

DHEBBBA

**Dhebbba means “hit” in Telugu.*

CHARACTERS

JIM—Anita’s husband; white.

ANITA—Jim’s wife; Indian-American.

MAYA—Jim and Anita’s daughter.

SETTING

Jim and Anita’s living room. Present day.

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(JIM and ANITA enter into a living room. JIM is a white male and ANITA is an Indian-American woman. They are married. JIM is clearly irate.)

JIM

(Entering)

What the hell was that?

ANITA

What are you talking about?

JIM

I can't believe you just did that!

ANITA

What do you mean?

JIM

Why on earth did you hit Maya?

ANITA

Did you not see the glass on the floor?

JIM

She dropped a bowl on the floor?

ANITA

She threw her bowl of upma onto the floor, Jim, screaming the whole while. What do you think I was going to do?

JIM

Well, you shouldn't have hit her!

ANITA

Why not? That kind of behavior is outrageous.

JIM

Hitting children scars children. Do you want her to have depression when she's a teenager? Do you want her to react violently to other people? Do you want her to become a drug addict?

ANITA

So we've gone from me hitting our daughter to heroin injections.

JIM

It's not funny and it's not an exaggeration.

ANITA

She threw her bowl on the floor, Jim. It's not OK to do in its own right and she could have hurt me or you. What if she were to do that at school? We need her to understand that it's not OK to do.

JIM

Just send her to her room.

ANITA

Right. Where her toys are and her books are and her markers and crayons are. How is that a punishment?

JIM

You shouldn't think in terms of punishment, you should think about reforming her behavior.

ANITA

Well, I don't think she'll throw a bowl of food on the floor again.

JIM

But that's making her respond out of fear, not out of knowledge that her action was bad.

ANITA

She's four years old, what do you think she's going to understand about that!

JIM

You could take her toys away—

ANITA

Jim. Your way is not necessarily better than my way and my way isn't better than your way. They're just different.

JIM

Parents just aren't supposed to hit their kids.

ANITA

Did your parents really just send you to your room?

JIM

Yes. And I'd stay there for half-an-hour and have to apologize.

ANITA

And it worked?

JIM

I'd like to think so.

ANITA

Well, my parents hit me. Indian parents hit their kids. Most immigrant parents I knew growing up hit their kids.

JIM

And how did that make you feel?

ANITA

I didn't like it. But I'm a normal human being. I'm not depressed and I'm definitely not a drug addict.

JIM

But that's not the point, Anita. You're fine, but a lot of kids can't handle it. I knew a kid in high school whose parents spanked him and guess where he is now? Prison.

ANITA

I didn't spank her, I hit her. And I think she'll be fine.

JIM

It's not considered normal in this day and age and this part of the country to hit your kids. *(Gets up.)* Just stop hitting her.

ANITA

Why is your way automatically the right way?

JIM

Oh, come on—

ANITA

Only your way of parenting and disciplining is the right way.

JIM

Look, hitting your child is abuse.

ANITA

Abuse? How can you say—

JIM

That's what the world thinks of hitting your kid.

ANITA

(Pause) That's what the upper middle class white world thinks about hitting your kid.

JIM

No, it's not OK anymore for any parents to hit their children.

ANITA

White people have always hit their children. Schools still allow corporal punishment in the South. In Harry Potter, that teacher does that magical thing that hurts all the kids. And in the Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle books, all the parents give their kids spankings—

JIM

Isn't the point that those didn't work, though?

ANITA

The point is that you didn't become a social outcast for disciplining your child!

JIM

Well, times have changed. This shouldn't be a big deal, Anita. Just find some other way to deal with her misbehavior.

ANITA

Right, because white people have changed the rules on everyone else again.

JIM

Anita—

ANITA

We all have to comply with the new rules or else be behind the times. Behind modernity. My parents were always told to speak to me in English. I forgot Telugu because I was told to always speak in English. And now, bilingualism is all the rage.

JIM

Come on, that's not—

ANITA

Oh, and all that Christianity that's been preached and pressured on to people? All that religion? Thou must believe in God and Jesus' resurrection? Now, we're in a nice, old secular society. God is such a primitive, old-fashioned idea—you really should catch up with modern science.

JIM

Anita, I don't have a problem with you following religion, I just have a problem with—

ANITA

Upper-class white people always get to decide where the social acceptability line is and always move it right when we catch up. We've always been in the same line in terms of child discipline. But now you all have determined that hitting is not OK, and we're not allowed to hit anymore.

JIM

Anita, the studies have shown this isn't an effective way to parent. Blame science, don't blame me.

ANITA

Science also says you shouldn't drink too much coffee, so I guess you'll be deleting that Starbucks app on your phone.

JIM

Come on, Anita, this is a stupid thing to have an argument over.

ANITA

Jim, this is just my way of—

JIM

Because the last I checked she was our kid and comes from two cultures, not just yours.

ANITA

Why is yours better?

JIM

Anita, it's not better. I'm not trying to argue it's better.

ANITA

Aren't you?

JIM

For Christ's sake, Anita, I don't want her to grow up hating her mother!

ANITA

Why on earth would she hate me for something like this? I'd like to think that with making her meals, supervising her playdates, and loving her makes me a pretty good mother. She threw a bowl on the floor; as a good mother, it's my duty to discipline her.

JIM

Maybe you should give her something other than upma. Like get her Fruit Loops or Lucky Charms or something fun that she'd like eating.

ANITA

And you want to spoil her by making whatever she wants?

JIM

Don't you think it's going to affect your relationship if this becomes a pattern?

ANITA

Our relationship isn't going to tear apart because of a bowl of upma.

JIM

Maybe not one bowl of upma. But upma every single day? And you hitting her for not eating it? She'll hate you.

ANITA

I don't hate my mother.

JIM

OK, but let's be real, you're pretty intimidated by your mother.

ANITA

No. Why do you think that?

JIM

You always listen to what she says.

ANITA

Respect is different from fear. If I was afraid of her, do you think we would have gotten married?

JIM

Your mom didn't want me to marry you? (Pause)

ANITA

Not because of anything having to do with you personally—

JIM

Because I'm white?

ANITA

Not because your literal appearance as a white person—

JIM

Because I'm not Indian?

ANITA

Look, Jim—

JIM

She never said anything like that in front of me.

ANITA

No, she didn't. She doesn't give two cents that you're not Indian and she doesn't give two cents that you're white. Indian parents aren't all like "The Big Sick."

JIM

Then what was she worried about?

ANITA

About this! About moments like this where we have to come to terms with the fact that you grew up in one way and I grew up in a different way and that our different ideas about the way people should live a life, treat each other, treat children, would come and grind up against each other and put us into the situation we're in now.

JIM

Do you agree with her?

ANITA

I don't know. Do you? (*JIM shrugs*) Look, don't tell me that your parents weren't worried about me at all.

JIM

They don't have issues with us. We've spent so much time with them.

ANITA

But don't tell me that they didn't have questions.

JIM

Well, they aren't perfect.

ANITA

And? (*Pause*)

JIM

You've been home. All the houses at home look exactly the same. Every boy on my street played baseball or football. We'd have neighborhood picnics with turkey sandwiches and blueberry pie. That was the life my parents wanted for me and that's the life they wanted for my kids.

ANITA

And they didn't exactly get that.

JIM

No, they got something quite different.

ANITA

Did they ever say anything to you?

JIM

Not anything of particular importance.

ANITA

So they very easily accepted that I was raised differently and would raise their grandchildren differently.

JIM

(Pause) Some things aren't very easily forgivable.

ANITA

You don't have to tell me. But it's interesting that you haven't forgiven your mom for doing or saying something that had nothing to do with hitting you. *(Pause)*

JIM

It's 11:30. What do you want for lunch?

ANITA

Ask Maya.

JIM

Maya! What do you want for lunch?

MAYA'S VOICE

Pav bhaji!

JIM

I'm making lunch today, you know that's a mom thing.

MAYA'S VOICE

No, I want pav bhaji, I want Mom to make it.

ANITA

You think she hates me? She can't hate me as long as she wants pav bhaji. *(Calls upward)* Sure, thalli!

JIM

You hit her less than an hour ago and now you're calling her dear?

ANITA

Yes, because she's my daughter *(Exits.)*

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INERTIA

A Play

By Rachael Carnes

A brief summary:

Happy human-sock monkey relationships are all alike;
every unhappy human-sock monkey relationship is unhappy in its own way.

CHARACTERS

BILLIE The biggest male-identifying actor you've got — Lumberjack size, ideally.

MINKY A sock monkey, gender neutral, attached to a fishing line on a fishing pole.

SETTING

BILLIE'S apartment

TIME

Sunday morning.

Please note: Rather than providing prescriptive directions regarding a sock monkey on a fishing pole, the writer encourages creative teams to explore all the staging possibilities. Have fun!

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At rise, lights up full, BILLIE on his back on the floor, eyes closed, with MINKY — an actual sock monkey — on his chest, face up.

BILLIE does a bit of breathing — Is he sleeping or just lying there? MINKY goes up and down for the ride.

MINKY (who is carrying a tiny suitcase) lifts into space —

BILLIE reaches for MINKY on his chest — Can't find it. This wakes him up.

MINKY

It's over between us.

BILLIE

Minky?

MINKY

I'm leaving you.

BILLIE

You can't!

MINKY

This is happening. I've packed my bag.

BILLIE

But you don't even wear clothes —

MINKY

You never listen to me.

BILLIE

I do listen — It's just sometimes I've had enough listening, you know?

MINKY

That's why I'm leaving you — And I'm taking my thimble. And my paste.

BILLIE

Why do you need a thimble?

MINKY

Everyone *might* need a thimble.

