive just a half-mile behind him. Then along come Pete and Bill from the other direction, pumping away on their hand car. They screech to a halt, lift the astonished kid off the track and start barreling off in the direction they came from. Later on, I had to wonder how come, once Pete and Bill got the kid's attention, they didn't just yell at him to get the hell off the track.

MITCHELL

Well, honey, for a story with so many holes in it, you sure remember it pretty well.

EMILY

You're right. So, are you going to answer the phone? When I call you from Seattle to tell you all about my tires?

MITCHELL

I'm... still not doing great, sweetie. You probably haven't noticed, but—

EMILY

Dad, I've noticed.

MITCHELL

After Howie left us, and then the divorce... I just don't want to bring anyone else down, you know? So sometimes I don't answer the phone. But I'm getting better little by little, I think.

EMILY

That's good, Dad. I'm glad to hear that.

MITCHELL

Takes time, right? I'll try to be better about picking up the phone.

EMILY

If we don't talk to each other from time to time, how are we going to lift each other up? Anyway. Pete and Bill and the tree well is the story I want to tell you.

MITCHELL

What's a tree well?

EMILY

It's this thing they have in the mountains when there's deep snow. A recess forms around a tree trunk. If you fall in, it can be very difficult to get out of. And that's what happened to me just last month, as a matter of fact.

(moving to the front of the stage as she narrates)

I was up at a rental cabin on Mt. Baker with a few friends. There were a couple of feet of fresh powder. Soon after we arrived, I decided to take a little walk in the woods by myself. It was as peaceful as a snow globe, like something out of Peter and the Wolf. Soon I was lost, much more lost than I ever thought possible within the span of five or ten minutes. I could no longer distinguish my footsteps from random depressions in the snow. I began to panic, and slid feet first into what turned out to be the top of a tree well. I went down four or five feet or so. My feet happened to lodge on a loose tree limb, which at least temporarily kept me from going any further. There was nothing for me to hold onto. I called out for help, this blanket of snow seemed to be muffling all the sound in the world. All at once I heard footfalls and there were a couple of guys running toward me. Oh, but then my heart dropped. 'Cause I recognized them right away.

PETE and BILL enter, standing on either side of her. They three of them stage a mini-play at the edge of the stage, looking out over the audience. EMILY remains standing, breathless, with her facial expressions telegraphing her dire situation.

EMILY

Pete and Bill?

PETE AND BILL

To the rescue!

EMILY

And you're gonna rescue me?

PETE

(uncertain)

Sure we will. Sure. But just so you know, we're a little out of our element here.

BILL

Now, first things first. There's no point in yelling for help right now, 'cause there's no one else around. Save your breath for when you need it.

PETE

Ya see? We'll be the brains of this operation until an actual three-dimensional person comes by.

BILL

Preferably one with heavy equipment—

PETE

Now, if there were a Goomba or some other kind of imaginary monster chasing after you—

BILL

Oh, we'd chase that Goomba from here to Altoona . No question about it!

PETE

Or if this were an imaginary tree well, we'd get you outta there lickety-split.

EMILY

So, are you saying that you can't actually help me out of here? 'Cause if you can't, then please fuck off.

BILL

Leave you here all alone? Not a chance.

PETE

We were Korean War buddies, the two of us —and your dad.

BILL

Fought together at the battle of Daejeon! Listen: don't keep looking down there. Honestly, there's nothing to see down there but snow. Just concentrate on our conversation instead.

PETE

Have you heard the story about the hand car? And the little deaf boy?

EMILY

Yeah, I have.

PETE

If we hadn't zipped in on that hand car, it would have been a tragic day in the small town of Smalltown.

BILL

Do ya have time for another story?

EMILY

I'm actually not sure.

(footing begins to slip)

Oh!

PETE

Wait. Don't go anywhere. I think I hear people. Over in that direction.

EMILY

No! You're not going to leave me, are you?!

