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Dramatic Publishing

AFTER THE BEEP

Seven short plays

by

SETH KRAMER

The following excerpt contains strong language.



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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(AFTER THE BEEP)

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ISBN 0-87129-903-8

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Thank you, Ron.
For believing.

AFTER THE BEEP

Seven Short Plays

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AFTER THE BEEP

a drama

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Turnip Theatre, New York City — February 1998

Director: Andrew Dunlop

Cast: Michele Ammon, Stephen Federbusch,
Nicole Severine

After the Beep

CHARACTERS: 1 man, 2 women
PROPERTIES: Couch, end table, answering machine.
RUNNING TIME: 10 minutes

(Lights up. SCOTT sits on the couch, LYNN stands behind him. She presses a button on the answering machine. Each time the message is played it should become more suggestive in tone. BIANCA is on stage speaking these lines. She is a presence in the room throughout the scene.)

MACHINE (*beep*). Hi. Um, this is Bianca calling for Scott. You know, it's been a while and I just wanted to say hello. Give me a call sometime when you have the chance. You have the number. OK, bye.

SCOTT. Yeah?

LYNN. That was on here when I came home.

SCOTT. So?

LYNN. So?

SCOTT. So, what?

LYNN. You want to explain.

SCOTT. What's to explain?

(LYNN presses button.)

MACHINE (*beep*). Hi, this is Bianca calling for Scott. You know, it's been a while and I just wanted to say hello. Give me a call sometime soon when you have the chance. You have my number. OK, bye.

LYNN. Why is this Bianca person calling you?

SCOTT. To say hello.

LYNN. Scott...

SCOTT. That's what she said in the message.

LYNN. Who is she?

SCOTT. She's Bianca. (*Beat.*) She's a friend.

LYNN. A friend?

SCOTT. Yep.

LYNN. All right.

SCOTT. All right. Good, great.

LYNN. Since when?

SCOTT. Since when, what?

LYNN. You and Bianca—how long have you...

SCOTT. Since always. I've known Bianca for years.

LYNN. That's funny. That's um... Then how come I've never heard about her?

SCOTT. I don't know, maybe you weren't paying enough attention.

LYNN. You never talked about her.

SCOTT. That's— What do you mean? I've talked about her.

LYNN. No, I don't think you have.

SCOTT. This is silly. You're being silly. I've talked about her.

(*LYNN presses button.*)

MACHINE (*beep*). Hi, this is Bianca. I'm calling for Scott. You know, it's been so long since we got together and I

just wanted to say ... hello. Give me a call as soon as you get a chance, you know my number. OK, bye.

SCOTT. Stop playing that.

LYNN. Tell me what's going on.

SCOTT. You're digging, again. That's what's going on.

LYNN. I just want to hear you say ...

SCOTT. You know that, right? Digging. You do this all the time.

LYNN. I'm sorry, Scott. I'm sorry.

SCOTT. OK.

LYNN. I just ...

SCOTT. What?

LYNN. This message makes me think ... *(Beat.)* You know what I'm saying. It's ... It ... *(Beat.)* Please, just tell me.

PERFECT MEETINGS

a comedy

PRODUCTION HISTORY

City Theater of Miami, Fla. — June-July 1997

Director: Ru Fynn

Cast: David Bugher, Leila Piedrafita

Perfect Meetings

CHARACTERS: 1 man, 1 woman
PROPERTIES: Garbage cans, table, chair, 2 phones,
phone book, bed, night stand.
RUNNING TIME: 18 minutes

SCENE ONE

(ALICE sits by three garbage cans. MARK walks by once, twice and finally a third time.)

MARK. Hello. *(Beat.)* Hm, odd...it looks like somebody threw out a perfectly good human being. Hello? *(Beat.)* Ah, you're a mute, I see. Well that's certainly no reason to throw a person out, is it? I mean, hell, I've got two mutes of my own and I never threw them out... As a matter of fact, I take my mutes with me wherever I go, they're here right now...only they're invisible. Say hi, guys...oh that's right, you can't, you're mute. Hey a smile, that's good. They say a smile is worth a thousand words, you know.

ALICE. That's a picture.

MARK. What?

ALICE. It's a picture that's worth a thousand words.