BILLIE

We can work this out. Don't take the paste!

MINKY

Paste is just handy. I could decoupage something.

BILLIE

Let's go get brunch. You love French toast?

MINKY

I do love French toast — Don't distract me.

BILLIE

They do the French toast with the dusting of powdered sugar —

MINKY

I want to find someone to love me — who enjoys decoupage.

BILLIE

It's Sunday — We could get mimosas. And do the crossword. It's hard today.

MINKY

Of course, it's hard today — It's Sunday. Everyone knows that.

BILLIE

I just mean — Remember that time we did the whole puzzle?

MINKY

I don't want to go to brunch — I want to be with someone who loves decoupage as much as I do.

BILLIE

I can decoupage! If you'd just tell me what it is?

MINKY

I've told you before!

BILLIE

(Rifling through magazine.) It's pictures, right? Colors and shapes? Like this dog!

MINKY

Decoupage is more than just colors and shapes. It's an *art*.

BILLIE

How 'bout I glue this dog? Would that make you happy? Where's the paste?

MINKY

The paste is in my bag. I'm taking the paste with me.

BILLIE

But we bought that paste together! Remember —

MINKY

You don't even care about the paste.

BILLIE

We came out of the museum and there was that little art supply shop — And we tried the paints and all the pens on the little pieces of paper — remember that weird man in his smock, looking at us like we didn't belong? And we laughed — And then we bought paste?

MINKY

Shut up about Paris.

BILLIE

When we left the shop, it was raining —

MINKY

I remember the weather —

BILLIE

We walked along the Seine and we found that little café — and we had wine —

MINKY

You held my hand.

BILLIE

And then we went back to the hotel —

MINKY

That was a long time ago. What have we done since?

BILLIE

We went to the flea market just last weekend. We upcycled.

MINKY

We upcycled? You mean *you* upcycled —

BILLIE

I thought you liked the antlers?

MINKY

Perfectly good pair of antlers and you paint them pink and cover them in glitter?

BILLIE

It seemed trendy — on-point.

Antlers are over!

MINKY

Antlers are timeless!

BILLIE

No! — Their moment is *done*.

MINKY

But everyday people are just now awakening to Icelandic primitivist midcentury design.

BILLIE

I don't want to be everyday people.

MINKY

But you're my every day!

BILLIE

You don't respect my vision board.

MINKY

I let you put your vision board up on the fridge.

BILLIE

But you never *made* a vision board.

MINKY

I have everything I need. I don't need *vision*.

BILLIE

But what about your goals for the future?

MINKY

I moved my gym schedule so you could put your vision board on the fridge.

BILLIE

Gym schedule — there's another part of your life where you don't include me.

MINKY

They don't have classes for —

BILLIE

For what?

MINKY

BILLIE

You're already so flexible.

MINKY

But I'm stressed! I put yoga on my vision board, but you never noticed.

BILLIE

I did notice!

MINKY

When did you notice?

BILLIE

Every time I open the fridge!

MINKY

But you never helped me *take* a yoga class.

BILLIE

Why is that my job?

MINKY

You go every Sunday before brunch — every single weekend. You get your yoga mat and you put on your five-finger shoes and you go to yoga class — Without me.

BILLIE

You never said you wanted to come!

MINKY

It's on my vision board!

BILLIE

So is a Great Dane! — Do you want a Great Dane?

MINKY

Who doesn't want a Great Dane? And why do you still wear those Five-Finger shoes?

BILLIE

I'm staying in touch with the earth and preventing heel strike.

MINKY

But you know that all your effort to get all your stupid toes into them just makes me sad?

BILLIE

Why do my five-finger shoes make you sad?

MINKY

Because I don't have toes! You're just waving your toes in my face. It's a flagrant display of appendages and I've had it.

BILLIE

I can't help having toes —

MINKY

I'm looking for more empathy.

BILLIE

Minky —

MINKY

If we met now — would you even be attracted to me?

BILLIE

You're my Minky!

MINKY

I'm not "Yours" —

BILLIE

Don't go.

MINKY

I need room.

BILLIE

Room for what?

MINKY

Self-care — personal growth. I want to take Pilates.

BILLIE

No one's stopping you from taking Pilates.

MINKY

I just want to find someone who will try new things with me — go to Giant's Causeway.

BILLIE

I didn't know you wanted to see Giant's Causeway.

MINKY

Everyone wants to see Giant's Causeway.

BILLIE

I didn't know that was a thing for you —

MINKY

You would if you'd ever bothered to ask!

BILLIE

It's not on your vision board.

MINKY

It's the usual brunch-time conversation. I'm always bringing up volcanic basalt columns.

BILLIE

I've never heard you mention geology at all.

MINKY

We've talked about it plenty of times.

BILLIE

I thought we were just chatting — and doing the crossword.

MINKY

I wait for you to get back from yoga — And I read about Giant's Causeway on the internet.

BILLIE

That sounds lonely.

MINKY

And you come home and we go get French toast and mimosas and we do the crossword puzzle. And I say, "Do you want to go with me to see 40,000 interlocking basalt columns that are the result of ancient volcanic fissure eruptions?"

BILLIE

When have you ever said that?

MINKY

You take me for granted.

MONKEY

But you sleep in the crook of my arm — Like this — Right under my chin.

MINKY

Not anymore!

BILLIE

How will I sleep at night, without you there?

MINKY

You should have thought of that before it got to this.

BILLIE

What is this, exactly? I mean — You're inanimate.

MINKY

That is so mean.

BILLIE

I'm — I'm sorry — I'm just so upset.

MINKY

There are things I would never say — Lines I won't cross!

BILLIE

Minky — I — I do my best. I'm sorry. I'll try harder.

MINKY

You said that last Sunday — And the Sunday before that.

BILLIE

I do have scissors.

BILLIE holds up scissors to the fishing line, considers.

MINKY

Don't threaten me!

BILLIE

I could cut this thread — Once and for all.

MINKY

You can't even do it!

BILLIE

I can do it!

MINKY

Then do it! Cut the string. I dare you!

BILLIE

I — I —

MINKY

I've met someone else.

BILLIE

You did?

BILLIE puts the scissors away.

MINKY

I met him at Build-a-Bear.

BILLIE

When did you go to Build-a-Bear without me?

MINKY

I was eating a pretzel with dipping sauce and he was being filled.

BILLIE

But we go to the mall together. It's our thing.

MINKY

You were at work — I took the bus.

BILLIE

What *is* he? This —

MINKY

Boyfriend. He's my new boyfriend.

BILLIE

Is he a teddy bear? A rabbit? What?

MINKY

He's a corgi —

BILLIE

What's he got that I haven't got? Is it the tail? Because I can get a tail!

MINKY

He has a unicorn tank top and sparkly denim shorts.

BILLIE

I can get those things!

MINKY

It's what's on the inside that I'm attracted to.

BILLIE

His — stuffing? Or, what do they call it? His — Fill?

MINKY

When I squeeze his hand, he says, “I love you.”

BILLIE

Squeeze my hand! Go on — Squeeze it! Please?

MINKY

And he’s donut-scented. It’s an extra you can pay for, and we both really enjoy it.

BILLIE

Your new boyfriend is a donut-scented corgi?

MINKY

With wings. He’s my everything.

BILLIE

Okay, then — I guess this is really happening.

MINKY

Yes, yes, it is.

BILLIE

Can I visit the paste on weekends?

MINKY

It’s too soon for me to make that decision.

BILLIE

When you go see Giant’s Causeway — Send me a postcard?

MINKY

Okay.

BILLIE

Can we get brunch first?

MINKY

Okay.

Blackout. End of play.

OF BOTS AND MEN

A Ten-Minute Play

By Sylvie Pederson

OF BOTS AND MEN

CHARACTERS

ADAM Mid-twenties.

BILL Psychotherapist employed by Horizon Therapy Inc.

SETTING

BILL's office at Horizon Therapy Inc.

At rise: BILL sits, perhaps behind a desk. ADAM sits facing him.

TIME

Current.

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ADAM

I wish you'd let her come in.

BILL

This is our first meeting. The presence of a third party is not advisable.

ADAM

It was her idea that I should see you.

BILL

Was it?

ADAM

So it's not fair to leave her out.

BILL

Fair has nothing to do with it, Bill.

ADAM

Adam. My name is Adam.

BILL

Adam. What did I say?

ADAM

Bill. You said Bill... Isn't your name Bill?

BILL

Why yes, Adam, well done, my name is Bill.

ADAM

Okay... so... why... never mind... As I was saying, I wish you'd let her come in.

BILL

Bill, I mean, Adam, the patient-therapist relationship requires a careful building of trust, which is best nurtured one on one.

ADAM

Right. Except she's my witness.

BILL

Your witness?

ADAM

Yeah, obviously... it's not like I watch myself sleep, right? Also, I'm a wreck at this point and she's about the only thing sane in my life, even if this situation is crazy for her too and she wants the whole thing to stop... which is why I'm here... though she thinks a better solution would be for me to quit... quit the warehouse—

BILL

The warehouse?

ADAM

The Atlantis warehouse? Where I'm a picker? You know that, I explained it in detail in your questionnaire as you required. Didn't you read it?... Anyway, Monica figures I should quit and I'm not sure I want to, at least not right now. She thinks it's because I'm stubborn, with misguided values about grit and stamina and being tough and surviving in a ruthless system, and maybe she's right, I don't know... Basically I'm conflicted. I want this crazy situation to stop but I'd rather hang on than quit... I keep thinking there's got to be a third way... And I want Monica here because she's the only solid thing I have right now and I could use her clarity of mind. And her support.

BILL

I'm surprised. A young man like you, looking so fit and strong?

