

Funny Shorts LIVE!, March 10, 2023

BEST OF the BEST

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The Next Ivan Sheransky

by Jim Geoghan

Characters

IDA— a mature woman

CARL—a mature man

The set is a table and two chairs at a sandwich joint somewhere on Hollywood Boulevard. IDA nurses a soda. After a beat a weary CARL enters.

IDA

There you are. I've been waiting for over an hour.

CARL

Couldn't be helped.

IDA

What happened?

CARL

My schedule got all jammed up.

IDA

How did that happen?

CARL

The impossible happened. I had an audition.

IDA

You had an audition?

CARL

Yeah, my agent calls me once every year to make sure her phone is still working.

IDA

An audition. For TV?

CARL

No, a movie. And it's a big one.

IDA

What kind of character was it?

CARL

What?

IDA

What kind of character were you auditioning for?

CARL

A dead body.

IDA

What!

CARL

A dead body. In this movie the lead finds a dead body. You know, someone who doesn't move.

IDA

Aha.

CARL

Someone who has assumed room temperature.

IDA

Well, you would be very good in a role like that.

CARL

You think?

IDA

Yes, you're one of the slowest moving people I know.

CARL

Thank you.

IDA

When I saw you walking down the street...

CARL

Uh huh.

IDA

I thought you were standing still.

CARL

Thank you.

IDA

Your body moves...

CARL

Yes?

IDA

Like a statue.

CARL

It comes naturally.

IDA

When we go to the movies...

CARL

Yeah?

IDA

Sometimes I check to see if you're still breathing.

CARL

It's how I fly, baby.

IDA

This is exciting news. Who was the casting director?

CARL

Lois Felcher.

IDA

Oh, my God! Lois Felcher! She's big time! Very powerful! Also has a good rep. The big studios go to her all the time.

CARL

I know.

IDA

Wow, Lois Felcher! How does something like this go? I mean, how do you audition for a dead body?

CARL

Mostly it involved...

IDA

Yeah?

CARL

Being very still.

IDA

Not moving?

CARL

Exactly.

IDA

You really thought this out.

CARL

What can I tell you, I'm a method actor. I studied with Lee.

IDA

Lee Strasberg?

CARL

No, Lee Berkowitz. Just as good.

IDA

What did you actually do?

CARL

I got on the floor...

IDA

And?

CARL

And I didn't move.

IDA

Good choice.

CARL

Thank you.

IDA

Then what?

CARL

Lois and some other people helped me get up again.

IDA

What did she say?

CARL

Lois said it shoots tomorrow.

IDA

Uh huh.

CARL

So there would be no call backs.

IDA

Okay.

CARL

And she was going with someone else.

IDA

Damn! Did she at least tell you why?

CARL

Yes, Lois said she wanted someone who was a little more "bubbly."

IDA

Bubbly! But the guy is dead!

CARL

I know!

IDA

She's lost her mind!

CARL

She has no idea what she's doing.

IDA

What a bitch!

CARL

I know!

IDA

I hate her!

CARL

Everyone does!

IDA

A weasel with lipstick!

CARL

Yeah.

IDA

A two timing, back stabber.

CARL

Total phony.

IDA

A monster in high heels. The most hated woman in Hollywood. Bubbly! I don't believe it!

CARL

Neither did I.

IDA

How in hell could a dead guy be bubbly!

CARL

Casting directors... they get this thing in their head and nothing will erase it.

IDA

Unbelievable! Did she tell you who got the part?

CARL

No. But I think it was Ivan Sharansky.

IDA

Was he there?

CARL

No, but I saw Ivan had signed in two hours before me.

IDA

They probably went with him.

CARL

Yeah.

IDA

Dead bodies are Ivan Sharansky's thing. He's numero uno.

CARL

Ivan's the Jackie Robinson of dead bodies.

IDA

Ivan's license plate says "Dead Guy." He has his gravestone on his front lawn! His phone message says "Sorry I can't come to the phone right now, I'm dead!"

CARL

The man invented the open eye stare, the body in a bathtub, the dead guy hanging upside-down...

IDA

Dead in a swamp, dead in a garbage can, dead inside a vending machine!

CARL

He's very versatile.

IDA

At Metro, Ivan once stayed in a master shot for three minutes, didn't breathe once.

CARL

How in the hell did he do that?

IDA

He passed out.

CARL

The man is committed to his craft. Casting people, producers, directors, when they think dead body... they think Ivan Sharansky.

IDA

I know. And yet...

CARL

Yeah.

IDA

I want you to know I hesitate saying this.

CARL

Go on.

IDA

Because I don't like to gossip or judge people.

CARL

Please! We're in show business! All we do is gossip and judge people!

IDA

It's just that Ivan has played dead bodies in maybe a hundred movies and you have to admit, over the years, his work has gotten a little stale.

CARL

You know what?

IDA

What.

CARL

I have to agree with you. And not just because I probably lost a role to Ivan... but sometimes, when I see his work, I tell myself "I'm sorry, Ivan... I've seen that body before."

IDA

You know his dead body in that western *Silver Six Guns*?

CARL

Sure.

IDA

There's no difference between that and the one he did in *Manhattan Murder*.

CARL

You're not the first one to mention it.

sighs

This one was tough to take, Ida. To lie on the floor and be told someone else did it better. I think I'm going to call it quits.

IDA

No, Carl don't say that. One bad audition. It's not worth it. You're a good actor and...

CARL'S cellphone rings.

CARL

Hold on.

CARL answers his phone call.

Hello. Yes? This is him. Uh huh... Uh huh... Oh, that's horrible! Just terrible! I'm so sorry to hear. What a shock! Uh huh... uh huh... yes. I think I can. Let me check.
Hold on.

CARL holds the phone to his chest, then...

Looks like I can, yes. Eight o'clock. Yes, I'll be there. And thank you. Sorry to hear the horrible news.

CARL ends his call.

IDA

What was that all about?

CARL

That was Lois Felcher. Ivan Sharansky dropped dead.

IDA

When?

CARL

About an hour after he auditioned.

IDA

My God. Was he ill?

CARL

Not that I know of.

IDA

Maybe when he auditioned, he exerted himself too much.

CARL

Could have.

IDA

Got down on the floor too fast...

CARL

Got up too fast...

IDA

And now the role he played all his life...

CARL

Is a role he will play forever.

IDA

Sad.

CARL

Very sad. Lois said she only had one second choice and it was me.

IDA

God bless her.

CARL

She's fantastic.

IDA

Incredible.

CARL

Lovely woman.

IDA

Attractive, too.

CARL

Classy.

IDA

Very bright.

CARL

And insightful.

IDA

Slightly rude.

CARL

At times.

IDA

But she has to be!

CARL

I know!

IDA

She's a woman in a male-dominated industry!

CARL

Of course!

IDA

She can't let them push her around.

CARL

I work tomorrow.

IDA

Fantastic.

CARL

Pays big money.

IDA

Big films always do.

CARL

And no dialogue to memorize.

IDA

Dead guy.

CARL

Dead guy. And get this...Lois says there's a morgue scene. She talked them into using me for that as well.

IDA

Another day of work.

CARL

Yes.

IDA

And Lois talked them into that?

CARL

That's what she said.

IDA

God bless her!

CARL

She's fantastic!

IDA

Love her!

CARL

Yeah.

IDA

When you see her.

CARL

Uh huh.

IDA

Tell her I think she's terrific and if she's casting any roles I'm right for...

CARL

I will. I'm going to celebrate and buy us a sandwich!

IDA

Six inch?

CARL

Twelve inch!

IDA

Wow... when you celebrate you go all out!

CARL

It's how I fly.

CARL begins to exit but stops when...

IDA

Carl...

CARL

Yeah?

IDA

This could be the start of something.

CARL

You think?

IDA

Yes. You could become...the next Ivan Sharansky.

CARL thinks for a beat, then.

CARL

It makes my head spin.

CARL exits and as IDA watches him go. The lights fade.

End of Play.

The Third Person

by Dan Borengasser

Characters

MAN—late 20s

KAREN—late 20s

Setting

A harbor area

Time

Dusk

The SOUND of a foghorn in the background.

A woman, KAREN, wearing a trench coat, steps out on stage, glances around expectantly, then goes over to a railing, leans on it and nervously waits.

After a moment, the voice of a MAN, is heard.

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

The harbor. A lonely spot.

beat

Darkness nears. With it? —a hint of mystery. An intimation of intrigue. An unearthly quiet—

SOUND: at that moment, a seagull squawks raucously.

An occasional seagull.

beat

Like all harbors - a refuge. A place to seek shelter. Away from the bright lights.

Away from the clamor of the city. Away from prying eyes.

KAREN glances uneasily offstage, from where the MAN's voice comes.

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

A fog rolls in. Obscuring details. Blurring edges. Keeping secrets.

At that moment, a fog floats onto the stage.

KAREN is even more nervous.

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

She waits. Nervous yet excited. Uncertain. About the present. Even more - about the future.

With this, KAREN steps away from the railing and toward the sound of the voice, peering closely.

KAREN

calling

Hey, you.

beat

Yeah, you. What're you doing?

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

She calls out blindly, into the inky night.

KAREN

It's not inky night yet. I can see you. I asked what you're doing.

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

Confused and unsettled, she hales a figure she imagines she sees in the gloom.

KAREN

You better get the hell out of here, or I'll call the cops. I swear it.

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

She seeks an answer. For a question she doesn't know how to ask.

beat

KAREN

Question? What question?

beat

Did Brad hire you? Is that what you're talking about?

beat

He did, didn't he? I should've guessed.

