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# BLEEDERS

A One-Act Play

by

**BRYAN PATRICK HARNETIAUX**



**THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY**  
**P.O. Box 109, Woodstock, IL 60098**

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(BLEEDERS)

# **BLEEDERS**

**A One-Act Play  
For Two Men, One Woman and Extras \***

## **CHARACTERS**

**Gar** ..... an inner-city street poet, magician  
**Helen** ..... woman from the suburbs  
**Vince** ..... adult book store employee

**\* Patrons - Faceless Clientele of the Book Store**

**TIME:** The present, early morning

**PLACE:** Inner-city

**BLEEDERS** was first performed August 14, 1986 at the Studio Theatre of the Spokane Civic Theatre in Spokane, Washington. The production was directed by Pamela Kingsley. Scenic/lighting design and technical direction were by Peter Hardie.

#### CAST

Gar ..... Brooke S. Plastino  
Helen ..... Joan McKenzie  
Vince ..... Mark Bernstein  
Faceless Clientele ..... Jim Draine/Charles Bradley

**To The Spokane Civic Theatre  
of  
Spokane, Washington**

## BLEEDERS

SCENE: *The inner-city; the sidewalk in front of two store fronts. One is "St. Jude's Blood Bank." It is run down, with dirty windows, peeling paint and a faded sign that reads "9 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Mon.-Fri." The other is "Dionysian Library & Health Club," an adult book store. It has an aura of respectability - a fresh coat of paint and an attractive sign that reads "Open 24 Hours." The sidewalk speaks more freely of the decay of this inner-city by-way. The pavement is dirty and littered with bits of urban residue.*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *GAR is sitting up against the doorway of the Blood Bank, his gear at his side. There is a guitar case. He composes, alternately scribbling lyrics; scatting, singing snatches of lyrics. His scats, etc. may be repeated throughout. They have, on occasion, a dissonant quality. He is working on the "Tawdry laughs..." lyrics. HELEN enters, crosses in front of the Blood Bank and stops at the entrance to the book store. She carries an open-topped purse and a large placard mounted on a stick which reads "PORNOGRAPHY IS UGLY" or some similar text on one side and "GO HOME WHERE YOU BELONG" on the other. It is covered when she first arrives. GAR hums, wildly it seems. A PATRON exits the Dionysian, takes HELEN in, and is gone. As he leaves, HELEN takes up the placard and removes the cover, but it is too late. She then organizes her things and sits. Nothing. She takes out a paperback book of crosswords and begins working a puzzle. GAR rises and peers over HELEN's shoulder. Alternately, while HELEN is distracted GAR might rummage through her belongings, discover the book of crosswords and begin working one she has already started.*

GAR. Try chronic. C-H-R-O-N-I-C. Recurring. Seven

letters. That would make six across cistern. C-I-S-T-E-R-N. (*Back to his lyrics; perhaps singing.*) Tawdry laughs, fatted calves, polyethylene/styled hair, market share, unleaded gasoline. (*GAR scats as HELEN tries to ignore him.*)

(*A PATRON appears and enters the book store. HELEN again notices this too late. She picks up the sign and begins to "picket;" a foreign task.*)

GAR. You look like a person with a *mission*. (*Picks up HELEN's crossword and studies it.*) For that apple or banana I could enlighten you on eleven down. You crack eleven down, you've got the secret to life. It's a word everyone can pronounce and spell, but few can live. Need somebody on crowd control? You do a lot of crosswords, right? Not much of this, though.

HELEN. It's a public sidewalk.

GAR. That don't mean it's safe. A guy almost died there last month. You wanna make your mark, wait 'til dark. This isn't exactly prime time. The sun's barely up. What's the stakes here? This some group gripe and the others just slept in, or a noble journey of one?

HELEN. Would you go back to whatever you're doing or not doing. I'm not bothering you.

GAR. Keep this up and you won't get in our Christmas name exchange. Don't get me wrong, I like causes. It's my life. If one can't make a statement with a life, what's the point, huh? But the idea, see, is that the statement be heard. Heard by the herd, so maybe you pick up a couple along the way. Start a new herd. Have you heard a word I said? (*GAR sits. HELEN pickets.*) We all bellow at the moon once in a while, is that it?

HELEN. What do you do around here?

GAR. Typical. Want to know what I do before you know who I am.

HELEN. You've had little trouble harassing me without knowing who I am.

GAR. You are Helen, I am Gar, and that was not

harassment. That's G-A-R, and no it's not a family name. Near as I can tell it's probably a misprint. Legend has it I was supposed to be one more in a long line of undistinguished Garys. Don't ask me why the Y went, or where. I don't care. The only decent Gary went by "Coop." And your Helen comes from the receipt in your purse next to the banana, which I'll still trade for eleven down.

HELEN. God.