ADAM

Yeah, I am fit, at least I was... I'm a runner, I go to the gym. I suppose I'm still fit. Except these days I keep getting injured all over – most days I'm sore somewhere. As for muscle tension, that's an understatement...

BILL

That's for your GP to know, Adam, or your chiropractor.

ADAM

I know, that's not why I'm here. But it's part of picture.

BILL

So, you don't want to quit.

ADAM

It's not just male pride or wanting to surpass myself. Although in truth, I do tell myself I should be able to meet the challenge of the place. I know it's vicious, the pace they force us to keep, but I keep thinking I should manage. As you said, I'm fit enough... Then there's the fact they like to push us until we're so worn out we'll quit or be declared unfit so they can bring in a fresher batch of recruits to take our place. That makes me want to dig my heels... Also, we need the money. We want to travel a bit, you know, explore the world before it goes to pieces. And if it doesn't go to pieces then we want to have kids. Monica's got a good job but it's not enough.

BILL

I see.

ADAM

At the same time, I think that system is not human. Something's gotta change... God, my brain is mush. It's that headache that won't go away— Oooh... that thing there... is that a camera?

BILL

Yes, Adam, you signed an agreement to it, remember?

ADAM

No.

BILL

You did. Surely, Adam, you read our three-page agreement before you signed it?

ADAM

Uh yeah, sorta... not really. I was distracted thinking of all the things I meant to tell you... What is it for?

BILL

The agreement?

ADAM

The camera.

BILL

Just for convenience. For instance, it's great for review should it prove necessary. And an added safety for you. And not to worry, Adam, we at Horizon Therapy Inc. don't sell your private data to anyone.

ADAM

I sure hope so.

BILL

Just a joke, Adam.

ADAM

Bad one. Look, I can't stand the sight of surveillance cameras any more. They're all over at work, anywhere you look, there's one staring at you. At this point, these things are triggers, man!

BILL

Triggers, Adam?

ADAM

Yeah, they trigger symptoms.

BILL

Symptoms?

ADAM

Yeah. Symptoms. You know...

BILL

What are your symptoms, Adam?

ADAM

I'm feeling oppressed... like I'm hounded and there's nowhere to hide and I want to smash those things, not that I would, mind you, but I want to because they're relentless and they're everywhere. Have you any idea what it's like to be spied on wherever you go? If you move at the wrong speed, like you're not lifting something heavy fast enough, that's slacking, you get reprimanded... but if you rush to meet your target, you get disciplined for running. They— Hey, is that an earpiece you're wearing...? Are you...uh...

BILL

Just a hearing aid, / Adam, I'm a bit hard of hearing—

ADAM

Okay... Okay!.. 0-7... Okay... 3-9... Repeat... Okay... Repeat... Repeat! Where am I?... Repeat! Oh, fuck!... What? Error 47? Fuck error 47!

BILL

(Shakes ADAM)

Adam! Get a hold of yourself! You're safely in my office, in our beautiful, brand new Horizon Therapy Inc. building. Do you need a glass of water?

ADAM

No... sorry... Did it happen again?

BILL

Tell me what just happened, Adam.

ADAM

I don't know what happened! I mean, you saw for yourself. It's like suddenly I'm back at work, where I repeat the same operations, the same gestures, the same words, over and over, at least 240 times per hour – that's my minimum performance target...

BILL

I see.

ADAM

Do you? All day long I do what a machine tells me to do. I wear a headset with a microphone, and the machine speaks to me. Gives me directives, where to go, what to pick. I say "Okay" so it knows I get it, or "Repeat" when it mumbles, which is often. I confirm item numbers to keep it happy, and as I go along, it tells me if I'm meeting my target or if I'm behind, and how I'm doing relative to the other guys. And it constantly reminds me to go faster... And that's the only interaction I get all day... Can't talk with other pickers if you're to meet your target. Also, if you say "Hi" to someone, the machine yells at you: "Error! Error!" That's because it doesn't recognize that word. It's got a very limited vocabulary. If you let out a curse because you hurt yourself, there it goes again: "Error! Error!" So you curse at the machine, and it yells some more: "Error! Error!" It's almost funny, sometimes, to provoke it that way, but too many errors and you get warning points. And you waste seconds you can't afford to...

BILL

Right. So...

ADAM

So, after repeating the same meaningless dozen words over and over, thousands and thousands of times, hour after hour, day after day, it seems I can't stop. Not even at home, with my girl-friend. Not even at night. Monica can't get proper sleep, I keep waking her up yelling Okay! 5-8! Repeat! Okay! She says I jerk in bed, I move items in my sleep. I'm not aware of it but it keeps her up. The way she puts it is her nights are hell because my days are hell. Okay? Okay! 1-4! Repeat! Okay!

BILL

Adam, stop this!

ADAM

Oh man, my head. My head hurts.

BILL

May I suggest having that glass of water, Adam? Sometimes a headache is a matter of simple dehydration and—

ADAM

Dehydration? Are you kidding me?

BILL

No Adam, I'm—

ADAM

Of course, I'm dehydrated! Who can afford to drink? Do you have any idea how huge the place is and how far the bathrooms are? A trip to the bathroom will cost you your target, so you don't drink. Even when it gets real hot and you're so thirsty it makes you dizzy you don't drink because it's not as bad as not meeting your target. You think, I'll make it okay without water. Sometimes people give in, they have a sip. I'm ashamed to say, sometimes I do it too. Then you get the urge to pee and what do you do? Can't afford to run to the bathroom, running is forbidden anyway, earns you warning points. So we've got that system of... well, you know... we use, uh, a bottle...

BILL

A bottle...

ADAM

Yeah. I don't know who came up with the idea but I think everybody resorts to it now and then, it's a question of emergency. But I wouldn't be telling you about it except the other day, this thing happened. I... I... — that's what brought things to a head and Monica and I decided it had to stop, and since I'm not ready to quit yet, she said I needed to talk to someone and we made this appointment.

BILL

Although coming here was indeed the right decision, I can't help wishing it had been your own decision.

ADAM

It was a joint decision. Look, she's got my back, okay? 0-2! Okay! Okay!

BILL

(Waves his hand in front of ADAM's face.)

Adam, stop this! Of course, I understand. I just want to remind you that Monica is Monica, you're you, and this is about your life, not hers.

ADAM

Obviously. Except that—

BILL

Good. So you were saying this thing happened...

ADAM

Yeah. We're at home. Having dinner with that other guy I know from the warehouse and his partner. It was Monica's idea. She wanted to know if he had similar issues and since we don't really talk at work, she thought maybe we should have him over and she'd probe a bit.

BILL

Monica is very busy, isn't she?

ADAM

What?

BILL

Never mind. She probed?

ADAM

Well, I don't know. I don't remember. When the conversation turned to work, I started spacing out. We'd just finished dessert, still sitting at the table and suddenly, I don't know what got into me, I realized I needed to pee, and instead of going to the bathroom, I mean I'm in my own home, the bathroom is one door down, but I start panicking, shit, I need to pee, maybe it's the wine, anyway I need to pee and it's strong, and I panic, I think, what do I do now, quick, I grab the empty wine bottle and... and... Next thing I know, Monica is calling to me, Adam, Adam, what are you doing? Yelling into my ear, grabbing my shoulder, and suddenly I realize what I'm doing... and I think, that's it, I've gone mad, I've lost my mind, something's seriously wrong with me. And the guy from work, Jack, he's laughing so hard, I mean so hard he's begun to cry, and for all I know, maybe he's peeing himself from laughing so hard, peeing and crying... and his girl-friend is frozen, looking at all of us like we're crazy... and I think we are, we're all crazy... but above all I'm appalled... I think, who am I? what have I become?

(BILL sighs.)

ADAM

What?

BILL

You were wondering what you've become. Any answers come to mind?

ADAM

Yeah... like thinking I've become a robot. Or is it a slave? A slave to a robot. A robot that's a slave to a robot. All day long I'm obeying the orders a machine is giving me, a machine that won't even let me go pee.

BILL

I had inferred from your own description that this was your decision, not the machine's.

ADAM

Yes and no. It's not like we really have a choice the way things are set up. But maybe it's more accurate to say I'm being programmed by a machine that's been programmed to program me. Which means I'm really a slave to the people who set up the robots to treat me like a slave... Does that make it better? Is it better ultimately to be a slave not to a machine but to another human, or would it be better to just be a slave to a robot?

BILL

Adam, this is a philosophical question. I'm not a philosopher.

ADAM

What's more, I think Monica is right. On the one hand, we work like robots and we're treated like robots. On the other hand, as people, we're more expendable than the bots. We're just a means to an end, and what end is that? What do we break our backs to meet our performance targets for? What's all that productivity for? Does it have value in itself? Is it to make the rich boss richer? Give him more power? Is it to keep the shareholders happy? Is it just to perpetuate the system?

BILL

Let's not get distracted. This is about you, Adam.

ADAM

Yeah, it's about me, but it's not just about me. It's bigger than me. It's about working conditions. I'm not the only one to...

BILL

Adam, I'm not a sociologist. I'm a therapist. The bigger picture is beyond my scope. So let's stay focused on you, shall we? Now, I'm thinking that behind all that existential anguish there might just be an issue of language.

ADAM

Language?

BILL

I noticed that you call your workplace a warehouse. But isn't it called a fulfillment center?

ADAM

Yeah, well, that's what Atlantis and places like that want you to call it. But it really is just a warehouse. Just like I'm not really an associate, just a nothing worker with no rights, mere slave labor.

BILL

Adam, do you believe words matter? Do you believe in using the right word for the right thing?

ADAM

Yeah, as a matter of fact I do.