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

She begins making wild accusations.

KAREN

It won't do him any good.

beat

And stop talking in that weird way.

beat

How long have you been following me?

HE is quiet, and SHE squints into the dimness.

Come nearer. Where I can see you better. So I'll recognize you next time you're stalking me. So I can describe you to the cops.

The MAN steps onto the stage. HE wears a dark trench coat.

That's close enough.

As HE stops, SHE plunges her hand into her coat pocket and points something in the pocket toward the MAN.

I've got a gun.

MAN

Worried and a little desperate, she acts as if she has a gun in her pocket.

KAREN

I do have a gun. Which you'll find out if you take a step closer.

MAN

She continues to maintain the obvious falsehood of having a firearm—

KAREN

Hey!

MAN

She exclaims—

KAREN

Can you talk like a normal person?

MAN

She asks—

KAREN

Directly to me? Or is that too much trouble?

beat

MAN

Yes, I can.

KAREN

Thank, God. Whoever you are, you're irritating as hell.

beat

A private investigator, right?

MAN

No.

KAREN

But...but you are working for Brad?

MAN

No.

KAREN

Then—who the hell are you?

MAN

The narrator.

KAREN

The narrator? The narrator of what?

MAN

Your life.

KAREN

Oh, God. Just when I think things can't get any more screwed up...

MAN

He's not going to show up.

KAREN

Who's not going to show up. What are you talking about?

MAN

Randall. Randall's not going to show up.

KAREN

How do you know about...You are working for Brad. You know what? —tell him. Just tell him. I don't care anymore.

MAN

I'm not working for Brad.

KAREN

How else do you explain—

MAN

You came to meet Randall Billings. You were going to tell him that unless he splits with his wife, it's over—

KAREN

Only an investigator—

MAN

I'm not an investigator. You're carrying a friendship ring Randall gave you six weeks ago in your left pocket. You only wear it when you two meet—

KAREN

How did you know—

MAN

You decided not to wear it tonight so you won't weaken in your resolve to demand a divorce.

KAREN

This...this is too much—

MAN

Careful!

KAREN

Wh...what?

MAN

You're going to collapse.

KAREN

That's ridicu—

KAREN sways, about to pass out, as the MAN hurries over to steady her.

After a moment, she seems to recover.

No...no one could have known...about the ring. No one.

MAN

I know.

KAREN

But how did you—

MAN

I'm the narrator.

KAREN

That's not possible. It's crazy talk ...

During the following dialogue, the MAN describes what KAREN is going to do a fraction of a second before SHE does it.

MAN

You're so nervous, your hands begin shaking. You look down at them, then clasp them together to steady them. Glancing back and forth wildly, almost as if you're trapped in a cage, you frantically reach in the coat pocket where your imaginary gun was and rattle your keys anxiously.

beat

MAN

Believe me?

KAREN

The narrator?

MAN

Yes.

KAREN

Of my life?

MAN

Yes.

KAREN

Narrators tell stories. My life isn't some kind of story.

MAN

Oh, but it is.

beat

KAREN

This is nuts. Why am I talking to some...some lunatic?—

MAN

To keep yourself distracted. To keep from thinking—

KAREN

About my life being a story. A story? Seriously?

MAN

Even this—here...now—is a story. It's got all the components.

beat

KAREN

Components? What...components?

MAN

Characters, setting, plot, conflict, and resolution. You, Randall and Brad are the characters. The wharf is the setting. The plot is your attempt to escape a loveless marriage. The conflict is your wedding vows versus your infidelity, your present misery versus possible future happiness.

beat

KAREN

What happened to resolution?

MAN

It's the resolution I'm concerned about. It's the resolution that made me make my presence known. To speak out for the first time.

KAREN

Well, what is it? What is the resolution?

MAN

Every story has a beginning, a middle and an end. In the story of your life, you're in the middle.

KAREN

Fine. I'm in the middle—

MAN

I want to make sure this stays the middle of your story. And doesn't become the end.

beat

KAREN

realizing

Wait! You don't think I would have actually considered ...

MAN

After waiting and waiting and then getting a text? ...

KAREN'S phone makes a tone to indicate a text. SHE takes it out and reads it. SHE closes her eyes in anguish and begins to tear up. The MAN hands her a handkerchief.

Yes, you would have considered—

KAREN

The bastard.

MAN

And it would have been easy. Right here on the wharf? ...next to the water?

beat

KAREN

I...I don't know—

MAN

Believe me—you would have thought about it.

beat

KAREN

Maybe.

MAN

But, thanks to the intervention of the narrator, no longer an issue.

SHE doesn't respond.

Right? No longer?

beat

KAREN

No longer.

MAN

Come on. I'll walk you home.

KAREN

All right.

MAN

We'll take the long way.

KAREN

Okay.

THEY exit.

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

They walk off into the night, their footsteps echoing softly on the wooden planks.

Soon they're nothing but a hazy outline against a moonless sky—

KAREN (OFFSTAGE)

Stop that.

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

Sorry. It's what I do.

Curtain.

End of Play.

Charlotte

by Alex Bulova

Characters

HUMPHREY – mid-30s, married to Stephanie.

STEPHANIE – mid-30s, married to Humphrey.

TOMMY – 5, Humphrey and Stephanie's son.

Setting

A veterinary clinic, present day.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Sophie, Kate, and Laurie.

The waiting room of a veterinary clinic. Chairs line the wall. Muzak plays softly in the background.

HUMPHREY and STEPHANIE sit next to each other. Humphrey holds a cat carrier in his lap, his eyes watering. Stephanie fills out paperwork on a clipboard. TOMMY sits at their feet, coloring the back of a medical form.

A wail of pain emerges from the cat carrier. Humphrey looks inside, flinches, then leans back.

STEPHANIE

not looking up

I hear it's relatively painless.

HUMPHREY

We're not talking about this.

STEPHANIE

Just one injection and it's done.

HUMPHREY

Steph, please.

STEPHANIE

There are worse ways to go out. She could've been mauled by a bear or burnt in a fire, or -

HUMPHREY

snapping

Steph!

HUMPHREY stifles a sob. TOMMY looks up.

TOMMY

Is daddy okay?

STEPHANIE

Yes dear, he's fine. It's just his allergies.

TOMMY

Is that why his nose is runny?

STEPHANIE

That's right, sweetie. Now keep coloring.

TOMMY returns to his drawing. HUMPHREY whimpers. STEPHANIE sighs and puts down her clipboard.

STEPHANIE

I'm sorry Humph, but we need to decide soon. Tommy has Little League in an hour.

HUMPHREY

He can miss it.

Another moan of pain escapes from the carrier.

STEPHANIE

The vet says Charlotte's in a lot of pain right now.

HUMPHREY

I know.

STEPHANIE

She'll always be in pain.

HUMPHREY

I know.

STEPHANIE

Do you really want Tommy growing up with that? All that mewling and crying in the middle of the night?

imitating the cat

"Humphrey, why didn't you put me out of my misery when you had the chance? For the love of God, why?!"

HUMPHREY

Steph, we are not euthanizing Charlotte!

TOMMY

looking up again

What's oof-anizing?

HUMPHREY

It's what mommies do to make daddies very, very sad.

STEPHANIE

Oh, Jesus.

TOMMY

to Stephanie

Why do you want to make daddy sad?

STEPHANIE

He's just being silly. Mommy would never do anything to make daddy upset.

HUMPHREY

Except leave the balcony door open.

STEPHANIE

still to Tommy

Mommy wanted Charlotte to get some fresh air.

HUMPHREY

Mommy should've remembered that Charlotte is an indoor cat and that we live on the fourteenth floor.

STEPHANIE

Didn't daddy say that cats have excellent balance?

TOMMY

Yes! And nine lives too!

HUMPHREY

That's right. That's why Charlotte's here. She's cashing in a life.

STEPHANIE

to herself

Yes. "Cashing."

HUMPHREY

What was that?

STEPHANIE

Nothing. I just think it's ridiculous to pay full surgery price for two-thirds of a cat.

TOMMY

Two firds?

STEPHANIE

Didn't daddy tell you? If Charlotte comes home—

HUMPHREY

When Charlotte comes home -

STEPHANIE

--she won't have her two backy-leggies, because they were run over by the bussy-wussy. She'll have to slide everywhere.

TOMMY

giggling

That's silly!

STEPHANIE

Yes, it is silly to spend thousands of dollars for a defective hell cat!

HUMPHREY

Hey!

HUMPHREY moves TOMMY'S hands to cover his ears, shielding the child from the conversation.

HUMPHREY

Language!

STEPHANIE

rolling her eyes

Sorry.

HUMPHREY

And I told you I'd pay for it.

STEPHANIE

Right, because we're just made of money.

HUMPHREY

I'll work overtime.

STEPHANIE

So I can spend more time with the cat from hell?

HUMPHREY

Charlotte is not the cat from hell, she's majestic!

STEPHANIE

She bathes in the blood of the innocent.

HUMPHREY

She can be loving!

STEPHANIE

She attacked me when I peeled her off the street!

HUMPHREY

She was agitated!

STEPHANIE

Look at this!

SHE rolls back her sleeve to reveal stiches running up the length of her arm.

STEPHANIE

A dog wouldn't have done this!

HUMPHREY

But you're allergic to dogs!

STEPHANIE

That's beside the point!

TOMMY

still covering his ears

Daddy, can I listen again? My ears feel like the ocean.

