

Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Dramatic Publishing



Short-Term Affairs

by
Donna Spector

From...

35 in 10

Thirty-Five Ten-Minute Plays

Compiled and Edited

KENT R. BROWN



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our Web site: www.dramaticpublishing.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, P.O. Box 129, Woodstock IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MMV by
DRAMATIC PUBLISHING
Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(35 IN 10)

ISBN: 1-58342-283-8

SHORT-TERM AFFAIRS

By
Donna Spector

© 2001 by Donna Spector

Short-Term Affairs was first produced in 2001 by Actors on the Verge in New York City. In 2003, it was a finalist in the Actors Theatre of Louisville National Ten-Minute Play Contest and was a winner in the Palm Springs National Short Play Fest.

CHARACTERS

MARK FANBERG: Age 34.

DENISE DELANEY: Age 32.

SETTING: The Bureau of Short-Term Affairs. A stark office in a mid-town Manhattan building. A small table with a telephone and two chairs.

TIME: The present.

SHORT-TERM AFFAIRS

AT THE CURTAIN: *DENISE is seated at a table. She is talking on a small pink phone.*

DENISE. No, I'm sorry. You must have misunderstood our advertisement.

(MARK enters.)

MARK. Hello. I'm looking...

DENISE *(puts her hand over the mouthpiece)*. Sorry. I'll just be a moment. *(Back to phone.)* Listen, if you're looking for something "real," whatever that means, you've got the wrong number. *(She slams down phone.)* Yes?

MARK. Yes, I, uh, I'm looking for a...

DENISE. Oh, let me guess. You're looking for the perfect woman to fall in love with, get married, have 2.5 children, a springer spaniel, some cast-iron lawn ornaments—deer and cute little dwarfs painted in bright Christmas colors—a ranch-style house in the suburbs...

MARK. Well, actually...

DENISE. And you want to grow old together and take long walks on the beach, and when you become senile and incontinent, you want her to take care of you.

MARK. No. I must be in the wrong place.

DENISE. Oh. Sorry. It's been an unnerving day. So what are you looking for?

MARK. A relatively brief affair. Six months to a year.

Fun and exciting, but no kidding ourselves that it's going to last. That sort of thing.

DENISE. Really? You're sure this is what you want?

MARK. Yes. I've tried other dating services, but they're always trying to match perfect people, and when I go out with a woman, she starts talking love after a few weeks, and she uses words like "commitment," and I break out in hives, and I feel this *panic*, so I thought your ad sounded more, uh, realistic.

DENISE. You're an emotional coward?

MARK. I suppose so. Yes.

DENISE. Good. That's important. We specialize in emotional cowardice and/or disillusionment.

MARK. I've never opened up enough to be hurt or disillusioned.

DENISE. That's fine. You have hurt women, of course?

MARK. Yes. Though I prefer not to.

DENISE. That's good. We're not looking for cads. Just decent people who understand the brevity of attraction.

MARK. Yes. The transitory nature of all things.

DENISE. We're born alone and we die alone. And all in between is ephemeral.

MARK. *Yes!* A mere façade. And true communication between people is impossible.

DENISE. *Yes.* Because if I say I was bitten by a dog this morning, you might see a German shepherd, when actually it was...

MARK. ...a small but vicious schnauzer.

DENISE. That's...odd. Just what I was going to say.

MARK. I knew it! It was as though I was taking down dictation right from...your brain.

DENISE. Yes. I felt that too, I... *(Beat.)* But down to business. Let me explain our process. First, I take detailed notes about you. Then I go through our files and find someone so obviously wrong for you that you will immediately feel attracted...

MARK. Good so far.

DENISE. I'm glad. This attraction and attendant excitement will be based, of course, on your knowledge...

MARK. ...that she's so wrong for me that we would never speak of love or commitment.

DENISE. Yes. You do understand. You will both know that all you're in this for is...

MARK. ...fun.

DENISE. Yes. Fun. *(Beat.)* You do seem to be an ideal candidate. Now, our fee is \$100 per short-term affair. Is that too much for you?

MARK. No. It would be worth it to know...

DENISE. ...that you were free of entanglement.

MARK. Exactly.

DENISE. Good. Let me get down some vital statistics. *(She takes a notepad and pen.)* First and last name?

MARK. Mark Fanberg.

DENISE. Age?

MARK. Thirty-four.

DENISE. You don't look that old. Where are you from?

MARK. I was born in Chicago, but I grew up in New York.

DENISE. Yes, your accent.

MARK. We live in New York. How can you detect an accent?

DENISE. I'm from Los Angeles.

MARK. I thought you had a California accent.