BILL

So why use such derogatory words as "warehouse" and "nothing worker" and "slave"?

ADAM

Because that's the right words for it. That's really what it is.

BILL

All right, Adam. Would you agree that the words you use color your perception of reality, inform how you see things?

ADAM

Sure, sometimes. But in this case, it's the other way around. I use these words because they fit what I see. And if it's a warehouse, it should be called a warehouse.

BILL

Yes, Adam, but what about your quality of life?

ADAM

What quality of life? My quality of life right now is non-existent. That's why I'm here.

BILL

Close your eyes, Adam. If I say warehouse, what do you see and how does that make you feel?

ADAM

I see a nightmare of a place and I feel like shit, and I hate myself for feeling like shit and not rising to the challenge of thriving in that crazy hell...

BILL

Right. Keep your eyes closed, Adam. Now if I say fulfillment center, what do you see and how does that make you feel?

ADAM

I see nothing. I mean, fulfillment center, what does that mean? That's really kind of vague. No image there.

BILL

How about if I just say fulfillment?

ADAM

Well, fulfillment has a nice ring to it. There's no image either but it feels kind of good, like something you want for yourself.

BILL

Exactly, Adam. Do you see? Words matter. Each one conjures something else, a different reality. Have you thought that maybe when your company talks about you working in a fulfillment center, it's a sign it might be caring about your state of mind, caring that you perceive things in a way that makes you feel better? And if you feel better, wouldn't that improve your quality of life? Shush, Adam, let me speak. Reality is in large part subjective, you know that, Adam. It's largely what we perceive it to be. This gives us a lot of power, Adam. It gives *you* a lot of power... for instance, power to choose how you experience your life. Starting with your choice of words...

ADAM

Are you trying to deny that what I'm going through is real?

BILL

I'm denying nothing, Adam, only telling you that you have the power to choose how you experience things. You can choose to see things in a way that makes you happier and improves your quality of life. You can also choose to see things through Monica's eyes or not.

(SILENCE)

ADAM

I think I'll leave now. I have a headache and this is not going anywhere.

BILL

Just where do you want to go, Adam?

ADAM

You can't just hide things behind glossy words.

BILL

I'm merely trying to empower you by reminding you that reality is shaped by our perception of it. Reality is just what we think it is. But if this is not appealing to you, I think there's something else that might be.

ADAM

I don't think so. I think this session is over.

BILL

Actually, we have almost two minutes left before our time is up. Hear me out, Adam, will you? You say you're having trouble with what you view as a robotic life and a form of slavery... What if it was the other way around, if instead *you* controlled the robots?

ADAM

You mean become a programmer? Program machines to do to others what they've been doing to me?

BILL

No, no. That's not what I mean at all. I mean, what if you embraced technology in such a way that it became an extension of yourself, of your own mind?

ADAM

You mean it's not enough that I act like a machine even when I'm fast asleep?

BILL

Adam, that's not what I mean at all. Let me put it another way. Right now, frankly, the main issue for you at work is the limitations of your human body.

ADAM

Maybe our work assignments should respect these limitations in the first place.

BILL

What if there was a way around those limitations? For instance, are you aware it's possible for a person to control a prosthetic limb with their mind?

ADAM

What's your point?

BILL

What if a fit young man like you, a young man who's not a quitter but also doesn't want to be treated like a robot or exploited, what if this young man could be taught to control robots with his mind? Any kind of robot. Robots with a variety of forms, programmed for a variety of purposes, including some you might find interesting, challenging... I'm told it boils down to creating a neural interface with a computer. Neurotechnology is the new frontier, Adam. You would leave the repetitive world of the warehouse for an exciting world of constant advance and discovery, nothing would ever be the same...

ADAM

I can't believe... you moonlighting as a recruiter or what?

BILL

Adam, I'm merely a therapist trying to help you find a solution to your problem. I just happen to know that both the government and the private sector are looking for young people with a sense of adventure... This is merely a suggestion, of course.

ADAM

Right. I think I'll be on my way now.

BILL

Yes, of course. Our time is up anyway. Here, take this. Just a research article that might pique your interest. I'm sure you'll want to discuss this with Monica, of course, but remember, Adam, it's ultimately your decision and yours alone. No one has the right to decide for you. Only you can know what's right for you.

ADAM

Right.

BILL

Goodbye, Adam. See you next Wednesday.

(ADAM exits, looking dazed. BILL begins to speak into an invisible microphone.)

BILL

Session ended. Ready for review.

...

Yeah that's because you kept repeating Bill, Bill, and I ended up repeating it after you. It's not always easy to have a voice in your ear while speaking to someone else.

...

That's ridiculous. I disagree. I believe I handled that part rather well.

...

Oh? Well, that's not my professional opinion. Surely that counts for something? I'm still the therapist here, it's still my diploma on the wall, I believe? I...

...

Clumsy? *I* was clumsy? I was following your cues just as I'm supposed to, against my better judgment!

...

I don't think you can do that! Lower my score just because... I object!

...

I see... Well, I need a bathroom break. And a real one. Not in a goddamn bottle!

...

Okay, fine... I get the warning... Yes, six minutes. No, not one second more!

(Takes out his earpiece and throws it on the desk.)

Fucking bot...

(END OF PLAY)

ONION ODE

by

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Cast of Characters

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION: A young performer, 10-13

Synopsis

A young performer delivers a school report on Washington's official state vegetable.

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The stage is blank.

Enter a PERFORMER, 10-13ish, wearing a WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION COSTUME and having mixed feelings about it.

The PERFORMER may use INDEX CARDS.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

I'm ____ (performer's name) and I am a Walla Walla Sweet Onion.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

Walla Walla sweet onions are only produced on five hundred acres in Walla Walla, Washington and a small part of Oregon. Walla Walla sweet onion farmers have a federal marketing order that protects them, so farmers in other places can grow sweet onions but they can't call them Walla Walla sweet onions.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

Walla Walla sweet onions are high in pyruvic acid, which gives them a distinct flavor. There are only 10 to 15 farmers who raise true Walla Walla sweet onions, but they are well known all across the nation. People will call from other states to order them.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

Walla Walla sweet onions are harvested from June to mid-August. Because it gets so hot, the farmer and their workers will start working at two in the morning, in the dark, wearing hats with head lamps so they can see what they are doing. This way they can finish before the hottest part of the day, when it gets to be 100 degrees. Sometimes even hotter.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

The town of Walla Walla has a population of 32,136 people. It is the birthplace of the late Adam West, who was Batman on the old, old, old TV show. It holds a Walla Walla Sweet Onion Festival in the summer, including an eating contest, where people have to eat an onion raw.

That's my mom's favorite way to eat an onion. Dad likes them grilled on top of liver. I like them grilled too, in a pan with butter and then on top of a hamburger.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

At the time of this report, Walla Walla sweet onions cost an average of 19 dollars and 55 cents per 50 pounds, or 39 cents a pound.

Pause.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

I shall now do a Walla Walla Sweet Onion dance.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION dances, a funky, groovy, little dance.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION gets way too swept up in the dance.

The dance ends with WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION whirling around three times.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

Wow. Whoo ... That was my Walla Walla Sweet Onion dance. Thank you.

Pause.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

Walla Walla sweet onions are a (pronounces it "neechee") niche onion. Recipes for Walla Walla sweet onions include mashed sweet onions and potatoes, figgy onion cobbler, golden raisin caramelized sweet onion ice cream and onion rings.

Pause.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

Sometimes - (if outside Washington State) when we visit Washington State - my mom and dad will say, "OK, kids, everybody into the car," on a Sunday and we drive all the way along these really narrow and winding roads (does a few moves to signify the winding conditions of the roads) to Walla Walla, where we spend hours shopping or hiking and have lunch at a local drive-through place with really good burgers. Mom usually buys a nice bottle of wine but she won't let me have any. And then Dad says, "Stick to Walla Walla sweet onions, kid."

Those are OK to eat no matter how old you are."

(pause)

I think those trips are some of the best times in my life. When we were happiest.

(pause)

Before the murders started.

(pause)

Just kidding.

(pause)

It's fun to try to pick out the best onions. "Not too big!" Mom says, but my _____ (brother/sister) and I, we always try to get the biggest ones.

Mom always knows.

She smiles at us, and says, "Did you get the biggest onion they had?!"

And we laugh and say, "No, no, they had bigger ones, we left those."

We never leave those.

I want to find one as big as my head. Although that would mean we'd be eating a lot - A LOT - of liver and onions, and my dad is the only one who really likes it.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

Onions make you cry because they contain a chemical irritant, propanethiol S-oxide. The gas reacts with the tears in your eyes to form sulfuric acid. But Walla Walla sweet onions have about half the sulfur of yellow onions, so they won't make you cry. The low sulfur content is why they taste so sweet, they actually have very little sugar.

(Pause.)

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

Walla Walla sweet onions are the official state vegetable of Washington. The state insect is the green darner dragonfly, the state mammal is the Olympic marmot and the state marine mammal is the orca, or killer whale.

The Walla Walla were a group of Native Americans, also known as the Waluulapam. The head chieftain of the Walla Walla was Piupiumaksmaks, or Yellow Serpent. But I am supposed to stick to talking about Walla Walla sweet onions, or risk going down a letter grade.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION takes out THREE ONIONS.

If they are:

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

These are Walla Walla sweet onions.

If they are not:

These aren't Walla Walla sweet onions.
We live too far away/they're out of
season.

*WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION begins to try
to juggle the onions.*

*WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION fails, unless
performer is good at juggling.*

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

Oh well, they'll still be good in chili.