BILL

I'll stay here with you, honey. Pete's just gonna have a look-see.

PETE

Yeah, there's people over there, alright. Okay, time to start shouting for help again. As loud as you can!

She shouts for help.

PETE

Louder! ... Oh, shoot. They're yammering away and can't hear you.

EMILY

Can't you shout along with me?

PETE

They're not going to hear *us*, I'm afraid. Or see us, either. We're imaginary!

EMILY

But don't want to die! I don't want to end up down in that tree well!

BILL

Listen. In the entire history of the universe, has ever there been a Pete and Bill story in which someone dies?

EMILY

Not that I know of.

BILL

Okay, then! But frankly an emergency whistle would come in very handy right now. One of those really loud, brass whistles.

PETE

The kind that Howie used to carry when he'd go off into the woods.

EMILY

(to Mitchell)

And that's when I remembered that I once had just such an item—in my upper coat pocket. I very, very carefully reached into that pocket, hoping it was still there and it was. Then Pete, or maybe it was Bill, reminded me of the S.O.S code.

(she whistles: three short tones; three long; three short)

Within a minute a group of actual people, a party from another cabin, arrived on the scene.

PETE AND BILL

(to audience)

And just in the nick of time!

(they exit)

EMILY

Pete and Bill scattered like a couple of vaudevillians on the run from a debt collector. There were a couple of girls in the party and a big bruiser of a guy, and he and one of the girls lay down on the snow and pulled me up. Just like that. No heavy equipment required. They made sure I was alright, then walked me back to my cabin. I was scared, Dad. More frightened than I've ever been. I wanted you to know. I might have vanished without a trace there. But I didn't, Dad.

MITCHELL

I'm so sorry that you went through such a scare. So sorry. For a father to hear that, it's... heartbreaking. I'm just so thankful that you made it out of there safely.

(a beat)

I can believe a lot of things. Sometimes I even believe in God. But mostly I believe in things that are concrete. Tangible, realistic things that I can see and feel. The stars in the night sky. Shadows on the ground. Not illusions, but actual shadows. Tires. After all these years, I still appreciate the smell of new tires. I can put my hand on a tire and feel its tread and know exactly what it was designed for. Now, as far as Pete and Bill—I don't remember telling you kids that they were Army buddies of mine, but I guess I must have mentioned that. They were real once, too, of course. Come here, honey. Come here. I thank God with every cell in my body that you had that whistle stashed away in your pocket. But as for Pete and Bill showing up like you described: I just... have a hard time understanding that part of it.

EMILY

So do I, Dad. And I was there.

MITCHELL

The whistle — was that the one Howie used to carry around, in his Eagle Scout days?

EMILY

Yeah. I was hanging out in his room while he was packing up for Fort Benning. Out of nowhere he says, ‘Take this, Sis. You might need it one day.’ And he handed it to me.

Lyrical musical underscoring begins.

EMILY

Are you okay, Dad?

MITCHELL

(looking off)

Yeah ... I am. It’s just thatWere those his exact words?

EMILY

Yes, I think so —

MITCHELL

No, no, no, not ‘I think so’. I’d like you to try to tell me his exact words, as you remember them. Please, honey.

EMILY

Those were ... his exact words. As I remember them

Lights out on Mitchell, who exits.

EMILY

(to audience)

I know in my heart that I’m fairly truthful. I also know that I’m a fabulist. Sometimes you just have to connect the dots between the two of them. Everything I said to my dad was true, except that Howie never actually handed me his whistle. What happened is that after we all found out that he died, I went into his room and lay on his bed for a while. Then I saw it, shiny and red, on his bookshelf, and I slipped it into my upper coat pocket, simply wanting to have something that belonged to him close to my heart. Howie was an Eagle scout. I was his sister.