HUMPHREY removes TOMMY'S hands for him.

HUMPHREY

Sorry buddy. Keep drawing.

Tommy continues to color.

HUMPHREY

Look, Charlotte may not be a perfect cat, but she's our cat.

choking up

And we can't let her die. We have to save her!

HUMPHREY begins to cry. STEPHANIE pulls him into her shoulder.

STEPHANIE

Hey, hey, shhh. It's okay.

HUMPHREY

through the tears

I found her when she was just a kitten. I raised her...

STEPHANIE

I know, I know.

HUMPHREY

And I love her. She's our child, Steph.

STEPHANIE

No Humphrey, she's really not.

HUMPHREY

She is! We feed her, we give her shelter, we clean up her poop. She's basically a smaller Tommy. And would you kill Tommy?

TOMMY

What?

STEPHANIE

I'm not going to pretend that's an appropriate comparison.

HUMPHREY

But that's what you're doing! You're killing Tommy!

to Tommy

Mommy wants to kill you!

TOMMY starts to cry. STEPHANIE picks him up and comforts him.

STEPHANIE

Shh, shh, daddy didn't mean that, mommy loves you very, very much.

HUMPHREY scoffs. STEPHANIE covers TOMMY'S ears with his hands.

STEPHANIE

Fine. You want to know the truth? You're right. I want to kill our baby. I want to kill our crippled, demonic, idiotic needle-clawed vicious fucking hell cat baby! That is all I've wanted to do ever since you brought that fury little shit to our apartment.

HUMPHREY

Steph!

STEPHANIE

I've tried to love her, oh God I've tried, but every time Tommy or I try to pet her she either hisses, bites, or claws the shit out of my arms! Do you know how many sweaters that cat's destroyed?

HUMPHREY

So she deserves to die for being a cat?

STEPHANIE

No! But we have such a perfect opportunity to—move on. Start over. We could get a new cat, or a fish, or maybe just not have a pet and be the three of us again.

HUMPHREY

But...

STEPHANIE

But what?

HUMPHREY

looking down

I can't kill her. I can't.

STEPHANIE

She's in pain, Humph. She'll always be in pain.

HUMPHREY

But I...I don't want to be responsible for that. For that choice. I just want to let life run its course.

STEPHANIE

Making Charlotte live without her back legs isn't letting life run its course.

Another agonizing meow. TOMMY uncovers his ears.

HUMPHREY

I know, but I...I can't do it. I can't do it to...

TOMMY

Do what?

HUMPHREY

looking away

Nothing.

STEPHANIE

to Tommy

Tommy. Charlotte's really hurting right now, because she fell from the balcony, remember?

TOMMY

And got hit by the big bus.

STEPHANIE

Right. The big bus. So daddy and I need to make a really tough choice. Because Charlotte might be out of lives.

TOMMY

Oh.

TOMMY slumps to the floor, sullen.

HUMPHREY

to Stephanie

Steph, he's too young for this. He's not ready.

STEPHANIE gives HUMPHREY a pointed look. He looks down. She takes his hand. A moment.

Humphrey sighs, removes the cat carrier from his lap, and sits next to TOMMY on the floor.

HUMPHREY

Tommy, do you like Charlotte?

TOMMY

shrugging

She's mean. But I like to pet her.

HUMPHREY

Would you be sad if she...didn't come home?

TOMMY

I think so. Are you sad?

HUMPHREY

Yes, Tommy. Daddy's sad. Daddy's really sad.

TOMMY

That's okay.

TOMMY gives HUMPHREY the drawing he's been working on. It shows the family smiling together, a cat curled up at their feet.

HUMPHREY hugs TOMMY, crying. Tommy hugs him back. Stephanie places a hand on Humphrey's back. A moment.

STEPHANIE

Are you ready to say goodbye?

HUMPHREY looks at STEPHANIE and nods. The cat moans one last time.

Blackout.

End of play.

Don't Toy With Me

by Andrew Lyman Black

History

- “Queer Shorts” Playfest, StageQ Theatre, Madison Wisconsin, June 2008.
- North Park Vaudeville and Candy Shoppe, San Diego, California, October, 2008.
- San Francisco Fringe Festival, San Francisco, California, September, 2010.
- LGBTQ Shorts at Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, July, 2013.

Characters

JOE – Twenty-four years old, masculine, in military attire.

KEN – Twenty-two years old, a beach boy, lime green t-shirt, board shorts, sandals. He wears a blonde hairpiece, but a good one.

BARBIE – Ken’s girlfriend. Long blonde hair. Great figure. Very fashionable. She is barefoot, and her feet are stuck in “high heel” position.

Setting

The Malibu Barbie Beach House.

KEN, inanimate, is at a table. There is a noise. KEN suddenly comes to life.

KEN

What's that?

JOE throws open the door. He carries a gun.

JOE

Don't move!

KEN

Hey! What are you doing?

JOE uses SWAT techniques to ensure that no one is hiding. KEN watches.

JOE

relaxing

All right, civilian, as you were.

KEN

What's going on?

JOE

I received an unusual set of orders from my C.O. I had to make sure it wasn't a trick perpetrated by an evil doer. Your environment is strange and unfamiliar. Maybe I should abort this mission.

gets out a note and reads it

Are you "Ken"?

KEN

Yes. Beach Glam Ken, if you want to get specific. How did you know?

JOE

It's in my orders.

JOE hands his orders to KEN.

KEN

reading

"Joe: Go see Ken at the Malibu Barbie Beach House. Timmy." Who's Timmy?

JOE

Timmy's my C.O. That's "commanding officer" in civilian-speak.

KEN

returns the orders

You know, I get orders too. From someone named...Ashley. She doesn't write things down though. I hear what she wants...in my head.

JOE

Must be some kind of ESP. Is she saying anything to you right now?

KEN

I do hear something. But it sounds like a little boy. And suddenly, I have an impulse to offer you a refreshing beverage from the Dream Kitchen. We have a microwave, a refrigerator and 45 assorted kitchen accessories.

JOE

Do you have K-rations?

KEN

No. But we have Maxwell House Coffee and a small bottle of Ocean Spray Cranberry Juice left over from a co-branding promotion.

JOE

I'll take the juice.

KEN

Why don't you put your gun down, and I'll make refreshments.

JOE puts the gun on the table. KEN struggles with the bottle.

I'm having trouble with this bottle. It seems to be defective.

JOE

How can a bottle be defective?

KEN

Sometimes, things here in the beach house don't work the way they're supposed to. When that happens, we say they're defective.

JOE

The same thing happens where I come from. See this canteen?

KEN

Is there water in it?

JOE

No. Like that juice bottle, you could say it's...defective. I carry it around because it looks manly.

KEN

It sure does.

JOE

holding up the canteen

Shall we?

KEN holds up the juice bottle. They clink and drink.

I'm Joe.

KEN

Tell me, Joe, is it my imagination or have you been watching me walk back and forth?

JOE

I apologize. I have an eagle eye vision feature, so I appear to be looking around when this lever behind my head is moved.

KEN

That's funny. I have a round plastic talking ring at the base of my neck. When it gets pulled, I speak in a pre-recorded voice. You never know what I'll say next! The mechanism gets stuck sometimes, and I say the same thing over and over which I really hate.

JOE

That's...fascinating.

KEN

I'm glad you stopped by. You know, I don't get to interact with many other male dolls.

JOE

Don't say that! I'm not...what you said.

KEN

A doll?

JOE winces.

What's the matter?

JOE

I'm a 12-inch military-themed articulated action figure.

KEN

That's so impressive! I only have a six-piece jointed plastic body.

JOE

It's nice though.

KEN

Maybe we could share outfits! I love that camouflage top.

JOE

Oh, this old thing?

KEN

I wish I were an action figure like you. I've watched you guys over there. It's amazing to see the positions you can get in.

JOE

You watch us while we're waging war?

KEN

Sometimes, the hallway door is open, and I can see you guys spread out all over the bed. It looks very exciting.

JOE

Don't be deceived by appearances, Ken; it's dangerous too.

KEN

Can you see us up here when you're on duty?

JOE

Oh, yes. You may not realize it, but this pink house really stands out in the landscape. I've wondered what it was like inside. I have to say, from across the hall, it looks very peaceful.

KEN

Don't you ever get to take a break from the heat of the battle?

JOE

Not very often. When I do need some R&R, I just sit on that little outpost over there.

KEN

Next to that piece of chenille?

JOE

That's right. You have roommates here, don't you?

KEN

As a matter of fact, I do.

JOE

I've seen them. Sergeant Savage is equipped with a pair of binoculars, and he spends most of his time looking at the girls. He likes that tall blonde one.

KEN

Barbie. She owns this place.

JOE

Is she your...girlfriend?

KEN

She thinks she is. She's a successful fashion model, so it's a convenient situation for me right now.

JOE

You don't have a job of your own?

KEN

I'm between things. I've been a prince and an ice skater. I was even in the army once.

JOE

The army!

KEN

Stars and Stripes Ken, reporting for duty. But the next thing I knew I was back to being a beach bum, which I've been like 32 times.

JOE

Does Barbie call the shots around here?

KEN

Oh, no. I'm my own man, Joe. I do what I want.

JOE

I like that. So, where is...Barbie right now?

KEN

She's in the Pink Bubbling Barbie Hot Tub with Midge.

JOE

I'm glad they're not here. It feels good being alone with you like this. Sitting here, sipping our defective beverages.

KEN

I don't know why you would say that. Your military life seems so exciting.