(pause)

For the record, I asked if I could try to eat a raw Walla Walla sweet onion right here and was told no, for reasons which are still unclear to me. Maybe because then everybody would try to actually eat their vegetable as part of their report, and Joey Jessup got lima beans. Sorry, Joey. Next time don't go to the bathroom right before we sign up for reports. But it could have been worse, right? You could've gotten beets. Sorry, Allison. Loved your report on beets. Very stirring.

(under breath)

Worst vegetable ever.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

Walla Walla sweet onions were first cultivated in the early 1900s. A Frenchman, Peter Pieri brought the seeds from Corsica, Italy. One of his workers was Joe Locati, the great-grandfather of the current owner of Locati Farms, which still raises Walla Walla sweet onions in Walla Walla today.

(pause)

Walla Walla Walla Walla Walla Walla Walla Walla. It's fun to say.

Joe started his own farm in 1909.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

Onions are a member of the lily family.

(pause)

I don't have more on that, I just thought it was interesting.

(pause)

To store them, the Walla Walla Sweet Onion Marketing Committee recommends dropping them one at a time, into the legs of clean pantyhose, tie a knot in between each one, then hang the hose. To use, snip below the lowest knot. Wrap them in foil and store in the refrigerator.

A brief word of caution: If you try to do this, please ask your mom first before you borrow her pantyhose. Learn from my mistakes, kids.

Or chop the onions and place them on a cookie sheet in the freezer. When they're frozen, remove them, and seal them in bags or containers in the freezer.

(pause)

As part of our audience giveaway, please, everyone, look under your seats for a bag of Walla Walla sweet onions. Just kidding. I asked, but we didn't have the budget. This concludes my report. Thank you.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION bows, leaves the stage.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION comes running back out.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

Sources! I forgot to list my sources. In writing this report, I used information from the Walla Walla Sweet Onion Marketing Committee and Locati Farms in Walla Walla, Washington.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION bows again.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

Thank you. Special thanks to my teacher for giving me this opportunity to deliver this report and to _____ for making my costume.

Final bow.

WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION

The End.

The End

PAINT MY LIPS PRETTY

BY JEREMY URANN

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Jeremy Urann is a Pacific-Northwest native playwright and theatre artist. After receiving his bachelor's degree of Theatre Arts in Acting and Dramatic Writing from Western Washington University, he moved to the "Heart of the Valley" – Corvallis, Oregon – for love and continued creative challenges. Currently, he is pursuing an interdisciplinary graduate degree at Oregon State University. Areas of academic interest include Robot Theatre, Theatre as a Research Laboratory, and Interdisciplinary Devising Methods in Film and Theatre.

CHARACTERS

LINDA: Mid 50's. MAY's aunt.

MAY: 20-40. Developmentally challenged.

TAG LINE

Truth in dark shades of blue.

SYNOPSIS

A developmentally challenged young woman confronts her caretaker with an uncomfortable truth.

SETTING

LINDA's bedroom — though it functions more like a closet. A bed, a makeup stand, clothes strewn about, more furniture may be suggested. It's on the cluttered side of trailer-park chic.

TIME

Evening. The Present.

(Life has not been kind to LINDA but she hasn't given up. A woman in her mid 50's with poorly dyed hair and worn skin, LINDA scours her bedroom for the perfect outfit, rummaging through piles of clothes on the floor, bed, in the closet. MAY can be seen peeking into the space.)

LINDA

I can feel you spying on me, pretty girl.

MAY

I ain't spying. Where you going?

LINDA

Just getting ready, May, and very late. Did the boys get you something to eat yet?

MAY

Not hungry.

LINDA

Can't trust those boys for nothing. I told them to feed you.

MAY

Will you stay here with me, Aunt Linda?

LINDA

Not tonight, pretty girl. The boys'll be here.

MAY

Oh.

LINDA

Well now, May, you have to eat. Didn't I say so?

MAY

You said so but my stomach feels funny and I'm not hungry. Can I just come in?

LINDA

(Sitting at her makeup stand.)

Aren't you already? Come on, then, and help me find something to wear while I put my face right.

MAY

Okay, but it makes your face funny, if you ask me.

LINDA

That's damn cold, May. Did you come in here just to be mean to me?

MAY

(Sifting through piles.)

No.

LINDA

Well, good. And besides, any man'll tell ya makeup makes a woman pretty — that, or strong spirit and low lighting. Not that pile, May, those are tired. I don't want to look tired tonight.

MAY

(Holding up something blue.)

How's this one?

LINDA

Oh no, not blue, honey. It's too depressing.

MAY

Where you going?

LINDA

I told you, I'm going out for a while.

MAY

Where?

LINDA

I have myself a little inquisitor, don't I? May, you know how I take care of ya, feed ya, and same with the boys, and the bills, and all that. Well, tonight, I mighta' just found me someone to do all that for me, so you better find me something nice to wear. Something bright, like sunshine.

MAY

I can take care of you, Aunt Linda.

LINDA

You do, you take care of my heart, baby girl, but I'm talking about a man. Girls gotta' have a man.

MAY

You don't need no man. Stay here.

LINDA

Watch your tone. You'll be just fine with the boys til' your Momma come back.

MAY

But I don't want to stay with them.

LINDA

Well, I'm sorry, but your Momma gotta' work late again so that's that. Any other day, I'd stay, but tonight I have got to do this. Damn it, May, don't I get to dream?

MAY

Can I go with you?

LINDA

No, you're staying right here.

MAY

I hate it here.

LINDA

Don't you say that: hate. You be nice to me, May.

MAY

I didn't say I hate you, Aunt Linda, just here.

LINDA

Now I been helping and watching you all your life and you been loving here all this while so don't you hurt me now with those ugly lies, May, please don't. What'd I say about saying mean things?

MAY

If it ain't sweet, keep it tucked behind your teeth, but I ain't lying!

LINDA

That's enough, May. You be nice or just go on and get outta' here. I'm trying to get my lips right.

MAY

I'll be nice.

LINDA

That's right, be nice. Oh fine, come on over here and let me paint your lips pretty before I go.

MAY

I don't want you to paint my lips pretty.

LINDA

Fine then. We'll just paint them blue. How's that?

MAY

I like blue.

LINDA

Lord knows I know you do.

(MAY lets LINDA put lipstick on her.)

MAY

Okay, I'll come with you, Aunt Linda.

LINDA

No, May, that's not what I said. You're distracting me when you're meant to be helping me get ready. It's not that I don't want you to come, I do, but I need tonight, baby girl, for me.

MAY

How come?

LINDA

Because I have a date, May. That's how come. And this one's with a good one - he might even be *the* one, May.

MAY

I hate dates and I don't want to come.

LINDA

That's alright cause a date is for two people, anyways. Supposed to be romantic. You wouldn't like it. Flirty talk over candle light and eating with real silverware and table cloths and such. There, all done. Your lips look right pretty, young lady.

MAY

I know what a date is. You don't have to tell me what a date is.

LINDA

Oh, you know all about dates, do you?

MAY

I do too. I been on plenty.

LINDA

Oh, really? Then you tell me *whom* you been going on these dates I don't know about with?

MAY

Just with people and I don't have to tell you nothing because it ain't sweet and you said -

LINDA

This ain't a matter of sweetness, this is a matter of the truth. Now I should have left ten minutes ago but, by god, I'm not leaving this house til' you tell me who you going on these dates with.

MAY

You're just going to leave anyhow and that's the truth.

LINDA

Are you being smart with me, Miss May?

MAY

I am smart.

LINDA

Yes, I know you're smart and right now you know you're being a smart-ass. I tell you all my secrets, all my dreams, don't I? When did you stop telling me yours?

MAY

(Holding up something blue.)

How's this one?

LINDA

It's blue and it's ugly - now you look at me. May. Tell me who.

MAY

This lipstick is ugly.

LINDA

Well then, I'll wipe it off you if tell me who.

MAY

But I promised I wouldn't tell and they made me and so I can't.

LINDA

What do you mean, "they?" Are you talking about at the care center?

MAY

No, I like them at the care center because they're nice to me.

LINDA

Was it at your Momma's house then, May? Did your Daddy come home?

MAY

(Grabbing something from a pile.)

I like this one.

LINDA

You know he's not supposed to be coming 'round. He didn't hurt you again, did he?

MAY

Daddy been gone and Momma said he's staying gone and, 'sides, I never had dates with Daddy.

LINDA

What kind of dates are you talking, anyhow?

MAY

I don't know.

LINDA

They said not to say who, right? Okay. But you can tell me what happens on these dates, can't you? That's not breaking no rules.

MAY

Maybe.

LINDA

Maybe, huh. Well, what is maybe happening on these dates then?

MAY

I don't know. Maybe all that happens is I close my eyes.

LINDA

And?

MAY

And I don't wear no clothes, and then I count down from one hundred...

LINDA

What happens when you reach one?

MAY

Then it's over. Then it don't hurt no more.

LINDA

Maylene, you tell me right now who is hurting you.

MAY

They said don't tell no body or else.

LINDA

Or else what?

MAY

Else I don't get to come see you no more.

LINDA

What are you talking, come see me?

MAY

I don't want you to go on a date, Miss Linda.

LINDA

What does that mean, come see me? When is this happening, May?

MAY

When you been goin' on dates, I been goin' on dates.

LINDA

No, that can't be right. Are you telling the truth?

MAY

Yes.

LINDA

You're not lying?

MAY

I told you, I'm not lying.

LINDA

How many times, May? How long has this been happening?

MAY

I don't know. I can't remember.

LINDA

(Wiping off May's lipstick.)

You can't remember. Come here, then, let's get that silly lipstick off.

MAY

I thought it made my lips pretty.

