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UNBEATABLE HAROLD

A Comedy
By
Randy Noojin



The Dramatic Publishing Company

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(UNBEATABLE HAROLD)

ISBN: 978-158342-520-6

for Gus

Unbeatable Harold was first produced by Shorter College in Rome, Georgia in February 1986. It was directed by Kenny C. Gannon; assistant directed by Lisa Cooke; stage managed by Elizabeth Smith. The cast was as follows:

Wanda
Harold

Dorothy Bishop
Sidney Smith

The play was subsequently produced at The Raft Theatre in New York City in November 1988. It was directed by the author; produced by Gregory Reardon; production design by Stephen Godfrey-Jones. The cast was as follows:

Wanda
Harold

Sue Judin
Marc Geller

Most recently the play was produced at The Cubiculo in New York City in December 1988 by Love Creek Productions and was directed by Giselle Minoli. The cast was as follows:

Wanda
Harold

Susan Boehm
Gordon Michaels

Unbeatable Harold was commissioned by The Actors Theatre of Louisville.

UNBEATABLE HAROLD

**A Play in One Act
For One Man and One Woman**

CHARACTERS

WANDA

HAROLD

TIME: The Present

PLACE: Over at Harold's

UNBEATABLE HAROLD

SETTING: *A couch. A chair. A bar. A coffee table in front of couch. A window. A door leading out. An exit leading into the rest of the basement apartment.*

SCENE: *Music plays from tape player as lights bump up on WANDA sitting with her coat on playing with a Slinky. She seems deep in thought. She gets her purse, goes to door, stops. She puts back her purse and stands there in frustration. HAROLD, who has been singing from off, calls to her.*

HAROLD (off). Don't start dancin without me!

(WANDA gets paper napkin, finds pen, writes a note and props it up against a drugstore bag on bar. She gets her purse, goes to door, stops, beat, puts back her purse, takes off her coat and starts for the note as HAROLD enters dancing. He sweeps her into a dance, spins her out. She reaches for the note, but he spins her back into him and as the song ends he dips her and turns off the tape player.)

HAROLD. Bring back some memories? Well. I'm ready as I'll ever be. Have a seat right over here while I do a quick warm-up. *(He has ushered her to a place to sit and is warming up his hands. Five finger exercises.)* Now

don't expect too much in the way of a plot line of this. There ain't hardly much of a plot line to speak of. Maybe I'll add one later. But, I think you're gonna love the characters. At least I hope ya love *one* of em. I know *I* love one of em. This won't take but a minute. *(He begins to clear magazines and stuff from the bar and take things to different parts of the room. WANDA sits, but stands whenever he gets near the note.)*

WANDA. Harold, there's some things I gotta talk to you about. You ain't let me git a word in edgewise this whole night.

HAROLD. I know what you're gonna say, Wanda. And I understand how ya feel, but believe me, you deserve it.

WANDA. I deserve what?

HAROLD. I know Phylis has been with the steakhouse three more months than you, but I don't recommend people for raises on that criteria alone. It's the progress I wanna reward. You might not think I see things, but I see things. More than you think. *(He picks up the note in one hand, a magazine in the other.)* With me, nothing goes unnoticed. *(He puts the napkin-note in the drugstore bag and moves bag and magazine to coffee table.)* And I seen how you handled that guy on Sunday when we ran outta mushroom sauce.

WANDA. What guy?

HAROLD. He was a number six medium, baked, no butter, and he ordered mushroom sauce but we'd jist sold the last of it?

WANDA. Oh, yeah.

HAROLD. And even though I know it was very hard for you, you went right up and told him flat out. And it meant havin' to re-ring him up and fill out a void form and everything. And when I seen that I went straight

up to Mr. Fullerton when he wasn't busy and suggested the raise and the dental coverage.

WANDA. Harold, you really shouldn't a gone to the trouble.

HAROLD. He said no to the dental. But that's real progress, Wand. I mean, just think back to your first day. *(He sits on arm of couch, laughs.)*

WANDA. God.

HAROLD. You charged that family of five lunch-time prices when it was after five o'clock and instead of jist goin up and explaining it to em—you wrote em a note on a napkin.