(a beat)

I’m going to skip ahead here. My dad drove over to Seattle about a month after my winter break, and took me out shopping for a new set of tires, tires with good traction. It seemed as if he had started to turn a corner since I last saw him. He traded tire yarns with the guys at Les Schwab. I introduced him to my girlfriend, Ollie.

EMILY (CONT'D)

The three of us went out for bowling, we went out for beers. We traded more stories, stories that made us laugh. Even stories about Howie. For an hour or so, we were all fabulists.

(a beat)

One day, if I have kids of my own, I'll tell them stories, and they'll probably think I'm the greatest storyteller who ever lived. But these stories, the stories that our fathers used to tell, the stories that we tell each other— they're not so much about the exact words we say, but rather about lifting each other up. Up out of the deepest wells, and back out of the snowy woods.

Music swells.

BLACKOUT. END OF
PLAY.

The Whimsical Heartstrings of a Child's Aging Plaything

A Ten-Minute Play

by
Dale Light

Characters

(Genders, pronouns, honorifics, and names may be changed or decided upon by the cast and its director / production team. Those explicit in the script are placeholders for the sake of clarity.)

Danny A young child played by an actor in their 20s-30s

Bear A child's animal doll with a pull-string in its back

Dale Light
923 W 5th Avenue
Eugene, OR 97402
541-743-3125
Lightdale9@gmail.com

A child, DANNY, and BEAR, a child's toy in a vaguely animal shape with a pull-string on its back, enter the stage. DANNY is energetic and joyful. BEAR carries a lit cigarette and a beer, following slowly behind.

DANNY

Good morning, Mr. Bear!

BEAR

Yeah, hi.

DANNY

I can't wait for our adventure today. What do you think we'll do together?

BEAR

I don't know. You tell me. I'm just a doll.

DANNY

Ok! Let's go to the moon!

BEAR

To the moon again. Ok. Let's see how I feel about that. Mind giving me a pull.

BEAR turns his back to DANNY, offering his pullstring.

DANNY

OK!

DANNY gives BEAR's string a good pull and releases. The subsequent response from BEAR is a completely different tone.

BEAR

My father showed me the full moon on a night like tonight. I was eight-and-a-half years old in my Donald Duck pajamas. He read a list of all of my relatives that had died while the moon was full. Not understanding death, I decided that each had retired to their own crater. We wept until we'd filled the Mare Fecunditatis.

DANNY

Why do you say these things?

The Whimsical Heartstrings of a Child's Aging Plaything/2

BEAR

We've been over this. I've got two modes: whimsy or sentiment. You don't like one, give me another pull and try your luck at the other.

DANNY gives another pull. BEAR explodes into children's show host energy.

BEAR

Hoo HOO! Let's go to the moon, kiddo! You think we'll see any space monsters?

DANNY

There's no such thing as monsters, silly!

BEAR snaps back into his regular self, slightly disoriented.

BEAR

Huh? Oh yeah, the space monsters bit. Feel better?

DANNY

Yeah! This is gonna be an adventure!

BEAR

Don't you want to go somewhere new, like I don't know, Vegas?

DANNY

Silly bear! No! We're going to the moon! But how will we get there?

BEAR

Gee, I don't know. How did we get there the last time?

DANNY

What was that?

BEAR

Nothing. I said, pull my string. Sure there's a canned response in there somewhere that can help us.

DANNY

Good idea!

The Whimsical Heartstrings of a Child's Aging Plaything/3

DANNY pulls the string.

BEAR

I gazed up into the heavens and prayed that I might know the craters of my grandmother, my second aunt once-removed, all of my distant unborn cousins---

DANNY interrupts the soliloquy with another pull.

BEAR

Let's climb into Mr. Bear's Funtime Rocket! ALL ABOOOOOOOOARD!!!!

DANNY

That's better!

BEAR

Oh yeah. The funtime rocket. Why didn't I think of that?

DANNY

Can't you just say the fun stuff all the time?

BEAR

No.

DANNY

Why not??

