

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

GO BACK TO YOUR PRECIOUS WIFE AND SON

**Based upon Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s
"Welcome to the Monkey House"**

by
Vaughn McBride

The Dramatic Publishing Company

***** 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 fees are given in our current catalogue and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether it is presented for charity or for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed anytime it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, P. O. Box 109, Woodstock, Illinois 60098.

**COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR HIS 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.

GO BACK TO YOUR PRECIOUS WIFE AND SON

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. On all programs this notice must appear: Produced by special arrangement with THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois.

**©MCMXXXIX by
VAUGHN McBRIDE**

Based upon the work,

"WELCOME TO THE MONKEY HOUSE"

Printed in the United States of America

All Rights Reserved

(GO BACK TO YOUR PRECIOUS WIFE AND SON)

Photo back cover by Marian Klein Koehler
Cover design by Susan Carle.

GO BACK TO YOUR PRECIOUS WIFE AND SON

**A Play in One Act
For Three Men and One Woman**

CHARACTERS

GEORGE MURRA a writer
GLORIA HILTON an actress, George's wife
JOHN MURRA George's son
NEWT installer of storm windows and doors

TIME: The present.

PLACE: A kitchen in a New Hampshire home.

PRODUCTION NOTES

SETTING: The kitchen-eating area of a summer home in New Hampshire. The place abounds in kitchen gadgets that all look new. There is a butcher block, a multi-tiered spice rack and a dining table set with placemats, napkins in rings and too much silverware. One door leads to the outside, another to the rest of the house.

SIMPLIFIED SETTING: A table, three chairs, shelves, and two door frames.

CHARACTER NOTES:

THE SHOWER DOOR: Not a person, but an integral part of the action, the pivot point. It is a silver-lined door of slightly tinted glass or plastic. At the height of 5'2" is etched the face of an absolutely beautiful woman. It is the face of a fantasy beauty in full color—Gloria! Anyone standing in the shower could have a body which could not be changed, but the face of a legend.

GEORGE MURRA: A writer—near forty. At the beginning of the play his appearance is somewhat disheveled. Hair mussed up, tie pulled down, jacket off, shoes off. During the action he puts himself together—combs hair, fixes tie, finds shoes, puts on jacket. By the time the play is over, he looks ready to be photographed.

GLORIA HILTON: An actress. George's wife. At the opening she looks like a dowd although her manner is regal. Dressing gown, curlers, cold cream on her face. On her re-entrance she is transformed—"Glorious Gloria," the most beautiful woman in the world.

JOHN MURRA: George's son. He is fifteen, overweight and preppy. He wears a school uniform—blazer and tie. Perfect. A button-down mind enclosed in a button-down body. His father takes it all apart.

NEWT: A storm window and door installation man in his forties. He wears coveralls and tennis shoes. He is always the observer, the commentator. When he feels he is becoming too involved in the action he simply takes another drink and relaxes.

GO BACK TO YOUR PRECIOUS WIFE AND SON

AT OPENING: *GLORIA is seated at the table, her head in her hands. GEORGE is making snacks at the counter and NEWT is putting up a storm window outside the kitchen, watching the action.*

GLORIA. I've had it with rural America!

GEORGE. Do you think Velveeta on Ritz is better with capers or anchovies?

GLORIA. Had it, had it, had it!

GEORGE. Capers, I think—

GLORIA. You've got "rural" in your blood! All writers do!

GEORGE. Maybe one of each—looks pretty tasty.

GLORIA. This is what I get for—

GEORGE. Yeah, looks all right. Like a smiley face with one eye.

GLORIA. —trying to lift myself—

GEORGE. I'll try a little pimiento eyebrow.

GLORIA. —to a higher echelon—

GEORGE. A little paprika—

GLORIA. —of—

GEORGE. Or maybe—no, that's too hard.

GLORIA. —of—

GEORGE. Maybe we should just have chips and dip.

GLORIA. —culture! (*Pause.*) I've made a mistake. I hate New Hampshire. I tried to love New Hampshire—then

I tried to like New Hampshire. Now, I'm below tolerate New Hampshire.

GEORGE. Want a beer?

GLORIA. No! I want a martini, very dry, with an onion not an olive which means it's a Gibson, not a martini, in spite of what you call it. You are lowering my standards!

GEORGE. Gin on the rocks?

GLORIA. Fine! I've made a mistake.

GEORGE. We all do.

GLORIA. I mean a real blockbuster, true to life, National Enquirer movie-queen mistake.

GEORGE (*pause*). Me?

GLORIA. Arthur Miller you ain't!

GEORGE. Marilyn Mon—

GLORIA (*shouting*). Stuff it! You're a dried-out little twerp. Twerp!

GEORGE. Up, not out.

GLORIA. What?

GEORGE. I'm dried up. I don't write any more.

GLORIA. Up—out—the dried part's still the same. And I suppose you think I'm responsible for that!

GEORGE. Up or out?

GLORIA. Both!

GEORGE. I don't blame you.

GLORIA. And to think I gave up the role in *Demented Ginger* to come up to this Godforsaken place, this pimple of a state, this, this... (*Worst word she can think of.*) rural area so that you could start writing again.

GEORGE. You did the starring role in *Demented Ginger*.

GLORIA. That was only on sabbatical. I still had to come back here!

GEORGE. You went to Nice first.

GLORIA. That was on business. For a film festival. But I still had to come back here to—to—

GEORGE. —rural?