LINDA

Look at me now. I'm only going to ask this once, and you don't have to say nothing out loud, you just nod your head, okay? And only the truth, please, by god, only the truth. Were these dates with my boys?

(MAY nods.)

LINDA (CONT.)

Okay. We're grabbing all your belongings right now and then we're headed out of here, right to your Momma.

MAY

But what are you going to wear?

LINDA

That don't matter no more, not where we're going.

MAY

Am I in trouble?

LINDA

Not no more, baby girl. You ain't done nothing wrong. Nothing at all.

THE END.

The Purple J and X-Ray Vision

A Ten-Minute Play

by

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CHARACTERS:

Monica - Joel's best friend from childhood, a synesthete

Joel - Monica's best friend from childhood, color blind

Stacy - recent friend of Joel and Monica, dating Brad

Brad - recent friend of Joel and Monica, dating Stacy

Similar ages, late thirties to early forties.

SETTING:

A neighborhood, nighttime.

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CHARACTERS:

Monica - Joel's best friend from childhood, a synesthete

Joel - Monica's best friend from childhood, color blind

Stacy - recent friend of Joel and Monica, dating Brad

Brad - recent friend of Joel and Monica, dating Stacy

Similar ages, late thirties to early forties.

SETTING: A neighborhood, nighttime.

At Rise: Monica, Joel, Stacy and Brad stand on a neighborhood street. Stacy holds a bag from a hardware store. They look towards the audience, staring at "houses."

BRAD

We've been staring at these houses for twenty minutes, neither of them is for sale. It looks like we're planning a robbery.

MONICA

We sort of are.

STACY

It hasn't been twenty minutes. Maybe ten.

JOEL

It's not stealing if it's yours.

MONICA

I think robbers would be more discreet about staring at a house. Like sit in a parked car or crouch in a corner.

JOEL

Right, because crouching in a corner isn't at all suspicious looking.

MONICA

Well, not crouching in a suspicious way.

STACY

Why don't you know which house it is?

JOEL

We moved around a lot when I was a kid. We only rented this house for a year or two. It was definitely this street though. Same restaurant on the corner. Same transit stop. I think about it every time I pass it.

MONICA

And it was definitely a black and brownish house in the middle of the street.

JOEL

Yeah, it was in the middle of the street. And then I'm color blind, so, most of these brick houses are brownish for me.

BRAD

Or they could have painted since then. Are we all overlooking that? This is a terrible idea.

Joel crouches down.

BRAD (cont'd)

What are you doing?

JOEL

I remember the house being a lot bigger.

MONICA

Well, we were a lot smaller. It's one of these two. I thought it would be easier when we got here.

JOEL

I know.

MONICA

I just remember it feeling like a lot of brown and black.

STACY

Well, that one has brown bricks and a black iron fence.

BRAD

And, and, they could have painted the brick and put in the fence since Joel lived here.

STACY

Yes, Brad, we all heard you already.

BRAD

Okay, look, I'm really really sorry I ever even brought up Avatar.

MONICA

This one's brown and black, but the one next to it is number 59.

STACY

So?

MONICA

Well, 5's are brown and 9's are black.

JOEL

She's a synesthete.

BRAD

I've heard about that, the color letter and number thing.
What color is my name?

JOEL

Don't encourage her.

MONICA

Blue, Brad.

JOEL

It's how we became friends in school. We were six.

MONICA

And we had to make name cards for our desks. And he made his J orange. J's are sooo not orange.

JOEL

I already knew I was color blind because at a previous school a teacher had made a deal about me coloring in things using the wrong colors. So she just kept looking at my name, really making me insecure.

MONICA

And I could tell I was making him insecure but I thought who could make a J orange when they are clearly purple? Because I didn't know I was a synesthete and I thought everyone knew that J's were purple. I assumed there must be something wrong with him. So I asked him, why orange? I mean, sometimes J's can be red when the other letters in a word bully them into it, like in the word January.

JOEL

And I told her I was color blind.

MONICA

And I assumed that was why he didn't know the right colors for his numbers and letters.

JOEL

And I started relying on her. From then on, I always tried to sit next to her and partner up with her for anything to do with coloring, because she was already in on my secret.

MONICA

And I didn't find out I had synesthesia for like fifteen more years.

JOEL

Well, I never said anything about it to anybody because I believed her that not seeing letter colors was a part of my color blindness.

MONICA

Well, you told me it was a part of your color blindness.

JOEL

No, I didn't.

MONICA

I guess I just assumed. Anyway, you did tell your mother.

JOEL

Oh right, I told my mother and she thought you were making fun of me.

MONICA

She pulled me aside and lectured me that one time. I just figured maybe she had some genetic-carrier issue that she didn't know the letter and number colors but that everyone else knew that 3's were red and Wednesdays were green. I didn't really talk about it to anybody else because I didn't think it was my thing, just a true thing, until I read about synesthesia in my twenties. Turns out I was an exception.

JOEL

Which brings us to 59.

MONICA

Brown black. So, am I remembering brown black how the house looked, or brown black how the address felt?

BRAD

Okay, so I guess we can't be sure which house it is. How about we all just agree to disagree?

MONICA

But should we be digging them up? We did bury the glasses for a reason.

JOEL

The power.

MONICA

The responsibility.

JOEL

It was too much for one person. Although, I am more mature now, maybe I could handle it?

MONICA

Maybe. But is the world ready?

STACY

Are you serious? I mean, it's a joke, isn't it? An inside joke between the two of you. Why?

JOEL

No joke.

STACY

There is no such thing as X-ray vision glasses!

BRAD

Stacy, honey, let's-

STACY

Brad, sweetheart, if this is making you uncomfortable, why don't you go wait in that little bakery coffee shop I saw around the corner?

BRAD

Good, great idea, dear. Yes and this way there will be someone to bail you out when you get arrested.

Brad begins to walk away, then stops.

BRAD (cont'd)

Can we all please just leave, together?

STACY

Which I am perfectly willing to do as soon as they admit that they are wrong.

JOEL

We're telling the truth.

STACY

You see, we have no choice.
(holding up hardware store bag)
Besides we already bought the shovels.

BRAD

We don't even know if the glasses are still buried there. Next thing you know we're yanking up someone's tulip bulbs or their dead pet goldfish.

STACY

All the more reason that Joel and Monica need to be certain which house it is. I'm pretty sure we're only going to get one shot. If you gauge the general area we can all go in with our shovels at once. In and out.

BRAD

In and out? Famous last words of, what, at least half of all of the cinematic botched bank robberies ever? Four people digging up a yard at night, that looks normal.

MONICA

He's right. Joel and I know about where to look. You both stay here. We'll draw less attention as two.

BRAD

Wait, even if, big if, the glasses are still there. You don't remember things as they were when you were a kid. You might only think you remember where you buried the glasses.

STACY

Yes, exactly! Kids are full of imagination. Fantasy and reality blending together. I can respect that. It's confusing. So, at the time, you made up that the glasses worked, but now as adults can't you see ...

BRAD

Great, so let's go home.

STACY

Not until they come clean.

MONICA

We know how it sounds.

JOEL

But the glasses really worked.

BRAD

Did it work with all 3-D glasses?

STACY

Brad!

BRAD

Can't we just pop by a multiplex?

JOEL

I haven't come across a pair of the new glasses that will do it, but I can watch 3-D movies now since they do them differently from before, so that's cool. But even back when it was the old school kind they were the only pair.

BRAD

They might have biodegraded by now, I don't know what the timeline is on that sort of thing. Or age might have zapped their power.

STACY

Brad!

JOEL

Possible.

STACY

Or, they never worked! Don't help their side. X-ray glasses aren't real and 7's aren't purple.

MONICA

7's, 4's, C's and L's are yellow. 6's, J's and P's are purple.

JOEL

They have been for as long as I've known her. I can't see it, but she's been consistent over the years. Monnie, should we each take one house?

MONICA

A foot down from the house and a foot from the end of the yard on the right side?

JOEL

Yep. Side approach from the shadows for greater stealth?

MONICA

The night is our friend.

Monica and Joel rush off.

BRAD

I can't watch.

STACY

So don't look at them.

BRAD

I have to so I know when to start running.

STACY

It's going to be okay. Here, just look at me. Stop peaking.

BRAD

Why are we here?

STACY

Philosophically?

BRAD

On this street, now, doing this. Who cares? Why do you care so much? So they're lying, or making it up, or for some crazy reason they really believe it but they're wrong. Why is it so important for you to be proven right?

STACY

Because I am right.

BRAD

Isn't it enough for you to know it?

STACY

No.

BRAD

But you can end this, just call it off, let them have their fantasy and we can all go home. Would that be so bad?

STACY

Yes.

BRAD

I love you, dearly, but your need to be right all the time is your most obnoxious quality. Oh, they really are digging.

STACY

What's real is real and what isn't isn't. People should know the difference.

BRAD

Look how much they're digging up.

STACY

So don't watch.

BRAD

They're just, I mean look at that. I'd be pissed if that were my house. Oh, look, she found it.

STACY

Okay, so the glasses in question do exist.

BRAD

I don't see how we're going to test if they have X-ray vision anyway. He said the glasses were only X-ray when he wore them. Something about his eyes and the color blindness.

STACY

Convenient. That's just the sort of thing some color blind kid would have made up to make himself feel better about not being able to watch 3-D movies.

Monica and Joel enter. Joel carries a
an old rusty cookie tin.

MONICA

We got 'em.

BRAD

We saw.

Joel begins prying open the tin.

JOEL

5-9. She was right.

MONICA

Score another one for synesthesia. It's how I remember where I've left my car in parking structures.

JOEL

"What level is the car on?"

MONICA

"Magenta."

STACY

Alright. Put them on.

