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PLEASE HANG UP

A One-Act Play

By

ARTHUR S. ROSENBLATT



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(PLEASE HANG UP)

ISBN 0-87129-107-X

*This play is dedicated
in loving memory
to
John Sheridan Mintun.*

PLEASE HANG UP

A One-Act Play
For One Man and Two Women, Extras

CHARACTERS

THOMAS T. TULLIS.	A young bachelor
MRS. T (ULLIS).	Tom's mother
JUDY	Tom's prospective girlfriend
ASSORTED VOICES.	Extras

TIME: The Present

PLACE: The Apartments of Tom, Mrs. T. and Judy

PLEASE HANG UP

SCENE: The stage is bare except for three playing areas: DR is “Tom’s Area;” UC is “Judy’s Area;” and DL is “Mrs. T’s Area.”

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: A telephone rings in Tom’s Area. The lights come up to reveal a red, pushbutton telephone next to an answering machine on top of a small table which also serves as a makeshift bar.

MACHINE. You have reached the telephone answering machine of Thomas T. Tullis, speaking to you on tape. I’m not here right now but if you’ll please leave your name and telephone number, I’ll get back to you as soon as possible. Thank you. (Beep tone, followed by the sound of a phone being slammed down. The lights go out in Tom’s Area.)

(The lights come up in Mrs. T.’s Area. MRS. T. has just slammed down the receiver of a conventional black telephone on top of a small table covered with a red-checked cloth.)

MRS. T. (speaking “at” the phone). Well, Mr. Fancy Pants, this is a mother speaking. A real person, with a voice. Thank you. Goodbye. (She exits and her lights go out.)

(The lights come up on Tom's Area as TOM enters. He looks at the answering machine, sees that there is a message, rewinds the tape quickly and plays the machine.)

MACHINE (after a buzzing sound). Please hang up. There appears to be a receiver off the hook. Please check your main telephone and extensions and try your call again. Thank you. This is a recording. (He stops the machine, somewhat disappointed, and pours himself a small scotch with a lot of water. He returns to the telephone and makes a call. Lights come up in Judy's Area as her phone rings. It is a pink princess telephone on a small white table next to a boudoir chair.)

MACHINE. Hi, this is Plaza seven, six, five, four, three. I really wish I were here to speak to you in person, but, oh well, I'm not. If you'd like to talk later, just leave your name and number at the sound of the beep tone and I'll get back to you as soon as I return. Remember, you just wait for that beep tone. And, hey, thanks for calling.

TOM. Well, hi, this is T.T.T. . . . or as you said, Mr. T-Cube. And you're not as sorry as I am that you're not there. But maybe next time. Okay? Catch you on the flip. Just wanted to let you know that I really enjoyed meeting you at the Watering Hole and — (The answering machine goes dead as the lights dim out on Judy's Area.) I finally got a job. (He hangs up the phone sadly and sips his drink, then dials another call. The lights come up on Mrs. T.'s Area. Her phone rings and rings but there is no answer. TOM hangs up his phone and dejectedly begins to remove his tie and shirt as he exits. The lights go down on Tom's Area.)

(MRS. T. enters her area with her head in a towel, a terry robe wrapped around her, dripping wet. She rushes to the phone, picks up the receiver, hears the dial tone and hangs up. She takes the towel off her head and wipes the floor. She looks at the phone for a moment, then dials. The lights come up on Tom's Area as his phone rings.)

MACHINE. You have reached the telephone answering machine of Thomas T. Tullis, speaking to you on tape. I'm not here right now but if you'll please leave your name and telephone number, I'll get back to you as soon as possible. Thank you. (A beep tone.)

MRS. T. So what's real soon? How soon? This is your mother. Better I should drown in the bathtub than you should stay home for five minutes. Someday you'll want something, then you'll answer the phone. Meanwhile, don't call for a half hour. I'm going to watch *Family Feud*. Goodbye, already. (She hangs up and exits. The lights on Mrs. T.'s Area go out.)

(The lights come up on Judy's Area as Judy enters, wiping crumbs from a chocolate chip cookie she is eating. She looks at her answering machine, sees a message, rewinds and presses the Play button.)

MACHINE. Well, hi, this is T.T.T. . . . or as you said, Mr. T-Cube. And you're not as sorry as I am that you're not there. But maybe next time. Okay? Catch you on the flip. Just wanted to let you know that I really enjoyed meeting you at the Watering Hole and – (There is a dial tone as the machine stops recording.) Please hang up. There appears to be a receiver off the hook . . . (Annoyed at the cutoff, JUDY stops

the machine. She picks up her phone and presses the dial buttons. Offstage, there is a distant ringing.)