GLORIA. Yes! Thanks! To *rural*!

GEORGE. You only stayed two weeks.

GLORIA. I have obligations!

GEORGE. And marriage isn't one of them?

GLORIA (*ignoring him*). And then you had to bring that kid of yours, that whining little piece of prig-in-the-making and install him at the Mount Henry School.

GEORGE (*answering his own question*). Marriage isn't one of them.

GLORIA. What good does it do to have him here? He won't come to the house. He won't speak to you. If he runs out of money he calls your ex in California and asks her to call and tell you.

GEORGE. Edna never calls collect.

GLORIA. I mean, if *he* made the call it would be a local call. He hates you!

GEORGE. It's a comfort having him near.

GLORIA. Yeah. Like having a pet snowball!

GEORGE. Gloria, maybe we should try to re-define our relationship.

GLORIA. "Re" means to do it for the second time. We haven't managed to do it for the first!

GEORGE. I'm making a pot roast for dinner.

GLORIA. Don't try to sweet-talk me. I'm sick of pot roast.

GEORGE. It's very New England.

GLORIA. Well, I'm not! (*There is a knock at the door. GLORIA looks at GEORGE to answer it. He looks at her to answer it. Another knock.*) You're still wanting to bend me to your will. I used to like it when you tried

to bend me to your will and now I don't like it when you try to bend me to your will! (*Another knock.*)

GEORGE. I couldn't diagram that.

GLORIA. Diagram what?!

GEORGE. That sentence you just—created. I'm a writer but I couldn't parse that. (*Loud knock.*) COME IN!

NEWT (*off*). I can't.

GEORGE. Why not?

NEWT (*off*). The door's locked and I got the big one with me.

GLORIA. I'm a star! I'm a real, honest-to-God, bona fide movie star! And I'm in New Hampshire!

NEWT (*off*). It turned out good.

GEORGE (*to GLORIA*). You can leave if you want. The door's always open.

NEWT (*off*). It turned out real, *real* good.

GLORIA. I'll be out of here in two minutes. (*Yells at door.*) No, it didn't!

GEORGE. Takes you longer than that to put on your false—

GLORIA. Can it!

(*GLORIA exits. Another knock at the door. GEORGE opens it on NEWT, standing there with the shower door which has GLORIA's head etched on it.*)

NEWT. I fixed all the windows. Sealed up tight. And I got your new shower door. Turned out real good, see what I mean. They're all set up over at the factory to do initials and flamingos and sea horses and such. When I gave 'em this job they just exploded. Gloria! The famous one and only Gloria. The world's most beautiful object to be sand-blasted on plastic. I tell you they

just exploded. (*Pause.*) Exploded. (*Pause.*) A challenge! (*Pause.*) On plastic. Her face on plastic—on a shower door. Exactly 5'2" from the bottom. (*GEORGE has been covering the snacks with Saran Wrap and putting them away.*) And a big G.—on a shower—

GEORGE (*goes to phone*). Number of the Mount Henry School, please.

NEWT. Never had an order of such magnitude before—

GEORGE. Thanks. (*Dials.*)

NEWT. Never!

GEORGE. Hello. I'd like a message delivered to John Murra at once. Tell him there's been a family tragedy and he is to come to his father's house right away. I'll pay the cab. I know it's ten miles. I can afford it! At once. Thanks. My name—I *am* his father. It's tragic, what's happened, just tragic. (*Hangs up. NEWT looks at door.*)

NEWT. I think it's very good. Lots of craftsmanship—

GEORGE. Oh, shut up.

NEWT. Fine. Just fine. I'll just sit here and shut up 'til you decide what you want me to do with this. It's hand-crafted.

GEORGE. It's nice.

NEWT. You can't just leave it with me. My wife would never let me exchange our flamingo for a Gloria.

GEORGE. You got a wife?

NEWT. We all do—sooner or later. (*GEORGE has poured them both a drink.*)

GEORGE. Down the hatch.

NEWT. What time is it?

GEORGE. Nearly noon.

NEWT. Oh, okay. (*He downs the drink.*) Now, can you tell me what to do with this thing? (*Indicates shower door.*)

GEORGE. I can't. No.

NEWT. You got to. You ordered it. It was made, as I said, to specification at great cost to both the ingenuity and libido of dedicated craftsmen. (*Holds out glass.*)

That was good. (*GEORGE pours another.*) Thanks.

GEORGE. Can I have another, do you think?

NEWT. You're the host. (*He takes the bottle and pours one for GEORGE.*)

GEORGE. Thanks. (*Indicates shower door.*) I don't want to tell you what to do with that thing.

NEWT. Somebody's got to. I mean, dedicated craftsmen and all that.

GEORGE. I have a hard time giving orders.

NEWT. You called and ordered this. And it's a work of art.

GEORGE. I was reading my instructions, I have to tell you this, from a three-by-five card which had been prepared for me by—by—

NEWT. Her?

GEORGE. Yes, her.

NEWT. Gloria wrote the order?

GEORGE. Yes, on a three-by-five card.

NEWT. The *whole* order?

GEORGE. Yeah. On a three-by-five. She writes little.

NEWT. And you just read it out on the phone?

GEORGE. Yes.

NEWT. Not even in your own words?

GEORGE. No.

NEWT. Well, I must say you sounded like, I mean, the delivery had great—authority.

GEORGE. Thanks. I've known a lot of actors.

NEWT. I see.