JOE

All I can say is.... It's not all purple mountains majesties and amber waves of grain. I know there are lots of guys who would be jealous of me. I explore exotic foreign locations, I'm very handsome, and my job is to make the world safe for democracy. But the truth is, I still hear Sergeant Savage and the others whispering things behind my back.

KEN

What do they say?

JOE

It's like they know a secret about me. But they won't ask, and I won't tell.

KEN

Joe, I have secrets too.

JOE

Tell me.

KEN

I'm really tired of the Ashley voice and the things it makes me do. She makes me fix hot dogs on the grill. She makes me drive Barbie around in her convertible roadster. She makes me wear...bowling shirts.

JOE

That's disgusting.

KEN

I know I'm very masculine appearing, but I feel differently on the inside. Sometimes I wish someone else would just take over and...

JOE

Ken, wait. Before we go any further, I need to tell you something. Despite my rugged good looks and chiseled physique...Oh, I'll just say it out loud: I'm not anatomically correct!

KEN

Oh, Joe....neither am I!

JOE

I can't believe it. Like a lot of other things around here, our private parts are...defective. I've met someone else...like me!

KEN

And what are you going to do about it, big boy?

JOE kisses KEN.

KEN

Wow, for a guy with plastic lips and no tongue, you're a great kisser.

JOE

I love running my hand through your hair flock.

THEY kiss again.

JOE

I tell you, Ken, if it's the last thing I do, I'm going to see that jointed plastic body of yours!

JOE bends KEN over the table.

KEN

This is the moment I've hoped for since you first came through that door.

JOE

But how....?

KEN

You may not have any equipment of your own, Joe, but there's a shampoo bottle from the Barbie Vanity Accessories kit which I think you can use in a very creative way.

KEN holds up a phallic looking bottle. JOE takes it.

Please be gentle with me.

JOE

Of course I will.

JOE holds the bottle in the air.

KEN

Wait a minute! Stop!

JOE

What's wrong?

KEN

It's.... the Ashley voice. She's coming back.

VOICE OF BARBIE (OFFSTAGE)

Ken! Oh, Ken! What are you doing in the house? Midge and I are waiting for you.

JOE

It's the blonde, isn't it?

*JOE and KEN hastily reassemble themselves.
BARBIE enters.*

BARBIE

Hi, Ken! I just had to get out of that hot tub before I turned into a shriveled up old prune! Hey, it looks like we have company! I'm Barbie, what's your name?

JOE

My name is Joe, ma'am. G.I. Joe.

BARBIE

Hi, Joey, welcome to the Malibu Barbie Beach House.

KEN

Joe's a fully articulated action figure.

BARBIE

That is so hot! So tell me, Joey, what kind of accessories do you come with?

JOE

Well, ma'am, I have a gun and a canteen.

BARBIE

All Ken has is a beach towel and a pair of sunglasses. It looks like you have it all over him in the accessory department!

BARBIE slaps KEN on the back.

KEN

pre-recorded voice

The girls are going shopping. I want to come.

BARBIE

Oh, Ken, don't be silly. We just went shopping yesterday.

KEN

pre-recorded voice

The girls are going shopping. I want to come.

BARBIE

You're so goofy--your talking ring has gotten stuck again.

KEN

pre-recorded voice

I want to come. I want to come. I want to come.

BARBIE

He'll be okay in a minute.

Strikes KEN and he quiets.

then to Joe

Hey, Joey, my friend Midge is going to love you! She's out in the hot tub--let's go say hello!

JOE

I'd love to meet your friend, Barbie. But can I have another minute with Ken—alone?

BARBIE

What for?

JOE

We have some...man business we need to finish up. Besides, Barbie, it looks like you've lost your shoes. I know a fashion leader such as yourself would want to look her best at all times. Especially when she's entertaining a military man.

BARBIE

Oh, my! You're right! I'm so embarrassed. Let me find my heels, and I'll be right back.

BARBIE exits.

JOE

Ken, that female represents a significant obstacle to my achieving a dominant position in my intended zone of action.

KEN

What are we going to do?

JOE

I distracted her with that high heel thing. She took that Ashley voice with her, didn't she?

KEN

Yes. But she's going to come back, Joe. And the Ashley voice is so strong!

JOE

You've got to stand up to it. Be the man you were intended to be.

KEN

Oh, Joe. When you think about the world around us.... so fake and phony. How could real love ever survive?

JOE

There's got to be a way. I know. My gun!

KEN

Are you suggesting we kill Barbie?

JOE

And that other one. Midge. I know it's un-American to shoot two teenage girls, but this could be our only chance. Wait! She's coming back! Ken, just follow my lead.

KEN

Whatever you say, Joe.

BARBIE

re-entering, high heels on

I'm back, boys! See my fabulous heels?

JOE

They look great. So, Barbie, why don't you go out into the hot tub, and Ken and I will be right out.

KEN

Barbie, those heels are beautiful. And so are you. And you know what? I bet the water in the hot tub is nice and warm.

JOE

Ken! Be strong!

KEN

I can't wait to introduce Joe and Midge.

BARBIE

Come on, Joey. This is going to be fun.

JOE

Ken!

KEN looks forlornly at JOE. BARBIE and KEN exit.

JOE

looks at the gun

I still have my gun. There's only one thing left to do.

JOE takes out the gun. He points it toward the exit which BARBIE and KEN just walked through. A beat. He then turns the gun and points it at his own temple, pulls the trigger.

SOUND CUE: Gunshot.

JOE falls to the floor. A beat. JOE sits up.

JOE

Goddamn gun. It's defective.

End of play.

Private Dick

by Judy Klass

History

Private Dick was a 2016 Rover Dramawerks Semi-Finalist.

Characters

DICK DANFORTH – A private eye, 20s-50s. Although the play takes place in the present moment, DICK lives in a wonderful world in his head in which he is every bit as cool as Sam Spade, Philip Marlowe and other *noir* detectives of the 1940s. He dresses accordingly.

MONIQUE – A beautiful, mysterious woman. Not all that she seems.

RON GRESHAK – A hulking, macho bully.

Setting

A detective's office and a sports bar, a desk and chair.

Note

The last two syllables of the New Jersey borough called Ho-Ho-Kus rhyme with hocus pocus.

AT RISE: DICK is not at his desk; HE skulks in the corner of the stage in his trench coat and fedora. A saxophone warbles, and DICK addresses the audience.

DICK

Yeah, there are some who can't handle a town like this. They clear out. They run for the comfort of their cozy Manhattan apartments, lifted high above entropy and pain, where they never have to deal with the gritty reality of suburbia.

HE wads up his chewing gum in a piece of paper and puts it in his pocket

I'm not one of those. I like nature close up. I like leafy trees and in-your-face roadside scrub. I like houses that hug the ground, like wary animals, crouched on their haunches, with orifices spitting out human refugees, and the pungent smell of middle-class fear.

checks his watch

Tenafly, New Jersey is my beat. And I'm Dick Danforth, Private Investigator.

The LIGHTS GO UP over his office area as HE settles at the desk. Perhaps HE puts his feet up. There is a KNOCK at the door.

DICK

Come in.

MONIQUE ENTERS. Perhaps she has a fabulous '40s hat with a veil. She puts a long leg up on the desk, or a chair.

MONIQUE

Hello.

DICK

I was stunned. She had legs that wouldn't quit, even during a general strike, and a body that would make a celibate Shinto monk commit Hari-Kari. Her lips were like an opening rosebud made of extra rare steaks. Her eyes were like the North Sea. Blue. Unfathomably deep. Unmercifully cold. And wet.

MONIQUE catches a tear falling from her eye on a fingertip, and studies it.

You seem distressed. May I, ah, help you, Miss? Would you like a Kleenex?

SHE takes the Kleenex from him and delicately dabs her eyes.

MONIQUE

Are you a dick?

DICK

That's private.

MONIQUE smiles wryly. DICK tells the audience:

She smiled, wryly.

MONIQUE

Is it a secret?

DICK

No, I mean I'm a private dick. My friends call me Dick Danforth. Won't you sit down?

MONIQUE

still leaning toward him

I need some dirt.

SHE stares at him intently. HE gets out a toothpick and places it in his mouth.

DICK

Out of whose garden?

MONIQUE

What if I say I don't know yet? What if I say I want a lot of gardens checked out?

DICK

Well, it could take a while. New Jersey is the Garden State, after all.

to audience

I didn't know what the hell we were talking about. But I sounded cool, and that was the main thing.

MONIQUE

Didn't you used to have a partner, Mr. Danforth?

DICK

Used to, yeah. Lyle Bumpers. We worked together for years, one back scratching the other, like Two Musketeers after the third one got whacked, and we got along all right until our Frankie Valli suit went missing. You see, we jointly owned a gold lamé suit once worn by Frankie Valli. The original Jersey Boy. Not something he wore with the Four Seasons—it was from his "Can't Keep My Eyes Off Of You"

days, you know? His "Oh, What a Night" and "My Eyes Adored You" days. It would be worth a fortune on e-bay. The suit used to stand on a dummy, here in the office, right over there.

points

We were the only two who had keys, and we had a fancy alarm system that the thief didn't trip. I told Lyle I'd crack the case, but I couldn't find fingerprints, fibers, elevator camera footage, anything, to give me a lead. Maybe he looked down on me for that. Anyhow, he got out of this line of work—opened up a pet store in Ho-ho-kus.

MONIQUE

Mmmm. As it happens, I might have more information about that Frankie Valli suit.