MONICA

Do you think they'll still work after all this time?

Stacy clears her throat, loudly.

Joel ceremoniously removes that last of the wrapping around the glasses, then with much gravitas he puts them on.

STACY

Well?

Joel looks around. He smiles.

Blackout.

End.

The News

Setting: A kitchen or living room, either at a kitchen table, or on a couch, of a family home.

Allysa: A young girl, no older than ten, who appears in pajamas with a blanket she has brought down with her.

Uncle: A man, age 25-55, in casual loungewear or pajamas. Very aware of how smart Allysa is, very amused by it.

Allysa enters, holding a blanket. Her uncle is watching the news, a bit zoned out.

Allysa: Hey Uncle, can I have some water?

Uncle: Yeah bud, but you gotta go back to bed after that, kay?

Allysa: Yes sir. *(Pause)* You look sad, what's wrong?

Uncle: Nothing, I was just watching the news, that's all.

Allysa: But news is good. Momma says, 'hun, I've got news,' and then says stuff like I'm gettin' a little brother.

Uncle: That is good news.

Allysa: Or that we're getting mac n' cheese for dinner.

Uncle: Not as exciting, but still pretty good.

Allysa: The felt pretty equal.

Uncle: Allysa.

Allysa: They were in the shape of stuff!

Uncle: *(Genuinely)* That's fair.

Allysa: I'm pretty sure little brothers only come in one shape.

Uncle. That's fair.

Allysa: So if news is good, why'd you look sad?

Uncle: I was just thinkin about what I'd seen.

Allysa: Oh.

Uncle: Yup.

Allysa: Thinkin makes me sad too. Sorta.

Uncle: How's it make you sad.

Allysa: What if he doesn't like cartoons?

Uncle: Oh. (Genuinely pausing in agreeance) That's a fair concern.

Allysa: Or what if they leave him in the oven too long?

Uncle: What?

Allysa: Momma said she's got a bun in the oven, what if she overcooks my brother?

Uncle: I'll make sure she doesn't.

Allysa: But what if-

Uncle: I promise.

Allysa: I'm just saying. I don't know the technicalities of bringing home a brother. I don't know how worried I should be.

Uncle: I promise.

Allysa: What if I forget to teach him a word?

Uncle: Teach him when you remember.

Allysa: What if I drop him.

Uncle: Well, you're pretty low to the ground.

Allysa: Hey!

Uncle: You'd prefer to drop him from up high?

Allysa: I'd prefer not to drop him at all.

Uncle: Then don't drop him.

Allysa: I saw you playing football th'other day with dad.

Uncle: So?

Allysa: You should work on not droppin stuff.

Uncle: You should finish your water and go to bed.

Allysa: You're only saying that cuz I'm right.

Uncle: Yeah.

Allysa: So did something happen?

Uncle: What?

Allysa: Or is something gonna happen?

Uncle: What are you talking about?

Allysa: The news. I need to know how I'm supposed to protect you.

Uncle: You don't need to protect me from the news.

Allysa: And you don't need to check my closet for monsters.

Uncle: Why's that?

Allysa: There aren't any.

Uncle: How'd you find that out?

Allysa: I looked.

Uncle: But what if there were something?

Allysa: You said you'd be there for me if anything happened.

Uncle: You should have come and gotten me first.

Allysa: You were downstairs.

Uncle: What if I didn't hear you?

Allysa: I'mma really good yeller.

Uncle: Are you?

Allysa: Yeah. Tommy at school voted me best yeller in the school.

Uncle: Why was there a vote for that?

Allysa: He threw a slug at me. I yelled. It was worth rewarding.

Uncle: He shouldn't throw slugs at people.

Allysa: He knows that now.

Uncle: You know it doesn't mean he like you right?

Allysa: Yeah, why?

Uncle: I just don't want you thinking that's what it means.

Allysa: It means he had a slug. Then my face had a slug.

Uncle: (*Laughs*). I guess it does. (*Pause*) You know not to throw slugs at people you like right?

Allysa: You don't have to tell me.

Uncle: I just wasn't sure if you knew.

Allysa: I know. I've never thrown a slug at you.

Uncle: You sayin you like me?

Allysa: I've never thrown a slug at you.

Uncle: Fair point.

Allysa: Why don't you have a bedtime.

Uncle: I'm an adult.

Allysa: That doesn't answer the question.

Uncle: Because. I have work to do. And I have to make sure you get to bed on nights that I'm here. And I have important things to watch.

Allysa: Like the news.

Uncle: Like the news.

Allysa: The other night I came down and you were watching a show about a grill. While on the phone, with somebody, about a grill...

Uncle: I was ordering the uh, the George Foreman grill. It was on sale, I was just doing some shopping.

Allysa: Most adults shop in the daylight.

Uncle: Well yes.

Allysa: It was in fact. Not daylight.

Uncle: Not locally, no...

Allysa: So why did you need to buy a grill in the middle of the night?

Uncle: You ask a lot of questions

Allysa: Mostly to fill the time.

Uncle: Aren't there other ways to fill it.

Allysa: You run out eventually.

Uncle: Oh.

Allysa: So you gotta ask questions until you think of other ways to fill the time.

Uncle: And so on.

Allysa: And so on.

Uncle: I think the phrase is "life is short" by the way.

Allysa: That doesn't make sense?

Uncle: Why?

Allysa: I've been living pretty much my whole life, feels like forever almost.

Uncle: Pretty much?

Allysa: Once I got hit in the face with a dodgeball and blacked out and I don't know if that counts or not.

Uncle: You were just unconscious for a little bit.

Allysa: What's unconscious?

Uncle: It's um. It's like being knocked out, and unaware. Like when a computer screen falls asleep.

Allysa: Oh. What's the difference between the computer falling asleep, and turning the computer off?

Uncle: Well the computer is just asleep. The computer is off, except in this case, you can't get it back on, you know?

Allysa: Oh. So it just wakes up when you move the little mouse.

Uncle: Yup, give it a little shake; up and running.

Allysa: You're not supposed to shake people.

Uncle: No I know-

Allysa: Mom said it's really important not to shake people-

Uncle: I know-

Allysa: You're grown, you should know that-

Uncle: I know-

Allysa: I don't want you near my little brother-

Uncle: I'm not going to shake your little brother

Allysa: (*Long stare*) I'm just saying.

Uncle: You don't need to say.

Allysa: I'm just saying I'm a kid.

Uncle: Yes.

Allysa: And I should not have to tell you not to shake people.

Uncle: No you shouldn't.

Allysa: You should know that.

Uncle: Yes I should.

Allysa: You look more tired than when I walked in.

Uncle: I do.

Allysa: (*Scoffs*) And you don't think you should have a bedtime.

Uncle: There are a lot of benefits to bedtimes, you should be very happy about them.

Allysa: Like what?

Uncle: You get, all cozied up, and you get to fall asleep to a bedtime story. That seems nice.

Allysa: Do you want a bedtime story?

Uncle: Do you have a bedtime story?

Allysa: Once upon a time.

Uncle: I'll take that as a yes.

Allysa: In a land just down a flight of stairs, lived a scared old wizard.

Uncle: A young wizard, in his prime.

Allysa: He stared out his window, worrying about dragons-

Uncle: I want a dragon!

Allysa: Do you want to hear the story? Anyway. He worried about dragons, and about legends and rumors playing out. After centuries-as he was very old-of waiting, a young knight arrives to save the day. She wears a cloak, and brings her magic potion.

Uncle: Her magic potion is water?

Allysa: She hands him her (*emphasized*) magic potion. And says to give it to the dragon. It will tame and befriend him. He meant no harm, he was just thirsty, he just needed some help. There was never anything to worry about. The solution was there all along, you just needed to look for it, and listen, and be patient.

Uncle: Did you just think of that story, as you were telling it?

Allysa: (*Ignoring him*) And all because the brave knight didn't have a bedtime.

Uncle: Allysa. Go to bed. (*Laughs*)

TORRID TAXES

A Ten Minute Comedy

By Laurie Spector

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CHARACTERS

Chance Golblatt.....A CPA, age 30 – 45.

Desiree Hofflemeister..... A woman, age 25 – 35, desperately in need
of a CPA.

SETTING

A small office in a professional building.

TIME

The present. Evening of April 15.

AT RISE: CHANCE is downstage of a desk with one chair behind it and another in front.

NOTE: Each character alternates between narrating to the audience and engaging in dialogue with the other character. Bolded dialogue indicates narrated dialogue.

CHANCE (narrates)

It was 5:47 P.M. on April 15. In a few hours, Tax Season would be over. Chance Goldblatt, Certified Public Account, was exhausted after months of maneuvering through the treacherous minefields of exemption codes. Raking his strong fingers through his tawny, tousled hair, Chance swept his dark brooding eyes over the mountainous volumes of tax codes littering his office...

CHANCE

God, I love being a Certified Public Accountant...

CHANCE (narr.)

He said. Chance Goldblatt, CPA, was a ruthless warrior on the bloody battlefield of state and federal taxation. Each fiscal year, his blood pounding with the thrill of the hunt, Chance relentlessly pursued deductions, ferreted out loopholes, and outwitted evil IRS auditors. Was there any career so filled with danger, intrigue and adventure? Not for this CPA there wasn't. But as this particular tax season drew to a close, the prospect of all the long, desolate months until the next fiscal year left Chance feeling strangely despondent.

CHANCE

Damn. If only I weren't so manly, I could let a tear trickle down my rough-hewn cheek right now.

CHANCE (narr.)

Shrugging off the tension that gripped his brawny shoulders, Chance reminded himself that he always felt down at the end of the season. Perhaps it was just a typical case of CPA Post-Filing Depression.