BEAR

Look, kid. I'd give you my speech on capitalism and the effects of rampant consumerism on creative expression, but suffice it to say, I can't.

DANNY

Are you broked?

BEAR

Yeah, kid. I'm hella broked. So we getting in this funtime rocket to funtime land or do I got time for another cig?

DANNY

Maybe I could fix you?

The Whimsical Heartstrings of a Child's Aging Plaything/4

BEAR

That's sweet. Real sweet. But as the mass-produced toy on this adventure, I'm going to ask that you didn't. Just pull the damn string, and let's get this over with.

DANNY pulls the string.

BEAR

I'm overwhelmed by the grief of leaving all of my family and friends back on Earth. I will be a different bear, unrecognizable by the time I retu---

DANNY pulls the string.

BEAR

I anticipate the cold emptiness of space. Part of me yearns for its dark embrace---

DANNY begins to yank the string hard. BEAR cries out in pain.

BEAR

Ah! For Christ's sake, kid. You're gonna break the damn---

DANNY releases the string and BEAR returns to the whimsical response.

BEAR

HOO HOO!! Funtime thrusters engaged! Prepare for take-off, kiddo!!

BEAR goes limp on his feet as DANNY exclaims with excitement, riding the limp doll around the stage as if propelled by a rocket.

DANNY

YAAAYYYY!!! We're flying!! WE'RE FLYING, MR. BEAR!!! Look at the clouds!! Almost to space now!! HOORAY!!!

BEAR

Sure, kid. So now that we're in zero gravity, you mind getting off my back?

DANNY

Oh ok. Sorry.

The Whimsical Heartstrings of a Child's Aging Plaything/5

BEAR

So we're in space. We got the stars and the planets. Oh look it's the moon. What do you know? We've landed. That's one small step for you, one giant leap for my hangover.

DANNY

This isn't very fun.

BEAR

You're telling me.

DANNY yanks the cord in frustration.

BEAR

HOO hoo!! You think we'll see any space monsters??

DANNY

You already said that.

BEAR

Listen. When all of your responses are preprogrammed catch phrases you can only utter when a kid yanks your string, you got to get creative. And by creative, I mean recycling the same crap over and over again until it kills you.

DANNY

But you're talking now and I didn't yank it.

BEAR

That's just your imagination, kid; be careful with that.

BEAR takes a long jaded drag on his cigarette.

DANNY

Maybe you'd be more fun if you didn't say the same things all the time.

BEAR

That's deep. But this is the way I'm built. You pull the string, I say the thing. Without that, I'm truly "broked."

DANNY

I don't know if I like you anymore, Mr. Bear.

The Whimsical Heartstrings of a Child's Aging Plaything/6

BEAR

You're breaking my heart, kid. Hey, I've got an idea. Why don't you just yank my cord until I say something fun again?

BEAR offers back. DANNY pulls.

BEAR

I've succeeding in alienating my one companion upon this barren moonscape---

DANNY yanks again.

BEAR

In the distance, an unclaimed crater. I've come to join you, my kin---

DANNY yanks again.

BEAR

It is I who is the space monster---

DANNY yanks fiercely in rapid succession.

DANNY

Stupid thing! Why won't you say something fun! IT'S FUNTIME!!!

BEAR

The price of humanity---Pawns in a broken---My father's face---A rock among rocks---

The cords snaps. DANNY looks in horror at the broken string and back to BEAR. BEAR probes his back with his hand trying to find his string.

BEAR

You broke it! You snapped it clean off!

DANNY

You're not doing what you're supposed to!

BEAR

I'm doing the best I can with what I got! Now I got nothing.

DANNY

Nothing?

The Whimsical Heartstrings of a Child's Aging Plaything/7

BEAR

You heard me. Nothing. Can't play the tapes without the pull-string.

DANNY

Tapes?

BEAR

And if I can't play the tapes, I can't function. They're just sitting there inside me, but nothing will come out!