DICK

Really? My God, if that's true—what do you know about it?

MONIQUE

We'll get there, Mr. Danforth. Eventually. But first, tell me this. Mr. Bumpers had an Uncle Doug whom you found—irritating?

DICK gets up abruptly, and paces, agitated.

DICK

Did I? Did I? God, that guy was annoying! He'd come around here, okay, he'd come striding around here to the office, and he'd be saying "Lyle, Dick, catch any big ones? Ha ha," with this big smirk on his face, and then he'd slap me on the back, whammo, and laugh his putrid little laugh, and I'd just want to wring his fat neck –

MONIQUE

You're too late.

DICK

What?

MONIQUE

Uncle Doug has been murdered.

DICK

Geez. Geez, that's awful. Say, listen, I had nothing to do with it –

MONIQUE

I want you to find the man who murdered Uncle Doug.

DICK

You a relative of Lyle's?

MONIQUE

No. I was Douglas Bumpers' fiancé.

DICK

Oh. I'm sorry.

MONIQUE

I'm not. Not sorry we were engaged, I mean. I liked him.

DICK

Sure. Sure.

MONIQUE

Is all this getting a little too dark for you?

DICK

For me? Heck, no! I'd describe myself as a man whose life oozes noir, except I'm too manly to use French words like that. But listen, Miss ...

MONIQUE

You may call me Monique.

DICK

That your name?

MONIQUE

It will serve for now.

DICK

There's a sports bar where Lyle and I always used to go when we needed a place to talk to someone. Why don't we go there?

LIGHTS DOWN on the office area. LIGHTS UP on two chairs and a table, perhaps the same two chairs on opposite sides of the same table, in a sports bar. The noise is deafening either crowd noise, or Bon Jovi, or both. DICK and MONIQUE sit and try to talk.

DICK

hollering

How long were you engaged?

MONIQUE

hollering

What?

DICK

hollering

I said, how long were you engaged?

MONIQUE

hollering

What?

DICK gestures to illustrate his point. HE holds his hands a few inches apart, then a foot apart.

DICK

How ... long ... how long were you—

points at her

—engaged? How long?

His hands are, again, a foot apart. RON, a big, burly cuss, heads over, to mock DICK and flirt with MONIQUE. The noise fades.

RON

Don't believe this guy, honey. If he says he's packing that much,

gestures at Dick's hands

he's lying his ass off. You need a guy who swings a man-size bat. The little twerp's about a third that size.

MONIQUE

How do you know? Have you slept with him?

DICK

angry, at Monique

Now, wait just a minute here! I hardly know this man!

RON

You trying to be cute, honey?

MONIQUE

Why don't you go swing your man-size bat at the bleachers?

RON

You know, I'd sure hate to have to redecorate that pretty little face of yours. And not with my man-size bat. With my fists.

DICK

to audience

This was no idle threat. Ron Greshak worked out daily at the Tenafly Fitness Spa. He didn't just move – he rippled. He sprinkled steroids on his breakfast cereal, until his biceps bulged like breadfruits, and his balls shriveled up like Cracker Jacks. Ron was tough, and respected – we'd all seen him beat up beautiful women before. Monique was up the Swanee River with a busted steamboat and no life-jacket. I wished her well.

RON

to Dick

You got any objections if your lady friend and I duke it out?

DICK

shrugging

No sir, not at all. This is your favorite bar, Ron, after all, and you should do whatever you feel you have to.

RON

Good. That's what I like to hear.

to Monique

Supposing you and I just step outside for a minute?

MONIQUE stands, calm and cool.

MONIQUE

I can't wait that long. Let's settle this here and now.

In slow-motion, MONIQUE decimates RON. Her fist connects with his jaw.

RON goes down. Ron scrabbles up, and an elegant leg shoots out, a high-heeled foot connects, and HE is down once more. DICK provides running commentary.

DICK

to audience

I saw it all in slow-motion. It was uncanny. Like Ali vs. Frazier, without the subtext of how they each felt about the war in Vietnam. Like Tyson vs. Holyfield without any ear-biting. Monique was a fluid, deadly force, like a super-soaker full of battery acid, and Ron didn't stand a chance. She wiped the floor with him like he was a Swiffer.

On the floor, RON groans. MONIQUE steps down savagely with her heel.

MONIQUE

Losers should be seen and not heard.

SHE strides away. DICK addresses RON with equal bravado:

DICK

What she said!

HE scurries to catch up with her, as SHE smooths her hair and clothes.

DICK

Did you see how we handled that guy? We're an amazing team! I'm sorry I got you mixed up in –

MONIQUE

Listen to me carefully, Dick. Return to your office now, and stay there for the rest of the day. I left some money in the top drawer of your desk. That should cover our drinks and chicken tenders.

DICK

But – you were going to tell me about the case –

MONIQUE

There is no case. Douglas Bumpers is alive and well –

DICK

But – you said –

MONIQUE

I wanted to prove my love to him, by beating up Ron Greshak, his hated enemy. I needed a pretext, to be in the sports bar, so Ron would start with me. It needed to look like I was there with someone.

DICK

You were. You were there with me!

MONIQUE

Technically, yes. But Douglas is a jealous man. He has spies. I had to be there with someone he considered irrelevant. Non-threatening. Thank you for providing that service.

DICK

I'm not your rent boy!

MONIQUE

But you were a useful male escort—for an hour.

SHE starts to walk away.

DICK

Hey, wait a minute. You said you knew something about the Frankie Valli gold lamé suit.

MONIQUE

Yes. Yes, I did.

DICK

Well, was that just another lie?

MONIQUE

No, it wasn't. Your partner, Lyle Bumpers, was the one who went into the office when you weren't there, and walked off with the suit. He got a fortune for it on ebay. But you didn't hear it from me.

SHE blows him a kiss, and leaves.

DICK

to audience

So. That was that. The dame was gone. She walked in beauty like the night, but it was daytime, so she just walked. I had been double-crossed, used, lied to. Manipulated. My partner had snaked me, just before he shed his skin and slithered off. A no-good broad, a rotten tomato, a frail made out of steel, had used her stems to figuratively beat me about the face and neck, and kick my leathery old heart in, like a busted old love seat in a junk yard. I saw it all for what it was. But I didn't let it get me down. That's how it is in this game. You spend a lot of time alone. You look out for number one. You take yourself in hand, and you realize love is just a fantasy – and you can't wait around for Miss Right to show up. You learn that loving yourself is the greatest love of all. And you see best out of your own private eye. It's just all in a day's work for a private dick.

Lights down.

End of play.

Stain

By Oded Gross

History

Stain was first produced in February of 2019 as a staged reading in New Albany, Indiana at St. Paul's Arts Council's Building Bridges—"Healing Our Divisions Festival of Short New Plays." Its first full production was done in Tucson, Arizona by Winding Road Theater Ensemble for their "Eight 10s in Tucson" 10-minute play festival in April, 2019.

Synopsis

Dave is trying to prepare for his Ku Klux Klan meeting. He is up for a promotion in the ranks and wants to make a good impression. Unfortunately, after his wife Charlyn has a laundry mishap, Dave's future in the Klan may be on the line.

Characters

CHARLYN—Caucasian, 40s, a wife

DAVE—Caucasian, 40s, a husband

Setting

The modest home of Dave and Charlyn.

A middle-aged woman, CHARLYN, is ironing some clothes on an ironing board. Next to her is a large basket of laundry. Her husband, DAVE, enters.

DAVE

Char, have you seen my robe?

CHARLYN

Your robe?

DAVE

My Klan robe. It's Saturday. We got the meeting tonight.

CHARLYN

It's... folded on the dryer. I just washed it.

DAVE

Thank you.

DAVE exits. CHARLYN looks up nervously, then down in her laundry basket. She pulls out a white button down that is now pink.

DAVE (OFFSTAGE)

Charlyn! Dammit Char!

DAVE enters holding a Klan robe that is now stained pink.

DAVE

What did you do?

CHARLYN

I'm sorry.

DAVE

What did you do?

CHARLYN

There was a red sock in the laundry.

DAVE

Do you know what the guys will say if I show up wearing this?

CHARLYN

I'm sure they'll understand.

DAVE

It's pink!

CHARLYN

I know.

DAVE

How am I supposed to get this out by tonight?

CHARLYN shakes her head.

CHARLYN

...We can take it to the dry cleaner—

DAVE

To the Korean dry cleaner?

CHARLYN

Mr. Kim does wonderful work—

DAVE

I'm not taking my Ku Klux Klan robe to the Korean dry cleaner.

CHARLYN

I had a horrible grease stain and—

DAVE

Are you kidding me? Are you kidding me right now?

CHARLYN

I thought I'd never get to wear that pantsuit again, but he fixed it.

DAVE

You understand, I am being groomed to become the next district Kleagle.

CHARLYN

The district Kegel?

DAVE

Kleagle! Kleagle! Recruiter! For the Klan.

CHARLYN

They want you to recruit new Klansmen?

DAVE

They're thinking about it. But they won't think about it for long if I show up wearing a pink robe.

CHARLYN

I didn't know they wanted you to be a Kegel—

DAVE
Kleagle!

CHARLYN
Kleagle!

DAVE
Jeez, Charlyn... You have got to get this pink out. You've got to bleach it.

CHARLYN
I don't think I can.

DAVE
Of course you can. You've done it before. You bleached my t-shirts when they had pit stains. This is no different.

CHARLYN
Not every fabric can be bleached.

DAVE
What fabrics can't be bleached?