WANDA. It's not funny, Harold. I can't stand to disappoint people.

HAROLD. Well, you've come a long way, Wanda. And I got a feelin there's no tellin how far you'll go. You are definitely goin places, Wanda!

WANDA. In more ways than you think, Harold.

HAROLD. Now *that's* the way I like to hear ya talking. Okay, now pretend if you will that this here bar is Meyer Park. Lemme set up some trees. *(HAROLD ducks behind bar, WANDA quietly moves toward the bag but HAROLD pops up with two bottles.)* The gin bottle, let's say, is a big ole pine tree. And the rum bottle—is a tropical palm. *(He drops down behind bar again.)* And we need something for the building that the sun was comin up over. *(WANDA picks up drugstore bag, HAROLD pops up.)* Ah, good idea. *(HAROLD takes bag and places it on his "set.")* All set. Now you jist have a seat over here and git in the mood, Wanda. Time? Five months ago today. You didn't think I'd remember did ya? Place? Meyer Park. The trees, the

breeze, the birds—and the bees. All for you my wonderful Wanda.

(He disappears behind the bar. A hand puppet resembling HAROLD pops up from behind the bar.)

HAROLD PUPPET. Ohhhh boy! It's such a great world. Jist lookee at that sky! And smell them trees! Mmm Mmm! Here comes that sunshine! Wow, what clouds! I could jist look at them clouds all the livelong day. Watch em roll up the sky like credits to God's great big movie of life co-starring everybody that's born. Boy, oh, boy. It would be jist perfect if I had somebody to see this with me. Somebody special who, when we got to be old would say, "Harold? Member that time we looked at the sky and watched all them clouds roll by?" And I'd say, 'Yes. I remember that. Thanks for remindin me.' Sure wish I had somebody like— *(PUPPET sees someone coming.)* Say! Git a load a that gorgeous gal walkin this way. Boy, I bet she wouldn't talk to me, good lookin girl like that. Here she comes. She's sure worth a try.

(PUPPET resembling WANDA pops up.)

HAROLD PUPPET. Hi there.

WANDA PUPPET. Hi. *(Pause. HAROLD pops up.)*

HAROLD. Welp? What d'ya say?

WANDA. I don't know what to say, Harold.

HAROLD. You must wanna say something, Wanda.

WANDA. Uhhh—how long you been workin on that?

HAROLD. All semester. Landed me a B on my mid-term.

WANDA. It was very imaginative.

HAROLD. Did ya like it? *(Pause.)*

WANDA. I'm sure it must be good. B means good.

HAROLD. No, but did *you* like it? *(Pause.)*

WANDA. Well, I'd be pretty stupid if I didn't like something that was good, now, wouldn't I?

HAROLD. *Hot dog!* Thanks. Thanks alot. You'll never know how dangerously close I came to not even talkin to ya. *(Beat.)*

WANDA. Whew.

HAROLD. I'm workin on a whole puppet show about our lives together. The next scene'll be about how I got you the job and how well we work together. I'm gonna call it WANDA'S WONDERFUL WORLD. I was gonna call it THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF WANDA but that sounded too much like a nature show—

WANDA. Harold—

HAROLD. And then I was gonna call it WONDERFUL WANDA'S WONDERFUL WORLD, but that'd be the second time I used the word “wonderful” twiced.

WANDA. Harold—

HAROLD. So I think I'm gonna stick with WANDA'S WONDERFUL WORLD. It came to me in a dream.

WANDA. Harold, if you're not gonna git to the point, I am.

HAROLD. I'm buildin up to it. There's a design at work in all this. I jist want this to be as perfect as possible. I got it all planned out. I been thinkin about this for weeks. So, please, jist bear with me awhile. Here. *(He pulls out from under the couch a box of candy.)* Happy Anniversary.

WANDA. Ohhh, Harold. This is way too nice of ya.

HAROLD. And you don't gotta share em with me or nobody else if you don't want. Open it up. Go on. Taste one. *(She closes her eyes trying to be random and picks one. She tastes it.)*

WANDA. Mm. I got a raspberry creme on the first try.

HAROLD. Oh, really? What a coincidence. Now taste another one.