RHONDA (offstage). Hello out there. You have reached Rhonda Powers, but alas, not in the flesh. If you just leave your little old name and number, I'll do what I can to make you happy as soon as I can. Go ahead, tell me everything. You have thirty seconds.

JUDY (into the phone). Rhonda, it's Judy. You can't believe what just happened. Remember that kinda funny cute guy at the Watering Hole last night? He called and left a message, but no number, darn it. And I don't know how to get in touch with him. I know he lives on Horatio Street, but I didn't get his last name when he was talking to us. Did you? Give me a call and let me know, okay? 'Bye for now. (She hangs up the phone. Judy's Area lights go out. After a sustained pause, Tom's phone begins to ring as his lights come up.)

MACHINE. You have reached the telephone answering machine of Thomas T. Tullis, speaking to you on tape. I'm not here right now, but if you'll please leave your name and telephone number, I'll get back to you as soon as possible. Thank you.

RHONDA (offstage). Hi there, you sexy thing. This is the red-headed half of the dynamic duo from last night at the Watering Hole. Just couldn't face up to another night with one of the long list of desperados from my recent past, so if you're not busy tonight, why don't you give me a call. It's Rhonda, at Murray Hill six, one, four, one, eight. What have you got to lose that isn't already gone? 'Bye-'bye. (A click, then Tom's Area lights go out as the machine goes off.)

(Judy's Area lights come up. Judy paces back and forth, eating

an apple, then goes to the phone and dials four, one, one.)

JUDY. Hello, Directory Assistance, you wouldn't have any way of finding the number of someone whose name is Thomas T. and then something or other that starts with a T, would you? On Horatio Street? (Directory Assistance obviously gives her a sharp rebuff. She looks astonished at the receiver and hangs up quickly as her area lights go out. She exits.)

(Mrs. T.'s Area lights come up as MRS. T. enters and dials fiercely. The lights come up in Tom's Area.)

MACHINE. You have reached the telephone answering machine of Thomas T. Tullis, speaking to you on tape. I'm not here right now, but if you'll please leave your name and telephone number, I'll get back to you as soon as possible. Thank you.

MRS. T. This is the voice of a person who would be richer by fifty thousand dollars if her name was Isabel Morales of Fresno, California, instead of Freida Tullis, formerly of Sheepshead Bay, now of Kips. It's also the voice of a mother who hopes she lives long enough to hear from her unemployed son to know if he got her CARE package. And a goodbye to you for now. I'm going next door to play Mah Jong. (She exits. Mrs. T.'s Area lights go out.)

(Judy's Area lights come up as JUDY walks in and looks at the machine. There are no messages. She picks up a magazine, puts it down, and dials the phone. A phone rings offstage.)

MALE VOICE (from offstage). Hello, this is the Ottoman Empire Deli. All our lines are busy right now, but if you'll hold

on, our next available operator will be with you in a moment. Thank you for calling. (Middle Eastern belly dance music plays for a few seconds, then stops.)

FEMALE VOICE (from offstage). Ottoman Empire Deli. Can I help you?

JUDY (into the phone). Yes, I'd like a small order delivered, but I don't have much cash. Will you take a credit card?

FEMALE VOICE (from offstage). Minimum charge ten dollars.

JUDY (into the phone). I just want a sliced turkey on rye bread and a diet Dr. Pepper.

FEMALE VOICE (from offstage). Wait a minute. (Offstage, an adding machine works endlessly ringing up a vast array of numbers.) Just under. We can't deliver, but we can take it over the counter here.

JUDY (into the phone). Oh, all right, thank you. (She hangs up the phone, grabs her purse, and starts to exit, then she remembers the answering machine. She pushes the record button, crosses her fingers, turns and exits. After a brief pause, her phone rings.)

MACHINE. Hi, this is Plaza seven, six, five, four, three. I really wish I were here to speak to you in person, but, oh well, I'm not. If you'd like to talk later, just leave your name and number at the sound of the beep tone and I'll get back to you as soon as I return. Remember, you just wait for that beep tone. And, hey, thanks for calling.

DAVID DONALDSON (offstage). Hello, I had hoped to catch you at home. You probably haven't given much thought to planning for the future, but that's where I can be of help. That is . . .