MARK. Really, well then a picture of a smile must be worth two thousand words! Hey, you can speak! You're

not really a mute, you've been faking this whole time. Say something else... Come on, you can do it...hello? Tell me about your childhood, I was a test-tube baby, how about you? Hello? Look, I know I heard you talk, you're not going to fool me. (*Pretending to come to a realization.*) Oh I get it, partial mute, comes and goes, huh? Do you mind if I sit down then? No, don't answer that, you're mute, I know, I understand. I'll just pull up a section of pavement and relax... Ah, much better, nothing like cement for the old butt cheeks. (*Pause, the best fake stud voice.*) Nice garbage cans, do you come here often? (*ALICE smiles.*) You do that well.

ALICE. What?

MARK. Smile. (*Beat.*) No, really you do, it lights up this whole...garbage area. I've always thought that people don't smile enough, you know what I mean? They always need some special reason, Christmas or New Year's or something. No one wants to smile anymore. It's like happiness is against the law. (*Whispering.*) "Look out, the 'smile police' are just around the corner." My mother was the worst. (*Making a face.*) She used to walk around with this look on her face... It looked like she just got done sucking a lemon... (*Annoying mom voice.*) "Mark! How many times have I told you not to..."

ALICE. Why are you doing this?

MARK. Doing what?

ALICE. Being so nice to me.

MARK (*almost ashamed*). Because I'm a recovering asshole. Yeah, I've been going to AA meetings for a while now... Assholes Anonymous, we have to be nice to people. (*She laughs.*) You laughed. Oh my God, you

laughed! You actually laughed! Well that's great... I mean that's really great, next thing you know you'll be in a good mood and then you'll be talking more, who knows... by the end of the night you might have this big grin on your face and just...

ALICE. WHY are you doing this?

MARK (*shrugs*). Why not?

ALICE. Well for one thing, I might want to be left alone.

MARK. Well, do you?

ALICE. Maybe.

MARK. But maybe not.

ALICE. What if I said I DID want to be left alone.

MARK. Then I suppose I'd leave. Do you want me to leave? Do you want to be left alone?

ALICE (*looking at MARK, long pause*). No.

MARK. All right then... good.

ALICE. Look, you don't even know who I am.

MARK. We can fix that you know, the name's Mark... and yours is ... ? (*Pause.*) Colleen... Maggie... Susannah... Helga?... ah... give me a clue, come on, be a sport... just the first letter?

ALICE. Mark...

MARK. Your name is Mark? Well that's weird? Don't you think? I mean here I am talking to you all this time and you have the exact same name as I do. Mark! Is that short for something... like Markellet or Markarina?

ALICE. A.

MARK. A? A what?... Oh I get it, that's my hint. A!... Annie? Amy? Arthea? April?... uh... Willma? No... wait, that doesn't start with an A... AAAAAA?... Angie... I'm runnin' out of A's here... AARDVARK! Close?

ALICE. It's Alice.

MARK. Right on the tip of my tongue, I mean, the next thought in my head, right there up in the brain just waiting to seep out my mouth. Alice. Wow, is this the way you get to wonderland, then? I thought I saw a rabbit running around here. (*Getting up, looking in garbage cans.*) Mister rabbit fellow, you in here? Hey, Alice, do you know who wrote those wonderland books?

ALICE. Lewis Carroll.

MARK. Do you think she did a lot of drugs before she wrote that?

ALICE (*covering her eyes*). Lewis Carroll was a man, Mark...and honestly, I have no idea.

MARK. I'll bet you he did. And I'm not talking the light recreational stuff, I'm talking MAJOR drugs. It's got to be pretty potent stuff to make you see talking rabbits or cause you to think that the Queen of Hearts wants you dead. I'll bet this Carroll guy hated his mother. Why else would he come up with all this... (*ALICE is about to cry.*) Hey, if what I'm saying is bothering you that much I'll shut up. Not another word, really. Alice?... Oh, hey, don't start... You OK?

ALICE. No.

MARK. Was it the wonderland stuff?

ALICE. No.

MARK. You want to try and talk about it?

ALICE. No.

MARK. You want a Lifesaver, I got some in my ...

ALICE. No!

MARK (*pause, softly*). Want a hug?

ALICE. But I don't even know you.

MARK. Does it matter? C'mere. (*They hold a long embrace.*)

ALICE. Thank you.