WANDA. I ain't done with this one yet. *(He eats the rest of the one she has.)*

HAROLD. Jist taste another one. *(She picks another one randomly.)*

WANDA. I got another raspberry creme.

HAROLD. That's right. And ya know why? They don't sell jist raspberry creme and I know it's your favorite cause I heard ya say it on the phone to Phylis, so I figured it out— *(Taking a piece of paper from pocket.)* —they put five raspberry cremes in every box of Deluxe Assortment which comes in twenty-five chocolates. So alls I did was get five boxes and took out the other stuff and consolidated ya a whole box of raspberry cremes. Here's the paperwork on that. *(Pause.)*

WANDA. That's—so sweet of ya, Harold.

HAROLD. Labor of love. Besides, I made myself a whole box of caramels. It's a night of magic, Wand. *(He puts his arm around her. Kisses her on the neck. She melts to him. Silence.)* Are ya in the mood? *(She seems to be in the mood, but she tears herself away.)*

WANDA. No. Harold, please, I really need to be gettin home.

HAROLD. Wanda, why?

WANDA. Well, you know. It's sorta late and I gotta be up early tomorrow.

HAROLD. What for? We're both on afternoons tomorrow.

WANDA. Well, yeah—

HAROLD. We can stay up as late as we want.

WANDA. Well, no see—

HAROLD. Are ya sleepy?

WANDA. No, I mean, yeah, but that's not—

HAROLD. Ya want a No-Doz?

WANDA. NO, I DO NOT WANT A NO-DOZ!

HAROLD. ALL RIGHT! I WAS JIST ASKIN! GOD!

(Pause.) I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Wanda.

WANDA. No.

HAROLD. I didn't mean to yell.

WANDA. No, yell! Yell! You got every right. Git mad!

HAROLD. No, no, I'm sorry. I'm jist irritable today.

WANDA. You *should* be irritated. I'm irritating.

HAROLD. No, it's jist—my hemorrhoids are flarin up again. I'll go stick in an Analcaine. *(He heads toward drugstore bag.)*

WANDA. Harold—I don't wish to be kept abreast of that, okay? Just—say excuse me please and go.

HAROLD. Sorry. I'll be right back. *(He picks up the bag with the note in it.)*

WANDA. Harold, what're you doin? *(Pause.)*

HAROLD. 'Excuse me please.' *(He starts out with bag.)*

WANDA. Wait. Harold, will ya just—come over here.

HAROLD. I'll be right out. This'll ease my mind.

WANDA. No, Harold, wait—just come over here right now.

HAROLD. What?

WANDA. Right now.

HAROLD. Oh. Ohhhhh. Are ya in the mood? *(Pause.)*

WANDA. Right. Now come over here and sit down.

(HAROLD puts bag on bar and sits next to her on couch.)

HAROLD. Heck, Wanda, when you're in the mood you come before my hemorrhoids any day. Whoops.

WANDA. You made the mood go away, Harold.

HAROLD. Oh, no!

WANDA. I wish you wouldn't talk about things like that.

HAROLD. I don't see why. It's a human thing.

WANDA. It's jist not pleasant to speak of. I don't like to picture it in my brain.

HAROLD. Really? Oh, I love to hear about stuff like that. That's why I subscribe to public television. You git to see operations and giant close-ups of animals havin babies and all different kinds a bugs all blown up to huge proportions with their shiny skin all gleamin in the light. Oh, I love stuff like that. That's why I always used to like to have Christmas at my uncle's house. Cuz he used to smoke alot and pretty soon he finally had to have a throat operation and from then on he had to talk with one a those buzzer things held to his throat. Makes him sound like this. You ever seen anybody like that?

WANDA. Yes. In high school. Some guy came to our health class that was like that.

HAROLD. Oh, my gosh. I can't believe this. Wanda, that was my uncle! My Uncle Luke used to go to schools around here and talk to the kids! I remember hearin him buzz about it! It *had* to be him. Oh, Wanda, isn't it all so amazing how we're all connected and everything in the world touches everything else in the world and it all has meaning?! Oh, man, and now—jist think! I can introduce you! After all these years, you, out of all