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Dramatic Publishing

PLAYS IN TEN

by
DAVID S. RAINE



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PLAYS IN TEN

For as few as 4 or as many as 25 men and women

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Thanks again to Allen Oster.

End of the Tunnel

CHARACTERS:

ELIZABETH MCCREADY - mother, late 40s

NONA MCCREADY - eldest daughter, early 30s

KRIS MCCREADY - youngest daughter, late teens

(Lights up on a bare stage with a table and four chairs, and a cradle. ELIZABETH is on stage. She wipes the table with a cloth, humming to herself. She straightens unseen flowers on the table. She moves to the side to get an unseen broom, and begins to sweep the floor. She suddenly "hears" something from the cradle.)

ELIZABETH *(moving to the cradle)*. What was that? Is somebody awake? Oh, look at that face. Look at that sweet face. Did you have a good nap? *(She reaches into the cradle and picks up an unseen infant.)* Oh, you're big. Yes, you are. Mommie's going to need a fork-lift before too much longer.

NONA *(offstage)*. Mom? Are you decent?

ELIZABETH. Nona?

NONA. It's me and Kris, can we come in?

ELIZABETH. Well, certainly. Wipe your feet.

(NONA and KRIS enter.)

ELIZABETH. You're going to have to forgive the house, but somebody woke up early from his nap.

NONA. Jeremy's giving you trouble again, huh?

ELIZABETH. Oh, he's not that much trouble. Are you, my little monkey?

NONA. It's good to see you, Mom. (*NONA hugs ELIZABETH.*)

ELIZABETH. Kris, you're not going to say hello to your mother?

KRIS (*a bit sullen*). Hi, Mom.

ELIZABETH. I do wish you weren't so sulky lately, dear.

(*Pause.*) Well, come in, come in. Pull some chairs around and make yourselves comfortable. (*NONA gets a chair from the table and sits, KRIS continues to stand.*) Would anyone like some iced tea? I just brewed some. (*NONA and KRIS decline.*) All right, let me know if you change your mind. What brings you two by?

NONA. Kris and I were near the neighborhood, so I thought this might be a good time to get your story for that article.

ELIZABETH. Article?

NONA. You remember—the one for Sunday edition? We talked about it.

ELIZABETH. Oh, for heaven's sake, you were serious about that?

NONA. Mom, it's a great story. My editors got really excited about it.

ELIZABETH. I can't imagine anybody would be interested in me.

NONA. You've had a remarkable experience. There are plenty of people who would like to hear about it.

ELIZABETH. Oh...

NONA. I really want you to tell your story, Mom. Kris does, too, don't you, Kris?

KRIS. Yeah, whatever.

NONA (*to ELIZABETH*). You promised.

Samaritan

CHARACTERS:

BETSY RYDER - motorist

EVELYN PUTNAM - Samaritan

(Lights up. There are two chairs to represent a car. BETSY is in her car, trying to start it.)

BETSY. Come on, come on. Not on the freeway! *(The car refuses to start.)* Come on, you beast! *(It still refuses to start. BETSY gives up.)* That's great. That's just great. *(She pops the hood, then carefully gets out of the car, avoiding the cars speeding past on the freeway.)* This is just what I need today. *(She opens the hood and peers in.)* Nothing on fire. *(She goes back to open the glove compartment and retrieves an owner's manual. She sits in the passenger seat and begins to leaf through the manual.)* Engine...engine... engine block heater...engine compartment service points... *(She can't find anything useful, so she flips a couple of pages.)* Brakes...brake fluid...brakes foot...brakes parking...what about "break downs," you stupid piece of...

(She trails off, continuing to read. After a moment, EVELYN walks by the scene, pushing a shopping cart. She is unwashed and unkempt, and mumbles to herself. She doesn't even glance at BETSY as she goes. A pause, and EVELYN walks through again, in the other direction, taking more of an interest in the scene. A pause, then EV-

EVELYN walks slowly back into the scene, as if deciding on a course of action. BETSY hasn't noticed EVELYN yet. EVELYN makes a tentative decision, and approaches the passenger side of the car.)

EVELYN (*bending close to BETSY*). S'cuse me...(BETSY gives a startled yelp, and reflexively rolls her window up.)

BETSY (*holding her chest*). Jee-sus.

EVELYN. You havin' trouble? (*BETSY takes in the sight of EVELYN.*)

BETSY. Um...no...everything's fine...thank you.

EVELYN. You just takin' a rest?

BETSY. Yes...just taking a rest...thank you.