MARK. Hey, what are strangers for. (*ALICE smiles. She reaches out and brushes MARK's cheek. He reaches up, touches her hand. Fade to black.*)

NO VOICE

a drama

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Raw Space, New York City — March 1996

Director: Nejem Raheem

Cast: Avram Ludwig, Veronica Bero

No Voice

CHARACTERS: 1 man, 1 woman
PROPERTIES: Needle, cup of pills.
RUNNING TIME: 10 minutes

(The sounds of many voices whispering in black. A sliver of light comes up on NADINE who sits on the floor rocking back and forth. She smiles, listens to the whispering voice, then laughs. She is at peace. Pause. COOK enters, a small cup in his hand. Lights flash up, they are harsh and bright. COOK crosses to NADINE who scrambles away from him.)

NADINE. No. No. No. NO!

COOK. It's time, Nadine.

NADINE. Don't take.

COOK. You know the rules.

NADINE. Don't take them. *(NADINE looks around and scrambles back into a corner. COOK places the cup on the ground before her and squats.)*

COOK. Nadine? You know you have to do this. I want you to take the pills on your own. Will you do that for me? If I leave them on the floor for you?

NADINE. No.

COOK. The pills will help.

NADINE. Too quiet.

COOK. We've talked about this.

NADINE. You talked. You said. Supposed to be— Supposed to! You talked! I didn't. I listened. I was told. (*Glares.*) Just another voice.

COOK. Nadine...

NADINE. What makes you so right? How do you know? You know—Cook! Cook knows. Cook knows everything. (*Jabs head.*) The others disagree. The others don't want the pills!

COOK. The others aren't real.

NADINE. And you are?

HISTORY (And a Dash of Hollywood)
a comedy

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Riant Theatre, New York City — April 1996

Director: Michael Jaeger

Cast: Connor Trinneer, Jonathan Wade

History (And a Dash of Hollywood)

CHARACTERS: 2 men or 2 women
PROPERTIES: Desk, 2 chairs, pads and pens.
RUNNING TIME: 9 minutes

(Lights up. CAESAR walks around a large desk, HARRISON sits across from him. There are numerous pads of paper and pens.)

CAESAR. So it's a script idea?

HARRISON. Sure.

CAESAR. Some new project?

HARRISON. That's right.

CAESAR. Talk to me.

HARRISON. OK. Benjamin Franklin. He's an inventor.
He's a brilliant mind. A founding father.

CAESAR. OK.

HARRISON. We follow his life. His accomplishments.

CAESAR. He's our good guy?

HARRISON. Good guy?

CAESAR. Yeah, our hero. He does something. He fights in the revolutionary war. He saves the colony somehow?
Rides a horse through towns: "The British are coming, the British are coming!" Something, right?

HARRISON. Well...

CAESAR. Talk to me.

HARRISON. That's not exactly right.

CAESAR. No?

HARRISON. Paul Revere made that ride.

CAESAR. Oh, well, he...something, what? The battle of Bunker Hill, the Boston Tea Party? What?

HARRISON. Benjamin Franklin was an inventor.

CAESAR. An inventor?

HARRISON. Yes, an inventor...one of the times' most respected thinkers.

CAESAR. I see. And you want to...what? Make a movie about this? About him and his...thinking?

HARRISON. He had a very high IQ.

CAESAR. What's the movie? What's the story?

HARRISON. Well, I told you, Benjamin Franklin was an inventor. He was one of our founding fathers. It could be a very educational film. Put people in touch with their roots.

CAESAR. No.

HARRISON. No?

CAESAR. No. There is no such thing as an "Educational Film." Not in this day and age. Not with fifteen million-dollar budgets on the small projects. Do you want to make money? Huh? You do remember money, don't you? You want to educate, get a job at PBS. Go work for Sesame Street. Become a fucking teacher!

SPAGHETTI PROPOSAL

a comedy

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Orchard Space, Calif. — May 1997

Director: Kelly Sue DeConnick

Cast: Jeff Pucillo, Wendy Heal

Spaghetti Proposal

CHARACTERS: 1 man, 1 woman
PROPERTIES: Table, 2 chairs, bowl of spaghetti,
engagement ring.
RUNNING TIME: 10 minutes

(JEFF and WENDY sit together at an elegantly decorated table. Both are dressed to the nines. They eat from an enormous bowl of spaghetti. WENDY has a mouth full of spaghetti.)