GAR. What I do is blood. I give blood.

HELEN. That takes ten minutes. What about the rest of the day?

GAR. I make more blood. It's a full time job. Twenty-two fifty a pint (*or appropriate going rate.*) You think I'm bad, wait 'til the regulars drift in for the vein drain. The who's-who of who's not. (*Scats; returning to lyrics. A PATRON leaves the book store and starts towards HELEN, spots her and retreats in the opposite direction, as she stands her ground.*)

HELEN. Go home to your family!

GAR. You're gonna get killed. Don't look to me. Stakes are too low. (*Performing*) Bonecrunchers-Silent screams as mayhem/signatures of tiny lives/ground into anonymity/heavy breathing little old boys and girls/left to rot/these shiny denizens dead inside/you and me/you see/more or less/Bad Samaritans. (*Perhaps some street magic with GAR producing, i. e., a small skeleton.*)

HELEN. You're a writer. A newspaper story, under cover. You're just here today?

GAR. Why is it important to you that I am not who I am? Be somebody else? This is me, Helen, professional bleeder, troubadour, wordsmith, street poet for the emotionally deaf.

HELEN. Are you published?

GAR. Yeah, my agent works the alley off Fourth. This is it, isn't it? No company coming. (*HELEN is silent.*) So, two first-rate mysteries. Why is Helen here at the crack of dawn trying to kill herself on Olive Street, and when will she unravel eleven down? Let's put on our thinking caps boys and girls and root about for an

answer or two. Ah, yes, our bag of clues. Let's check our bag of clues. (*As if rummaging through a bag.*) Reach way, way down and out comes clue number one. (*As if reading it - a string of gibberish.*) Well?

HELEN. Well, what?

GAR. What's it all mean, Helen?

HELEN. I don't know.

GAR. Well, that's what clubhouse decoder rings are for, boys and girls. Didn't eat forty boxes of those cardboard nuggets for nothing. (*Taking HELEN's ring hand and rubbing it over his palm.*) Just take our dandy decoder and wave it over our clue and whew - how do you do - sex. Oops' (*Whisper.*) Our clue word gang is SEX! Let's get it out in the daylight, right here on Olive Street, Helen, and lay it bare.

HELEN. Let's not.

GAR. We'll ease into it. Start with what you do. Social worker, den mother, reformed hooker - Saul to Paul type?

HELEN. I'm not discussing my personal life with you.

GAR. You come down here tourist class and stand righteous, you're fair game. You wanna play, take your toy sign, felt-pen manifesto and go home. Where the air is thin, the scotch neat and reception clear. You come down here in the less-than-grand canyon to make your mark, change things, you pay. And it's not cheap.

HELEN. I am not ashamed of my existence. Or where I live. And my life. We worked very hard. . .

GAR. Now we're getting somewhere. *We*. We as in husband and wife. (*A nerve.*) I'll bet he. . . laces teeth, huh - an orthodontist. How 'bout stockbroker? Underwriter, that's it - the true mystics of the American way.

HELEN. He was. . . No, I'm not going to play your game. You lay in wait here to bushwhack any innocent person who happens by.

GAR. Innocent as in tested and pure, or as in untested, virgin.

*(A PATRON approaches the book store. HELEN, with sign, blocks the way. The PATRON says nothing but fakes left and goes right around HELEN, entering the store.)*

GAR. It's like my old coach used to say, watch their feet, not their eyes. *(GAR playing basketball, defending, then stealing the ball and scoring.)* I've got it! You're at the club playing truth or dare, lose, and have to picket a porn shop. Your friends are up there with their home video machines with telephoto lenses, bleary-eyed and ready for eggs ben on the veranda. God, I wish you could have given me more notice. I coulda got a flasher or two, and Blind Bob coulda done his street scene number where he gets something in his eye. It's a scream; usually good for six-eight bucks on a Saturday night. Me, I do this bit where I pick up this old copy of *Forbes* magazine, experience this metanoia, and want to hypothecate tax-free municipal bonds.

HELEN. You strike me as a man with a big vocabulary and a small life. I don't see any issues raging up about you.

GAR. No decent issue rears its head before nine o'clock. I'm between causes right now. *(Scats.)* Actually, we may be completely out of raging issues. They've all run their course on the movie of the week. Tapped out last month with the story of a short, lower-east-side malnourished, dyslexic, amputee Viet Nam vet, black passing as white, with delayed stress syndrome, latent homosexual tendencies, and a suspicious blood test.

HELEN. Do you always have that smile?

*(A rough-hewn man, VINCE, emerges from the Dionysian and draws a bead on HELEN.)*

VINCE *(to GAR)*. What the hell is she doin'?

GAR. I don't know, Vince, why don't you ask her?

VINCE. What the hell are you doin'?

GAR. Asks Vince, seething.