CHARLYN
Wool, silk, mohair.

DAVE
facetiously
Thank God this isn't my mohair Ku Klux Klan robe!
then
Charlyn, please! This is your mistake. You've got to fix it.

DAVE hands CHARLYN the pink robe.

Beat.

CHARLYN
I'm not so sure it was a mistake.

DAVE
What?

CHARLYN

I said-

DAVE

I heard what you said. I just don't understand. You mixed a red sock with the whites on purpose?

CHARLYN

Not on purpose.

DAVE

So, it was a mistake.

CHARLYN

It might have been subconscious.

DAVE

Subconscious? Your subconscious is doing the laundry?

CHARLYN

No.

DAVE

Is your subconscious also driving the kids to school? Because I don't know if I like that.

CHARLYN

I want you to quit the Klan!

Beat.

DAVE

Why would you want me to do that?

CHARLYN

Many reasons.

DAVE

Tell them to me. Because I have many reasons for wanting to stay.

CHARLYN

They're kind of racist.

DAVE

Only against other races.

CHARLYN

And anti-Semitic.

DAVE

Do you mean anti-Satanic?

CHARLYN

I just don't see the point of being in the Klan.

DAVE

The point? You understand the white race is going extinct. Between interracial relationships and interfaith. We might be the last generation of pure white people on the planet. Our numbers are low. We are a serious minority. Who is going to protect the rights of white people, if not the Klan?

CHARLYN

Plus, the annual dues are kind of expensive.

DAVE

Is this about the money? Because I think we can afford it. And I think we get a lot out of it. We get a community we belong to. The bar-b-cues are really wonderful.

CHARLYN

I want you to quit.

DAVE

I don't understand why.

CHARLYN

I have my reasons.

DAVE

I haven't heard any good ones.

CHARLYN

Just quit.

DAVE

Not until you tell me—

CHARLYN

I'm black!

Beat.

DAVE

What?

CHARLYN

I'm black.

DAVE

...You don't look black.

CHARLYN

I am.

DAVE

Why didn't you tell me this before?

CHARLYN

I only just found out. Remember that DNA test we took. To learn our ancestry.

DAVE

Where we spit in the test tubes?

CHARLYN nods.

What did it say?

CHARLYN

It says I'm black. 7 percent black. From Africa.

DAVE

Jesus.

then, frightened

What did it say about me? Am I black?

CHARLYN

No. Just me.

DAVE

relieved, then

Maybe the test is wrong. Maybe you didn't spit enough. Or maybe you spit too much?

CHARLYN

I took the test twice. Second time with a different company. That one said I'm 12 percent black.

DAVE

Well, the first test is definitely better.

CHARLYN

Fact is, I've always felt uncomfortable with our association with the Klan, and now that I know I'm African American—

DAVE

I don't think being 7 percent black—

CHARLYN

12 percent—

DAVE

I don't think that's enough to warrant labeling yourself African American.

CHARLYN

I think it is.

DAVE

It seems borderline, what do they call it, cultural appropriation, which is kind of racist.

CHARLYN

Are you calling me racist? You're in the Ku Klux Klan!

DAVE

I am just pointing out that black racial identity in America is far more than a mere matter of DNA. It is cultural, political and economic, and you have not had that black experience, so I am not sure what you're trying to accomplish here.

CHARLYN

I am just trying to embrace my African Ancestry, and I thought the best way to do that is to disassociate with white supremacist hate groups.

DAVE

You say hate group like that's all the Ku Klux Klan is. Like we didn't just hang out with half the chapter last weekend playing corn hole and having a great time. No one was hating anybody!

CHARLYN

That's because they didn't know that I'm black.

DAVE

Stop calling yourself black. You're not black.

CHARLYN

I am black like Maya Angelou! I am black like Denzel Washington! I am black like Dwayne The Rock Johnson!

DAVE

upset

The Rock is black?

CHARLYN

The Ku Klux Klan is a stain on this society. They are a hate group. And I will not be a part of it.

DAVE

They're not—

CHARLYN

A hate group! You hate black people. You hate Jewish people.

DAVE

We have every right to hate Jewish people! They are not part of the white race! They are a parasitic evil that wants to control this country. Control this country!

then—

And blacks? They are definitely not white! They don't look white. They don't talk white. You can't even understand half the things they say.

CHARLYN

You will quit that awful group!

DAVE

No! I won't! I am sorry that you found out that you have African ancestry. But I don't! And I am proud of my race! And I will protect the future of my race, so it keeps its rightful place in this country.

CHARLYN

Your pride is misplaced!

then

And there is no protecting the future of your race. You are extinct. There are no more white people. There are no more black people. There's just every beautiful shade in between.

SHE hands him back the stained, pink robe.

CHARLYN

Be proud of that. Protect that. We are evolving beyond race.

DAVE

What the hell did that DNA test do to you?

CHARLYN

It opened my eyes. I am woke.

DAVE

You are woke? What the hell does that mean? That must be the black in you talking because I don't understand it.

then

Forget that DNA test! It's hogwash. No one needs to know about it. You're going to be embarrassed tomorrow when you think back on this behavior.

CHARLYN

I'm embarrassed today that I haven't behaved this way until now.

SHE takes out some papers: The DNA test results.

And everyone will know about these test results. Because I am woke. I am awake. And I won't let you recruit any more bigots.

DAVE

You are dreaming if you think anything you say will stop me. White people are still the pure race. The superior race who should rightfully control this country.

CHARLYN

parroting him

You want to "control this country?" That must be the Jew in you talking.

CHARLYN hands him one of the pieces of paper.

Here are your test results.

DAVE takes a quick glance at the paper and does an immediate horrified double take.

Mazel Tov!

Blackout.

End of Play

A Lively Outfit

by Jeffrey A. Dunne

Synopsis

Theo is hired on to help Frank with his secret and suspiciously unconventional research agenda: to bring inanimate clothing to life.

Characters

THEO – a young man, perhaps late teens, who is looking to bring in a little money

FRANK – owner of Stein Mart, and a scientist on the verge of a great discovery

Setting

A back room in a department store

Time

Modern day

It is a back storage room of a department store. An older gentleman, FRANK, is standing near a table considering some clothes laid out upon it. Behind him are more clothes, perhaps on racks or just in piles.

THEO

Hello? Mr. Stein? They told me to come back he—

FRANK

Yes, yes! Come in, come in.

THEO

Are you Mr. Stein?

FRANK

Call me Frank. And you are?

THEO

Theodore Maclovski.

FRANK

Theodore Mac—

THEO

Actually, it's Theogore. It's an old family name. But everyone calls me Theo.

FRANK

I see. So, Theo, are you from the area?

THEO

Yes sir. I grew up on Estero Island. We used to live off of Meadowlark, but—

FRANK

Fine, fine. Now tell me, Theo...

suddenly becomes very intense

Why do you want to work at Stein Mart?

THEO

Well, my mom said that I should try to get a job at Carl's Jr., but when I saw that you were looking for an assistant, it just sounded like it was a good fit. You see, I'm trying to earn some extra money in—

FRANK

Bah! Money!? This is just about money? Off with you. Out, out!

THEO

Wait! Mr. Stei— Frank, wait. Just give me a chance. I mean, the ad didn't really say much about the assistant job, so...so it's hard to get real excited when you don't know what you'd be doing.

FRANK

I'm looking for someone...

FRANK trails off, because HE isn't sure HE's ready to finish with "who will help me with my publically unacceptable research"

THEO

Yes?

FRANK

assesses Theo, then

Do you know what we do here at Stein Mart?

THEO

Uh...you sell cheap clothing—

FRANK gives a grunt of derision.

N- n- no, I didn't mean *cheap* clothing. I meant you sell clothes cheaply. Like at a discount.

FRANK is clearly not won over.

Please, sir, just give me a chance.

FRANK

What would you say if I told you that what I really do here is to bring clothes...to life?

There is a long pause, as a myriad of expressions go across THEO's face. First the "ah ha" of someone being told a secret, then the fear of realizing that you've just been told it but have no idea what it means, then the concern that maybe you're talking to a psycho.

Nothing! Apparently you'd say nothing if I told you that. Not gonna lie, son, that's a little disappointing. I think we're through here.

THEO

Wait! No! Wait. I'm just...I was just...digesting what you said. So you mean that it isn't just about fabric, but finding what works together and making new fashions and...stuff.

FRANK

No! I don't give a rat's toenail about fashion!

THEO

You own a chain of clothing stores.

FRANK

I'm following a higher purpose! The stores are just a cover for my *real* work.

THEO

Whoa. What's your real work?

FRANK

Just what I told you. I am searching for a way to bring clothes...to life!

THEO

When you say...

FRANK

Yes! Yes yes! Life! Up and dancing around! Life! Talking, thinking, feeling!
Liiiffe!!

THEO

Clothes?

FRANK

Living clothes!

THEO

You're messing with me, aren't you?

FRANK

Just imagine it! No longer will clothing be something you just wear and discard, something to keep you warm. They'll be true companions on your journey through liiiffee!

THEO

So like...friends.

FRANK

Oh so much more than friends! They'll...they'll...they'll...Well, yeah, um, actually a lot like friends.

pause, then conspiratorially

But softer.

THEO

Soft friends.

FRANK

Right...

THEO

That you wear.

FRANK

Oh yes...

THEO

And that talk to you.

FRANK

Quietly...

THEO

I see. And, um, what would these clothes say to you?

FRANK

How should I know? I'm still in the research phase. You can't expect me to have all the answers at the get go.