EVELYN. Oh. (*Pause.*) Why don't you go to a rest area?

BETSY. I...uh...it's just fine right here, thanks. I'm just going to rest for a little while, and then be on my way. Thanks for stopping. (*Pause.*)

EVELYN. You got the hood up.

BETSY. The car is resting, too, okay? Everything's fine. (*Pause.*)

EVELYN. This is a nice car.

BETSY. Thank you. (*Pause.*)

EVELYN. Don't run so good, though, huh?

BETSY. It runs just fine. Look, could you maybe just...move on?

EVELYN. Huh?

BETSY. I said, it runs fine.

EVELYN. Hard to hear you with that window up. (*BETSY looks hopelessly out at the freeway.*) You don't think I'm gonna hurt you, do you? (*BETSY continues to look the other way.*) Hey. I ain't gonna hurt you.

BETSY (*turning back to EVELYN*). I never said you would.

EVELYN. Then why you scared of me?

The Pickup

CHARACTERS:

GENEVA LISTER - bounty hunter

MARTY DIXON - Geneva's guest

CLAUDIA LISTER - Geneva's sister

(Lights up on Geneva's apartment. There is a table and chairs. In the middle of the room is MARTY, unconscious and tied to a chair. After a moment, he stirs painfully.)

MARTY. Ah, Jesus...*(The light hurts his eyes, and his head aches. Quickly he realizes his predicament.)* What th...*(He pulls at the ropes.)* Hey! What gives here? *(He looks around.)* Hello? Somebody wanna tell me what's goin' on?

(GENEVA enters from another room.)

GENEVA *(cheerfully)*. Well, hey there, sleepyhead. Finally decided to wake up?

MARTY. Who the hell are you?

GENEVA. Well, I like that! You talk a girl up, buy her a fortune in drinks, and then can't even remember who she is the next day?

MARTY. Huh? Ow...my head's killin' me.

GENEVA. I'm not surprised—you were quite the party animal last night.

MARTY. Last...Hey, listen, I'm not really sure what's goin' on here. I can't honestly say I remember what all went on

last night between us...*(He looks at the ropes.)* however weird it might have gotten, but do you think you could get these ropes off of me? I'm really stiff and cramped.

GENEVA. I'll bet. *(Pause.)*

MARTY. Seriously.

GENEVA. Don't you remember anything about last night?

MARTY. Look, are you gonna untie me or not?

GENEVA. Oh, I don't think so. Not just yet. Answer my question.

MARTY *(laughingly)*. Did Tommy put you up to this? I'll kill that guy. Okay, fun's fun, but I'd really like to be untied now. *(GENEVA exits.)* Hey. *(Pause.)* Hey! *(Pause.)* Okay, okay!

(GENEVA enters.)

MARTY. What was the question?

GENEVA. Do you remember anything at all about last night?

MARTY. Uh...sure...I remember gettin' off work and goin' to the club...I remember...havin' a lot of drinks...I remember this girl that was comin' on...hey...that was you.

GENEVA. Bingo.

MARTY. We danced some...then...we went to your place... right?

GENEVA. Which is where we are now.

MARTY. We had some more drinks...after that I'm pretty fuzzy.

GENEVA *(checking MARTY's eyes)*. That's probably from the chloral hydrate. It'll pass.

MARTY. The what?

GENEVA. Chloral hydrate. Y'know, knockout drops. I spiked your drink.

MARTY. Spiked my...? Hey, what is this?! *(He winces.)* Ow! Jeez. Man, that stuff gives you a helluva headache, too.

Slightly Left of Paradise

CHARACTERS:

SABRINA COPELAND - too ignorant to know trouble

LYDIA TURNER - cynic

HELEN MORRISEY - realist

BARB BLEDSOE - easily shifting allegiances

(Lights up. SABRINA, LYDIA, and BARB are on a beach waiting for HELEN. HELEN enters.)

HELEN. Here it is. The boat is a total. Even if we could get it off the reef, the hull is Swiss cheese. The radio components are either smashed or full of sea water, and I don't think any of us knows much about electronics anyway. We've got no flotation devices, which was stupid, and only a day's worth of food and fresh water, which was stupider. There doesn't seem to be anybody living on this island, and we only know approximately where we are on the map—though it's for sure that we're too far from the mainland to swim home. *(Pause.)* Oh, yeah, and it's gonna be dark soon. *(Pause.)*

SABRINA *(cheerful)*. So what's the good news?

LYDIA *(incredulous)*. The good news? The good news is that there's no more bad news, you pinhead.