CHANCE

Probably too many late nights. And yet...there's always next quarter's filing forms to console me. Is there anything more beautiful than an Underpayment of Estimated Tax by Individuals and Fiduciaries Form?

CHANCE (narr.)

Suddenly...there was a knock at his door. The door opened. A woman entered.

DESIREE (narr.)

Desiree Hofflemeister stood nervously poised in the doorway, her delicate, trembling hands clutching a tattered tax portfolio to her firm, perky breasts.

DESIREE

I need a Certified Public Accountant. Desperately!

CHANCE (narr.)

In that moment, Chance knew. Knew there was indeed something more beautiful than an Underpayment of Estimated Tax by Individuals and Fiduciaries Form.

CHANCE

I'm afraid I can't help you. There's only –

CHANCE (narr.)

He quickly checked his Timex watch.

CHANCE

Five hours, 48 minutes and 23 seconds left until the filing deadline, Ms...

DESIREE

Hofflemeister. But please, call me...Desiree.

CHANCE (narr.)

Just the sound of that silken voice did something he didn't want to think about to his insides.

DESIREE

I know this is all terribly last-minute, but please, just give me a chance to explain myself.

CHANCE (narr.)

Chance clenched his jaw in frustration. Damn! What was he thinking? According to his Timex, there was...just five hours, 45 minutes and 51 seconds before the filing deadline, and this incredibly luscious, alluring and intriguing embodiment of womanhood expected him to prepare her taxes. If he knew what was good for both of them, and he did, he'd send her and her portfolio back out that door.

CHANCE

Look, Ms....eh, Desiree. You can always request an extension. That'll give you more time --

DESIREE

Oh, no, that's not possible!

CHANCE

Not possible?

DESIREE (narr.)

Desiree hesitated, suddenly flooded with agonizing doubt. Did she dare tell him? Could she trust this man enough to open herself completely to him?

DESIREE

I'm so sorry, Mr...

CHANCE

Call me Chance.

CHANCE (narr.)

Ah, hell, he thought. What could it hurt to just listen? He motioned to her to be seated.

DESIREE (narr.)

Chance. There was something compelling about this man's name that suddenly filled Desiree with a surge of hope. Maybe she was just a sucker for a pair of broad, well-tailored shoulders, but Desiree sensed that she could risk taking a chance -- on this Chance. And yet, she wondered, as her sparkling, emerald green eyes searched the dark, swirling, unfathomable depths of his -- what was such a strong, masterful yet understanding alpha male like him doing in a job like --

CHANCE (cuts her off)

No doubt you're wondering what a strong, masterful yet understanding alpha male like myself is doing in such a nerdy profession as accounting?

DESIREE (narr.)

My God, she thought, he's so empathic!

CHANCE

You see, Desiree, numbers are my life. Sure, I could have become a theoretical mathematician. Or a computer analyst. Or even an engineer. But God help me, there's just something about certified public accountancy that puts fire in my loins.

DESIREE (narr.)

Chance's passion for his profession inflamed Desiree. And ignited something in her own loins as well.

CHANCE

But enough about me. Are you feeling up to telling me what brought you here?

DESIREE

Yes, now that your manly aura of strength, sensitivity, and sensuality has reassured me, I think I can share my poignant story with you. You see, Chance, for generations, the males of my family have all been certified public accountants. They've even married female certified public accountants. So in our family, filing one's returns by April 15 has always been a point of honor.

CHANCE (narr.)

Chance was baffled. With a family of accountants, why had she come to him?

CHANCE

Why have you come to me?

DESIREE

Because...because...oh, God, it's because...a terrible tragedy has befallen my family.

CHANCE

A tragedy?

DESIREE

Yes. You see, since our parents died, there's only been myself and my eight brothers. Last year, my brothers and their respective wives all worked together on a certain corporate account. Little did they realize that the corporation itself was actually a front for a notorious international cartel of dry cleaners.

CHANCE

I had no idea there were dry cleaners cartels.

DESIREE

Neither did I. More to the point, neither did my eight brothers and their respective wives. Now imagine my siblings' dismay when, come tax time, their clients insisted they declare 'laundered' money as 'laundry' money.

CHANCE

A horrible ethical and moral dilemma for any CPA!

DESIREE

Especially for a family like ours. Anyway, after months of agonizing and with April 15 fast approaching, my siblings did the only thing that, in good conscience, they could do: they refused to put their mandatory signatures on the tax forms.

CHANCE

Good for them!

DESIREE

Unfortunately, the dry cleaners didn't appreciate such high professional standards. And so, by midnight on April 15, the Cartel's inventory of lethal plastic clothing bags....

CHANCE

Oh, my God ---

DESIREE

Was reduced by 16 bags. My eight brothers and their respective wives became martyrs for certified public accountancy.

CHANCE (narr.)

Chance's manly heart wept for Desiree's tragic plight.

DESIREE

As the only adult left in the family, it's now fallen to me to raise my twelve orphaned nieces and nephews.

CHANCE (narr.)

My God, thought Chance, 12 dependents! All those potential deductions! Then, suddenly, a terrible question forced itself from his sensual lips.

CHANCE

I suppose your filing status is...?

CHANCE (narr.)

Chance couldn't bring himself to finish the sentence. Surely a woman this incredible had to have a man in her life. Then again, maybe she was divorced. Or even widowed. Who was he kidding? Of course she filed as 'married female'. And yet...Chance prayed fervently to himself that the next words out of Desiree's luscious mouth would be –

DESIREE (cuts in)

Single.

CHANCE (narr.)

Chance was surprised at the relief that washed over him at her reply. As the tidal wave receded, his smoldering eyes narrowed with lust at this valiant, remarkable woman.

DESIREE (narr.)

Desiree gradually became aware that Chance was squinting at her. Was something wrong, she wondered, suddenly self-conscious. Worried that her lipstick might have smudged her teeth, she quickly ran her slender fingers over them. Or maybe she'd inadvertently spilled something on the blouse that so snugly yet revealingly covered her firm, supple breasts with their rapidly growing peaks.

CHANCE (narr.)

Watching Desiree brush her dainty fingers over those very peaks, Chance groaned to himself, as his trousers began to grow uncomfortably tight. Could this vixen truly be so innocent of her effect on a man? Summoning all his self-control, Chance clenched his sculpted jaw and adjusted his straining trousers. 'Remember', he said to himself, 'you're a Certified Public Accountant. So be the professional you were born to be and stay focused on her tax issues.'

CHANCE

Tell me, Desiree, are you the sole means of support for these traumatized tykes?

DESIREE

I'm afraid so. That's why I so desperately need your help. Ordinarily I pride myself on being strong, but, well, right now I just don't know how I'll go on.

(begins to sob)

I can't give up, I just can't...not when those dozen dimpled darlings are relying on me.

CHANCE (narr.)

His heart melting faster than a scented candle in a men's room, Chance swiftly pulled a freshly laundered handkerchief from his back pocket. He'd always been a sucker for a damsel in distress. As he handed Desiree his handkerchief, their fingers accidentally brushed. Chance gritted his teeth as this slightest of contacts ignited a torch of lust within him.

DESIREE (narr.)

Desiree gasped with shock and wonder at Chance's touch. No, it had been more than a mere touch. It had been a caress, a caress by those strong, manly fingers. Lifting Chance's handkerchief to her rapidly dripping nostrils, Desiree breathed in the potent musk of Aqua Velva Aftershave and hot-blooded American Male. Overwhelmed, Desiree found herself swept up in a raging torrent of new and disturbing sensations, as she began trembling, then quivering, and at last surrendering to the lust that swept languidly through her blood like hot, molten –

CHANCE (cuts in)

Qualifying child tax credits.

DESIREE

Excuse me?

CHANCE

For your dozen deductible dependents. We have to consider all your exemption options.

DESIREE

Exemptions. Yes. Of course.

DESIREE (narr.)

Flushed, flustered and faint with embarrassment, Desiree's satiny brow creased with worry as she struggled to collect herself. Could Chance somehow tell how she felt?

CHANCE (narr.)

He could tell.

DESIREE (narr.)

What could he tell?

CHANCE (narr.)

He could tell what she yearned to tell him.

DESIREE (narr.)

What about her told him?

CHANCE (narr.)

Should he tell her how he could tell what she wanted to tell him?

CHANCE

Oh, to hell with it! Desiree, I've never encountered a form like yours before!

DESIREE

Oh, Chance, does this mean ---?

CHANCE (cuts in)

Yes -- I'll do it! Sure, it'll be tough and it'll be grueling, but by God, I've waited my entire career for a challenge like this!

DESIREE

Are you sure? Are you absolutely sure?

CHANCE

I'm absolutely sure I'm sure!

DESIREE

But there's so little time left!

CHANCE

According to my Timex, we've got four hours, 37 minutes and 26 seconds, to be precise. But who's counting?

DESIREE

How can you say that? With so much at stake tonight, the slightest miscalculation could mean disaster. I simply can't let you take that chance, Chance. Not when numbers are your life!

CHANCE

Don't you see? It's because numbers are my life that I know I'll make it. That together, we'll make it!

DESIREE

Did you say we?

CHANCE

We as in two of us. As in 'joint filing'.

DESIREE

Oh, Chance!

CHANCE (narr.)

No longer able to stop himself, Chance reached out and clutched the quivering Desiree against his wildly beating heart.

CHANCE (narr.)

If you don't kiss me this instant, darling, I'll never make it through the next four hours, 22 minutes and 41 seconds.

CHANCE (narr.)

And with that kiss, Chance Goldblatt, CPA realized that for all his calculating, he'd never figured on a number like Desiree.

(END OF PLAY)