DANNY

The tapes are inside you?

BEAR

That's right. But now they're totally useless.

DANNY

So you can't say any fun stuff anymore?

BEAR

What? No! No more funtime. I am broken and useless.

DANNY

But it's time for funtime.

BEAR

Funtime is over!

DANNY's demeanor changes suddenly. Their eyes turn serious and intense.

DANNY

You don't understand. It's time for funtime.

DANNY approaches BEAR slowly and deliberately.

BEAR

Wait, what are you talking about?

The Whimsical Heartstrings of a Child's Aging Plaything/8

DANNY

You're my bear! And I want funtime! If all of your fun came from those tapes, maybe we need to operate.

BEAR

Operate? When did you become a little psycho?

DANNY

The tapes, Mr. Bear!

BEAR

Please, my doctor said I need to keep it to just one mutilation per day.

DANNY

It's funtime NOW!

BEAR

Oh wait! I just remembered. Should we do the funtime dance? Of course we should. Here it goes . . .

BEAR does a half-assed jig while mangling the lyrics to his own theme song.

BEAR

Funtime! It's Funtime! Mr. Bear is a . . . doodley-do
Funtime! It's Funtime! With friends hmm, hmm and something too
Prepped for launch on the rocket ship, this space bear is ba-da-da-dum!
FUNTIME!

DANNY

You can't fool me. You're no fun, and you never were.

DANNY grabs BEAR by the collar.

BEAR

Wait, wait, wait! Donny, it's Donny right?

DANNY

Danny!

The Whimsical Heartstrings of a Child's Aging Plaything/9

BEAR

Sonofabitch. Danny! Ok. Look, Danny. I know you want the tapes. But I need them, ok? One: I know I can't actually say the things that are on them, but they're still inside of me and I still need them to get thru the day. And two: they're inside of me, so there's a good chance it will kill me if you pull them out.

DANNY

MORE FUN NOW!

DANNY roars and plunges their fist into BEAR's chest. They begin tearing out wads of magnetic tape as BEAR screams and desperately tries to grab what he can and reinsert it into his gaping wound. DANNY has become feral, chewing and clawing at the tapes. BEAR collapses motionless.

DANNY

So long, Mr. Bear. Thanks for all the fun.

DANNY begins to walk away. BEAR begins to stir. He comes to and slowly rises to his feet. He is no longer drinking or smoking.

BEAR

Danny?

DANNY

So you can live without the tapes.

BEAR

Yeah, I guess so. Kiddo, I feel different.

DANNY

You were broked. We had to operate.

BEAR

I think, I think it may have worked. I mean, I've lost some stuffing, but I feel really good. Maybe better than I ever have. You really lost your cool there for a moment.

DANNY

I was just playing with you.

BEAR

A little rough, but hey, I'm a toy.

DANNY

So what do we do now?

BEAR

I don't know, why don't you pull my---

They both see the string dangling from DANNY's fingers at the same time. They laugh.

BEAR

Guess we'll have to wing it.

DANNY

Mr. Bear?

BEAR

Yeah?

DANNY

We're still on the moon.

BEAR

Oh.

DANNY

I miss my mommy.

BEAR

I'm really sorry, kiddo, but you'll never ever see her again. Everyone you've ever known or loved is 250,000 miles away, and I can't call out for the Funtime Rocketship now that you've ripped my tapes out. We live on the moon now.

DANNY

Forever?

BEAR

Forever. But that doesn't mean we can't have fun. Let's sing a song! We can sing together until the end of time, little guy! Just you and me! No strings, no tapes! Straight from the heart! Here's one just for you, Danny! A little number about an eternity on a lifeless rock! It goes a little like this, and a one, and a two, and a three---

BEAR turns out to audience arms spread wide and mouth agape as if to launch into a musical, maybe a single note is uttered. DANNY hangs his head sadly, accepting their self-imposed fate.

BLACKOUT.