HELEN. Easy, Lydia, Sabrina's just trying to keep up our morale.

LYDIA. Sabrina's the reason we're on a beach instead of a boat, Helen.

BARB (to SABRINA). You *did* say you could sail.

SABRINA. I sail great!

LYDIA. You put us on the reef.

SABRINA. Oh, well, you're talkin' navigation now, see?

HELEN. Since we don't have a whole lot of daylight left, I suggest we try to gather up some of this driftwood.

LYDIA. Gonna make a cabin?

HELEN. I thought we'd start with a fire. (*Everyone starts to forage around for wood.*)

SABRINA. Okay, okay. So maybe I was a teeny bit too close to the reef, but that's where the prettiest fish were.

HELEN. The sharpest rocks, too, Bree.

BARB. How long do you figure we'll be out here?

HELEN. Probably not too long. The Coast Guard keeps an eye out for vessels that don't report back according to their boating plan.

BARB. Boating plan?

HELEN. Yeah. The pilot of the boat always files...(*HELEN looks over at SABRINA, who shrugs her shoulders.*) You'll get a good tan while you're here, Barb.

BARB. Well, I guess this is kind of exciting. Like an adventure.

LYDIA. No, trying lamb fries is like an adventure. This is more like being stuck on an island 'til we die of dehydration.

SABRINA. That's not going to happen, girlfriend.

LYDIA. Call me girlfriend one more time on this cruise from hell, and you'll have an adventure of your own, Copeland.

BARB. You know something we don't, Bree?

SABRINA. Let's just say that out of the four of us, I am probably the best suited to deal with this particular crisis.

LYDIA. Best suited to *cause* this particular crisis.

HELEN. What've you got?

976-Lust

CHARACTERS:

ANN STOKELY

BRIAN BLEVINS

(Lights up. Ann's apartment is represented R, Brian's apartment is represented L. Each apartment has a phone with a reasonably long extension, table, chairs and windows that face the other apartment. ANN and BRIAN are moving anxiously about their apartments. Finally, BRIAN picks up the phone and dials from a number he has written down. ANN's phone rings, startling her. She seems to debate over answering. Finally, she picks up a card and answers the phone.)

ANN *(reading the card nervously)*. You have reached 976-LUST, our operator is standing by to serve you. Please state your credit card number now.

BRIAN *(nervously)*. Oh. Um...hang on a second...*(He searches for his wallet.)*...I don't exactly have my...my credit card handy...the...the time hasn't started yet, has it? *(Pause.)* Hello? *(Pause.)* Are you there?

ANN. I'm not supposed to talk to you until I've got a credit card number.

BRIAN. Yeah, okay, that's fine...but I'm having a little trouble finding...I mean, I'm not being charged yet, am I? Can't you just tell me that?

ANN. I'm really not supposed to...

BRIAN (*finding his wallet*). Here it is! Here it is! (*He finds his credit card.*) Okay. It's...are you ready?

ANN. Yes.

BRIAN. It's a Discover card, number...

ANN. Um...we don't take Discover.

BRIAN. You don't?

ANN. No.

BRIAN (*looking for another one*). Man, nobody takes that card. Uh...Master Card?

ANN. Okay.

BRIAN. The number is 1440...7287...9903...5323...0997. (*Pause.*) Is that okay?

ANN. Well...it's too many numbers.

BRIAN. What?

ANN. It's too many numbers.

BRIAN (*looking at his card*). Oh! Sorry. Forget those last four. That's the expiration.

ANN. That's okay, I need that anyway. One moment, please, while I verify the card. (*She looks through her booklet of numbers.*)

BRIAN. I don't use credit cards too often. (*Pause.*) I like cash and checks. (*Pause.*) Don't you?

ANN (*still looking*). I'm not supposed to talk to you 'til I verify the card.

BRIAN. Okay. (*Pause.*) Lot of rules. (*Pause.*) 'Course, where would society be without...(ANN has verified the credit card.)

ANN (*interrupting and reading from the card*). Welcome to 976-LUST. Your credit card has been approved and will be billed ninety-five cents for the first minute, and two dollars for each additional minute. If you don't wish to continue, hang up now, as billing will begin three seconds after you hear the bell.

Spirited Behavior

CHARACTERS:

MELINDA - a ghost waiting to be renewed

NADINE - a ghost who just got here

AGNES - a renewal scout

(Lights up on a cemetery. There are headstones. NADINE rises from behind one of them.)