THEO

So you haven't actually brought any clothes to life...

FRANK

Yet!

THEO

Yet.

FRANK

But I'm getting close. Very close.

THEO

And you're looking for an assistant to...

FRANK

Help with my experiments! I'm so close!

beat

Theo, I've got a good feeling about you. The enthusiasm you've shown for my work, it's clear you're the right man to help me usher in this new world!

THEO

I've shown enthusiasm?

FRANK

Compared to everyone else. And I want to offer you the job.

THEO

I don't know...

FRANK

It pays nineteen dollars an hour.

THEO

pleasantly surprised

Nineteen!?

FRANK

And time and half after thirty five hours.

THEO

That would be...

working out the math

FRANK

Plus a ten percent discount in the store.

THEO

suddenly making the decision

You know what, Mr. Stein? You've got yourself an assistant!

FRANK

Excellent! Excellent! You know, my boy, I had a good feeling about you right from the start! Together we are going to make history! People will remember us along with all the scientific giants. Tycho Brahae! Archimedes! Douglas Filman!

THEO

Douglas Fil—

FRANK

My sixth grade science teacher. Brilliant man.

getting back “on a roll”

People will sing ballads about Frank Stein, and his faithful servant Theogore Maclovski!

THEO

Servant?

FRANK

Stein and Maclovski! Frank and Theogore!

weighing the name

Theogore...Theogore...I don't suppose we could just shorten that to Eogore instead?

THEO

No!

FRANK

Very well, then. Frank and Theo! To the precipice of Godhood, and beyond!

THEO

Beyond the precipice? Wouldn't that be—

FRANK

Now, Theo, let me show you what I have been working on.

FRANK leads THEO over to a table where a shirt and pants are lying. There's some science-y looking equipment nearby if possible.

THEO

I think I have that shirt at home.

FRANK

It's a nice cotton-poly blend. Very comfortable.

THEO

It breathes well.

FRANK

It really does, doesn't it?
conspiratorially
That's why I chose it.

THEO

I never thought about pairing it with slacks like those, though.

FRANK

Oh?

THEO

I see the shirt as being more casual. I just wear it with jeans.

FRANK

Interesting. Very interesting. I wonder...

FRANK roots through a pile of clothing nearby, finally pulling out a pair of faded blue jeans.

Something like this, perhaps!

THEO

Yeah. That could work, I guess.

FRANK discards the pants that are on the table, and puts the jeans in their place. He starts to tuck the shirt in.

No, no. I'd leave the shirt out.

FRANK whips his head around to stare at Theo in surprise.

Over, so you can't see the belt.

FRANK stares at him with a bit of stylistic suspicion.

Trust me. It's how people are wearing them.

FRANK

weighing his inputs, then

Very well. What have we got to lose?

THEO

So...how does it...how do we...

FRANK

The secret is...electricity!

THEO

Of course. So do we...what? Do we plug them in somewhere, or—

FRANK

Oh no! It can't be alternating current. Only direct current will do. And you know what that means, my faithful servant!

THEO

Can we just stick with 'assistant'?

FRANK

Batteries!!

THEO

Batteries.

FRANK

pulling out two nine-volt batteries and holding them aloft

Batteries!!

THEO

Are those...

FRANK

But before we begin, we must prepare our subject. You see, the cotton-poly blend is not a natural conductor of electricity, so we must help it along with...

HE pulls out a bottle of Gatorade, and then, as if introducing the secret ingredient.

Electrolytes! Here...

FRANK hands the batteries to THEO, and then sprinkles Gatorade over the shirt. THEO watches in confusion. Once the sprinkling is done, HE closes the bottle, puts it down, and then takes a sleeve in either hand.

Are you ready?

THEO

Wait wait wait! What am I supposed to do?

FRANK

You will use the batteries to infuse our shirt with electrical power, while I train it in the basics of motion so it understands what it is supposed to do.

THEO clearly doesn't follow.

Like this.

FRANK flaps the arms of shirt around for a moment.

Got it?

THEO

So I just touch the battery to the shirt like this?

THEO reaches forward with one of the 9V batteries, and almost reaches the shirt when FRANK shouts out.

FRANK

Whoa whoa stop! Stop! What are you trying to do!? Kill us both!? This is science, and we're working with dangerous equipment.

THEO

W- w- what did I do wrong?

FRANK

You need to yell 'Clear!' before hitting the shirt with all that electricity.

THEO

So you can jump back?

FRANK

What are you, stupid? I can't jump back. I need to show it how to move.

THEO

Then why do I yell 'Clear'?

FRANK

Because that's what you do! Are you ready?

THEO, still clearly confused, nods yes. FRANK takes the sleeves again.

Okay...Go!

THEO

hesitantly at first, as if some part of him realizes just how stupid this is
Clear.

THEO touches one of the batteries to the shirt while FRANK flaps the sleeves around.

FRANK

Again!

THEO

a little louder/stronger...

Clear!

as he touches the other battery to the shirt.

FRANK

Again!

The pace quickens. All the while that FRANK is flapping the sleeves, THEO is reaching out with both batteries, calling “Clear!” more energetically each time as he ‘shocks’ the shirt with the 9V batteries. The pace quickens and the excitement grows until it is a steady stream of “Clear! Clear! Clear!...”. For the first few times, FRANK calls out “Again!” between the shocks, but after THEO gets into it, alternating hands/batteries in a steady stream of shocks, FRANK switches to calling out.

Live! Live, my creation! Life! I give you life! Liiiffffffeee!!!

At last, FRANK collapses over the shirt, which, oddly enough, has not come to life. HE lays there for a time, motionless, spent, devastated. After a few awkward moments:

THEO

Frank?

no response

Uh, M- Mr. Stein?

no response

Are you okay?

still no response

After another beat, THEO reaches out with one of the batteries and touches it to FRANK while softly saying:

Clear?

FRANK

still laying there

It's no use. It's no use.

THEO

Maybe we didn't use enough Gatorade?

FRANK

It's hopeless. Hopeless, I tell you.

THEO

No. No, don't give up. Maybe the shirt's just really tired or something.

FRANK

raising his head to look at THEO

Do you think that could be it?

THEO

Could be. Or maybe we should just use a different kind of Gatorade. They sell lots of flavors.

FRANK

They do?

THEO

Sure they do. Come on. We'll go find some. And you've got to be hungry.

FRANK

I...I am kind of hungry.

THEO

Of course you are. Come on. We'll go get a falafel, and then stop at the grocery store for some more Gatorade.

FRANK

Yes. Yes indeed.

THEO

And we'll try again tomorrow.

FRANK

You don't think it's hopeless?

THEO

Of course not!

THEY begin exiting.

FRANK

Can we get some French fries too? I haven't had French fries in years.

THEO

Of course we can. Maybe even some onion rings.

FRANK

Ooooh. I love onion rings. Let me tell you about the time I...

The voices fade off as THEY have exited. The lights go down on stage everywhere except the table, where (ideally) they brighten. Slowly, one sleeve of the shirt hesitantly starts to rise on its own (either pushed using a slender stick in the sleeve by someone behind the table, or perhaps pulled by a thread from above). The sleeve then lowers itself back to the tables, and the lights go out.

END

The Nude

by W.L. Newkirk

CHARACTERS:

Claire, in her 50's

Lisa, in her 50's

Brian, in his 50's

Jeffrey, in his 50's

*THE OPENING OF A NEW SHOW AT AN ART GALLERY.
(MINIMAL SET: AN EMPTY STAGE.) THE ACTORS LOOK TOWARD THE AUDIENCE AS IF THEY ARE STUDYING PAINTINGS ON THE WALL. THERE ARE THREE PAINTING POSITIONS: DOWNSTAGE RIGHT, DOWNSTAGE CENTER, AND DOWNSTAGE LEFT. CLAIRE IS TROUBLED AND SOMEWHAT AGITATED, DOWNSTAGE CENTER, STUDYING A PAINTING. LISA ENTERS, CARRYING TWO FLUTES OF CHAMPAGNE.*

CLAIRe

(Points at the painting.) Can't we just burn it!

LISA

Claire.

CLAIRe

It's an oil painting. Oil burns, right?

LISA

I know you're upset. Lemme see if I can get 'em to take it down.

CLAIRe

Maybe. *(Beat. Gets idea.)* No one'll show.

LISA

Don't say that! That's my worst nightmare! A lifetime of painting. My first opening. And nobody shows?

CLAIRe

OK. No one I know then. Or will ever see again. In my entire life. Ever!

LISA

You need Champagne.

CLAIRe

I thought that was just for patrons with money.

LISA

No. It's part of my deal with the gallery.

CLAIRe

In that case, (*Holds up her arm.*) start an IV. I'm as nervous as a canary in a cat house.

LISA

(*Handing CLAIRE a Champagne flute.*) Claire. I need a big favor.

CLAIRe

(*Points at the painting.*) Like getting nude wasn't favor enough!?

LISA

You can keep your clothes on this time.

CLAIRe

(*Looks to the heavens.*) And the world --- rejoiced.

LISA

The art critic from the *Herald* is gonna be here and I need you to——

CLAIRe

Shoot him.

LISA

No. I want you to find out what he thinks.

CLAIRe

Find out what he thinks, then shoot him?

LISA

Look. He's a guy. He's single. He's our age——

CLAIRe

And you figure since I'll be hitting on every single guy our age anyway——

LISA

I didn't mean it like that.

BRIAN enters stage right, consults his program. CLAIRE and LISA notice him.