JEFF. Marry me.

WENDY. Uhhh?

JEFF. Marry me.

WENDY. What?

JEFF. Marry me.

WENDY. Marry you?

JEFF. Marry me.

WENDY. Are you joking?

JEFF. No.

WENDY. You're not?

JEFF. No.

WENDY. Really?

JEFF. I'm being completely serious.

WENDY. You want to get married?

JEFF. Absolutely. To you.

WENDY. Wow.

JEFF. Wow?

WENDY. Yeah. Wow.

JEFF. Wow what? What does that mean? Is that a bad-type wow? Is that an, "Oh my God, how do I explain this to him and get out of this"-type wow, or is it more of a good-type, sorta-"Hurray, yes," happy-wow thingy? What? Tell me.

WENDY. I'm a little surprised.

JEFF. OK.

WENDY. A little stunned, too.

JEFF. You look a little stunned.

WENDY. I'm sure.

JEFF. Your eyes are all... all...

WENDY. What?

JEFF. Deer in headlights. Wide. Out of focus.

WENDY. It just feels so sudden.

JEFF. It's been three years.

WENDY. But, I mean, right now. Right this second. You just say the words and wham! It feels very ... (*Snaps fingers.*) Pow, you know?

JEFF. Pow. Wham. Wow. OK.

WENDY. Sudden. Spur of the moment.

JEFF. Sure, yes. I mean, no.

WENDY. No?

JEFF. No. It's not spur of the moment. Sudden, yes. Pow, yes. But I've been thinking about this for a long time. Building up the courage to do this. Sit down across from you and...

WENDY. Wait.

JEFF. What?

WENDY. Where's the ring?

JEFF. The ring?

DANCING BLIND
a drama

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Naked Angeles, New York City — March 1998

Director: Dale Hrebik

Cast: Jeff Pucillo, Antoinette Romano

Dancing Blind

CHARACTERS: 1 man, 1 woman
PROPERTIES: Chair, some photos.
RUNNING TIME: 8 minutes

(Lights up. JULIANNA sits in a chair facing out. She is blind. PATRICK slowly walks around the room.)

JULIANNA *(pause)*. Tell me something.

PATRICK. What?

JULIANNA. I don't care, anything.

PATRICK. Anything?

JULIANNA. I just like the sound of your voice.

PATRICK. You do?

JULIANNA. Yes. You have a gentle voice.

PATRICK. Wow, okay. Thanks.

JULIANNA. Tell me anything.

PATRICK. I think... I think...

JULIANNA. What?

PATRICK. I think I like talking to you.

JULIANNA. Really?

PATRICK. Yes. I think I do.

JULIANNA. Then we make a good match. *(Beat.)* You're walking around?

PATRICK. Uh huh.

JULIANNA. What are you doing?

PATRICK. Looking at things. You have a lot of photos.

JULIANNA. Yes. (*Beat.*) Do you find that strange?

PATRICK. A little.

JULIANNA. They're of my family mostly. I just like having them around me.

PATRICK. All right.

JULIANNA. I just like knowing that they are there.

PATRICK. I understand.

JULIANNA. Good.

PATRICK. Family is important.

JULIANNA. I think so.

PATRICK. Your turn.

JULIANNA. My turn?

PATRICK. Yes, you tell me something.

JULIANNA. What do you want to know?

PATRICK (*pause*). How old were you when ... when you ...

JULIANNA. I was seven.

PATRICK. Seven.

JULIANNA. It began when I was seven.

PATRICK. I can't imagine.

JULIANNA. It was ... It was—difficult. I didn't really understand at the time. Didn't know what was going on. What I was losing. I was pretty young. It didn't make sense, really. All the doctors and consultations and different treatments and fuss. It only took about four months and that was pretty much it. I remember that time very clearly.

PATRICK. Do you miss it?

JULIANNA. I don't know. Yes. (*Beat.*) It was so many years ago. You live a certain way long enough, you just become used to it. (*Beat.*) The loss of ... of—I don't—color, mostly. That was difficult. The things I knew so

well getting hazy, shimmering and then fading. Each day I'd wake up a little less aware of what the world looked like. I grew up a lot during that time. I cried a lot.