NADINE. Okay. What have we got now? Standing stones with writing on 'em. This is either a cemetery or...*(Pause.)* Yeah, like there's someplace else with standing stones with writing on 'em. Okay. A cemetery, then. *(She begins to walk toward another headstone.)* Questions come to mind. Like...what am I...

(MELINDA jumps up from behind her headstone with a frightening shriek. NADINE screams and tries to run the other way. She gets a little way from her headstone and is brought up short, falling to the ground.)

NADINE. OW! *(MELINDA laughs hysterically.)* What's the matter with you!?

MELINDA *(still laughing)*. I'm dead...oh, oh, that was so funny...

NADINE. You're what?

MELINDA. I'm dead. *(Pause.)* Well, what's wrong? You look like you've just seen a ghost. *(She breaks up again. NADINE picks herself up and moves toward MELINDA.)*

NADINE. What exactly do you mean by that? That you're dead, I mean.

MELINDA. I'm dead. A stiff. Worm food. A non-resident of the corporeal plane of existence. You can call me Melinda, though. *(Pause.)* You're still looking a little blank, kid. What're ya, slow or something?

NADINE. There's no such thing as ghosts.

MELINDA. I used to think that. I used to say that. But now that I am one, that statement seems a little self-defeating, y'know?

NADINE. If you're really a ghost, do something...ghostly.

MELINDA. Uh huh. You mean like rattle a chain, or remove my head, or something like that? What is this, "Star Search"?

NADINE. Well, I thought that...

MELINDA. Aren't you more interested in why you can see and hear me? Or how you got here? Or why you had your little short leash experience over there?

NADINE. Um...

MELINDA *(motioning her over to NADINE's headstone).* C'mere. Lemme show you something. *(NADINE approaches and MELINDA indicates the writing on the headstone. NADINE reads, then looks at MELINDA.)*

NADINE. Oh, well, that's plainly stupid.

MELINDA. Yeah, I thought "she now frolics with the cherubim" was laying it on a little thick myself.

NADINE. No, I don't mean that, I mean...well, that's my name there...Nadine Mitchell...the whole idea that I'm... *(Pause.)*

Lessons in Fear

CHARACTERS:

LEON

HORACE BOGEYMAN

LILLIAN BOGEYMAN

(Lights up dimly. There is a bed, a chair and two doors—one leading to a closet. HORACE is lying on the bed. We hear a noise from behind the closet door. HORACE stirs. Another noise. HORACE sits up.)

HORACE. Who's there? *(Pause.)* Is somebody there?

(The closet door is opening slowly. A figure in a cloak begins to emerge menacingly. The figure reaches out with a claw-like hand, then gives a completely ineffectual laugh that was meant to be evil and horrifying.)

LEON. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha...

HORACE *(interrupting, disgusted)*. Oh, you've got to be kidding me! Lights! *(The lights come up full. LEON, the shadowy figure, blinks and rubs his eyes—not looking very menacing at all now. HORACE rises and approaches LEON.)* What the hell was that?

LEON. That's...that's my blood-curdling...my blood-curdling laugh.

HORACE. *That* was a blood-curdling laugh?

LEON. Not enough?

HORACE. It sounded like you were out of breath.

LEON. It's pretty stuffy in that closet, Horace.

HORACE. What did you call me? (*Pause.*)

LEON. Uh...

HORACE. Nobody, and I mean *nobody* calls me by that name! Especially not some snot-nosed apprentice that I was tricked into taking on. You call me the Bogeyman or Mr. Bogeyman or sir. Call me by that name again, and I'll be looking for a new replacement. (*To himself.*) Which is what I should be doing anyhow.

LEON. I'm sorry, sir. I really am trying.

HORACE. I know you are, Leon, but we're running out of time here. I've got to be out of this office in just a few days, and you're not making a whole lot of progress toward becoming the new Bogeyman.

LEON. I guess some of the basics *are* still a little sketchy to me.

HORACE. To be completely honest with you, if the Tooth Fairy hadn't convinced me to pick up your contract...

LEON (*brightly*). How is Mavis, anyway?

HORACE. Oh, she's just swell. Seems her migraines stopped just about the time you came to work for me.

LEON. I'm glad. She's a heckuva nice gal.

HORACE. A snake oil salesman is what she is.

LEON. Taught me a lot about the Tooth Fairy trade, too. Gee, it's a shame that I had to...

HORACE. Like I said, Leon, we're a little short on time. Since you're my head...responsibility now, I've got to make sure you're up to speed before I can retire. Now... let's start with that blood-curdling laugh of yours. What did I tell you about the qualities of a really effective Bogeyman-type laugh?

LEON. It should...inspire terror...