Oh God! People! (*LISA crosses to BRIAN.*)

CLAIRe

(*To LISA, who doesn't hear her.*) Hey. How will I recognize him?

LISA

(*To BRIAN*) Champagne?

BRIAN

Oh. Thanks.

BRIAN takes a flute of Champagne. LISA exits. BRIAN crosses to the downstage right painting. Studies his program and the painting. CLAIRE studies him for several seconds and reluctantly joins him. Pause.

CLAIRe

(Awkward) Hi.

BRIAN

Hi.

BRIAN and CLAIRE study the painting. Pause.

CLAIRe

D'you know much about painting?

BRIAN

Some. (*Pause. They study the painting.*) I was an art major.

CLAIRe

A painter?

BRIAN

I was. Actually. Once. Not anymore.

CLAIRe

D'ya miss it?

BRIAN

Oh. God. Yes.

CLAIRe

Well then, why'd you stop?

BRIAN

(Beat, slowly.) Life. Work. (Pause. Looks at painting.) No. That's a complete lie.

CLAIRe

Would you care to confess? To a complete stranger.

BRIAN

Fear. I guess.

CLAIRe

Fear? Of what?

BRIAN

I don't know. Criticism. Ridicule. Failure. Having to explain why I chose art as a career. You know. The usual suspects.

CLAIRe

It is a tough way to make a living.

BRIAN

It was easier to just get a real job. (Holds out his hand to shake hands.) Brian.

CLAIRe

(Shaking hands.) Claire. Jackson.

BRIAN moves to the painting downstage center. CLAIRE follows, obviously uneasy. The next sequence evolves slowly. BRIAN looks carefully at the painting. Then at CLAIRE. Then at the painting. Then back at CLAIRE, who crosses her arms as if to cover herself up. Very awkward pause.

BRIAN

You have a tattoo.

CLAIRe

Yeh. About that. A word of advice: If you ever go drinkin' to celebrate your divorce, don't do it within walking distance of a tattoo parlor.

BRIAN

The painting. It's just. Lovely.

CLAIRe

Well. Thank you.

BRIAN

And you. Look great.

CLAIRe

That's why they call it "art", Brian.

BRIAN

I hate to even look at myself in the mirror anymore.

CLAIRe

Isn't that just the worst?

BRIAN

I know we're gettin' older. But you (*Points at the painting.*) --- do this --- and I --- go back to my apartment and stare off into space.

CLAIRe

That's 'cause I'm livin' the American dream: a failed marriage, a daughter who thinks I'm clueless——

BRIAN

But still. But still. --- You do (*Points at the painting.*) this. You put yourself out there. You take risks. You make. Art.

CLAIRe

I pose for art.

BRIAN

It's --- inspiring.

CLAIRe

Or in --- sane.

BRIAN crosses to the downstage left painting. CLAIRE follows.

CLAIRe (CONT.)

So now you write about it?

BRIAN

Write about what?

CLAIRe

Art. For the paper.

BRIAN

I think you're mistaking me for someone else. --- I sue people.

CLAIRe

You're an attorney.

BRIAN

Yeh.

CLAIRe

D'ya like it?

BRIAN

Not really. It's a dirty business.

CLAIRe

But it pays well.

BRIAN

(Resigned) I have a nice apartment.

JEFFREY enters from stage right and studies the downstage right painting. CLAIRe and BRIAN notice him.

BRIAN (CONT.)

Looks like you're gonna get busy. Good luck with the show. Claire Jackson. --- Oh. (Points at JEFFREY.) That's the guy you're lookin' for. But. Be careful. He's a snake.

BRIAN exits. CLAIRe studies JEFFREY for several seconds, then takes a deep breath and crosses to him.

JEFFREY

(Pointing at CLAIRe'S Champagne flute.) Where'd you get that?

CLAIRe

Champagne? Want some? I know where they keep the stash.

JEFFREY

Yeh. (CLAIRe exits to get Champagne.) Champagne makes nights like this remotely bearable.

JEFFREY makes some notes in his program. JEFFREY crosses to the downstage center painting. CLAIRe returns and hands JEFFREY the Champagne. He drinks a gulp.

JEFFREY (CONT.)

(Shakes his head. Slowly, with emphasis.) Christ. Aging housewives tryin' to be artists.

CLAIRe

Sorry?

JEFFREY

Oh. It's not your fault. It's everywhere. Not just painting. But theater, writing, photography. Women turn fifty and suddenly they think they're --- artistic geniuses.

CLAIRe

But don't——

JEFFREY

It's enough to make you sick. (Pause. CLAIRe doesn't know what to say.) She probably got her exhibitionist best friend to pose for this.

CLAIRe

You don't like the model?

JEFFREY

What's to like?

CLAIRe

Well——

JEFFREY

She's ancient!

JEFFREY

I mean. Maybe thirty years ago.

CLAIRe

I bet she was a real knock-out in her 20's.

JEFFREY

But now. (*Points at the painting.*) Look.

CLAIRe

(*Looks carefully at the painting for a few seconds.*) Sorry. What is it I'm supposed to be looking for?

JEFFREY

She --- sags!

CLAIRe

Excuse me?

JEFRREY

She sags!

CLAIRe

She does NOT sag!

JEFFREY

And the painting is just. Vile.

CLAIRe

It's not that bad.

JEFFREY

Oh, please! (JEFFREY gulps down the last of the Champagne and hands CLAIRe the empty flute.) Listen. I've gotta rush through this show. It's the only way to limit the suffering.

JEFFREY moves to the next painting, studies it briefly, rolls his eyes and then exits stage left. CLAIRe looks at her painting with increasing sadness. Slowly, CLAIRe mimes looking at the back of the painting to see how it's affixed to the wall, then she starts to remove it. LISA enters.

LISA

Claire! Don't do that!

CLAIRe

(Caught and embarrassed.) Do what?

LISA

Take down the painting.

CLAIRe

I wasn't gonna take——

LISA

The gallery handles that.

CLAIRe

(Beat) Yeh. Of course. (Pause. Doesn't know what's happening.) The gallery handles what, exactly?

LISA

Taking down the painting and packing it up after the sale.

CLAIRe

The sale?

LISA

(Holding up a check.) Four thousand dollars.

CLAIRe

FOUR THOUSAND DOLLARS!

LISA

We gotta do another one.

CLAIRe

Another one what?

LISA

Painting --- just like this one.

CLAIRe

Oh. No. That's (*Points at the painting.*) the very last time I take off my clothes for anybody?

LISA

Gonna make sex a bit difficult, don't ya think?

CLAIRe

I'm becoming a nun.

LISA

No way! (Holds up the check.) You're hot!

JEFFREY enters. Crosses to CLAIRe and LISA. Speaks to CLAIRe, ignoring LISA.

JEFFREY

Hey. I'm done. Whaddaya say we go out for a drink?

CLAIRe

A drink? You and me?

JEFFREY

C'mon. There's a brew pub around the block.

CLAIRe

Sorry. I hafta hang out here 'til we close.

JEFFREY

You sure. I haven't written the review yet.

CLAIRe

'fraid so.

JEFFREY

OK. Suit yourself. (*He exits.*)

LISA

Hot!

CLAIRe

SHUT UP!

LISA

C'mon. Claire. We gotta do another one.

CLAIRe

That was him. The guy who writes for the paper.

LISA

And you didn't go with him?!

CLAIRe

God. No. I know what he wants.

LISA

Did he say anything about the show?

CLAIRe

Nothing I care to repeat.

LISA

He didn't like it?

CLAIRe

I don't think the review's gonna be all that positive. No.

LISA

(*Beat, thinks.*) It doesn't matter.

CLAIRe

(*Surprised*) It doesn't matter?

LISA

Claire. Look. All my life, I've felt like a fraud, you know. Not a real artist. But tonight, my paintings are being shown in a professional gallery and some guy just spent four grand to buy one. So, if some two-bit hack for the local paper doesn't like my work. I say: "Screw you. You may not like it. But it's still art."

CLAIRe

Lisa. You're full of crap.

LISA

I know. If he doesn't like it, I'm gonna swear and throw things. But still.... (*Lets thought die.*) I gotta get back.

LISA exits. CLAIRE turns and studies the painting of her. BRIAN quietly enters unseen upstage. A big smile comes to CLAIRE'S face. She breaks into a long, increasingly enthusiastic, victory dance. When she finally turns, she sees BRIAN and stops suddenly.

CLAIRe

(Embarrassed) Oh. Hi.

BRIAN

Hi. (*He looks at CLAIRE and smiles.*) That's my painting. How 'bout treating it with some respect?

CLAIRe

You bought this?

BRIAN

Yeh.

CLAIRe

It was four thousand dollars!

BRIAN

I know. I wrote the check.

CLAIRe

(Beat) But——

BRIAN

If that's OK with you?

CLAIRe

OK? Sure. Great. Terrific. --- But --- why?

BRIAN

I bought it --- to remind myself --- what courage looks like.

CLAIRe

What courage looks like?

BRIAN

Yes.

CLAIRe

I suppose it'd be way too much trouble for you to say something like: (*Beat. Slowly.*) "Great ass."

BRIAN

(*Laughs. Shakes his head.*) You're a surprising woman, Claire Jackson.

CLAIRe

I think I'm gonna take that as a compliment.

BRIAN

Good. 'cause I'm gonna be lookin' at you for the rest of my life. (*Starts to exit.*)

CLAIRe

Hey Counsellor! (*BRIAN turns.*) For God's sake, paint.

CURTAIN