THE TARANTINO VARIATION
a comedy

PRODUCTION HISTORY

The Blueprint Theatre, New York — August-September 1997

Director: Ted Brunetti

Cast: John Stonehill, J. Judah Collins, Jeremy Guskin

The Tarantino Variation

CHARACTERS: 3 men or 3 women
PROPERTIES: Six guns.
RUNNING TIME: 12 minutes

(Three men in black suits, black ties, white shirts and sunglasses stand in a triangle. They are MR. MAUVE, MR. FUCHSIA and MR. PUCE. They each draw guns and stick them to each others heads. MR. MAUVE at MR. FUCHSIA, MR. FUCHSIA at MR. PUCE and MR. PUCE at MR. MAUVE)

MR. MAUVE. Freeze!

MR. FUCHSIA. Don't move!

MR. PUCE. Hold it!

MR. MAUVE. Put it down.

MR. FUCHSIA. Not until he drops his.

MR. PUCE. No way.

MR. MAUVE. I mean it.

MR. FUCHSIA. So do I.

MR. PUCE. You're going to have to pry this gun out of my cold, dead hand.

MR. FUCHSIA. That can be arranged.

MR. MAUVE. Do it and I kill you.

MR. FUCHSIA. Not before I kill this guy.

MR. PUCE. You shoot, then I shoot.

MR. MAUVE. Okay, then.

MR. FUCHSIA. Your funeral.

MR. PUCE. Let's go!

MR. FUCHSIA. Fine.

MR. MAUVE. Fine!

MR. PUCE. FINE! *(Pause. Triangle shifts. Everyone looks at one another.)* This is a little awkward.

MR. FUCHSIA. I'm feeling a lot of tension here.

MR. MAUVE. I need to urinate.

MR. FUCHSIA. Piss and die!

MR. MAUVE. What?

MR. FUCHSIA. Squirt and you're dirt!

MR. MAUVE. But you're not even pointing your gun at me.

MR. FUCHSIA. So?

MR. MAUVE. So, you can't really threaten me.

MR. FUCHSIA. Fine, then I'll threaten him.

MR. PUCE. Hey, if the guy's gotta go ...

MR. FUCHSIA. HE LETS ONE DROP OUT AND I'LL KILL YOU!

MR. MAUVE. I can hold it.

MR. PUCE. Hang on.

MR. FUCHSIA. WHAT!

MR. MAUVE. Why are you yelling?

MR. FUCHSIA. BECAUSE I'M... *(Beat.)* I'm a little nervous. Sorry. *(Beat.)* You got your gun to my head.

MR. MAUVE. I can relate.

MR. PUCE. Me too. *(Pause. Triangle shifts.)*

MR. MAUVE. You don't... REALLY want to shoot me, do you?

MR. PUCE. Wanna bet?

MR. FUCHSIA. Go ahead shoot him.

MR. PUCE. I will.

MR. FUCHSIA. So do it.

MR. PUCE. You don't think I got the guts?

MR. FUCHSIA. Naw, it's the BALLS you're missing.

MR. PUCE. I'll do it! I'll shoot this guy right in the head!

MR. MAUVE. Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey.

MR. FUCHSIA. What now?

MR. MAUVE. Why do you want this guy to shoot me?

MR. PUCE. Yeah, good question. Why do you want me to shoot him?

MR. FUCHSIA. So I can shoot you!

MR. PUCE. Oh.

MR. MAUVE. Oh. *(Beat.)* Well, what if I shoot you first?

MR. FUCHSIA. Shoot me first?

MR. MAUVE. Yeah, what if I blast you right through your eyeballs, first?

MR. FUCHSIA. Then he'll smear your brains all over the pavement.

MR. MAUVE. You will?

MR. PUCE. I will?

MR. FUCHSIA. Absolutely, you will.

MR. PUCE. Absolutely, I will.

MR. MAUVE. Um, why?

MR. PUCE. Yeah, why?

MR. FUCHSIA. Because I have this gun to your head.

BOOM!

MR. PUCE. BAM!

MR. MAUVE. KER-BLEWY! *(Pause. Triangle shifts.)*

MR. PUCE. All right, so let me see if I got this straight ...

MR. FUCHSIA. Sure.

MR. MAUVE. Go ahead.