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*Dramatic Publishing*



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# Coffee With God

Drama by  
Kal Wagenheim



# Coffee With God

*Drama. By Kal Wagenheim. Cast: 3m., 1w. or 2m., 2w.* A man is enjoying coffee and a bagel at his favorite New Jersey diner when God, carrying a laptop computer, enters, sits next to him, and seems to know all about him. Their conversation ranges from the playful—finding parking spaces in Manhattan—to the heartbreaking—the loss, all too soon, of a loved one. The man questions God, who expresses sorrow over the death of the man's mother at a very early age but explains that the world is too big and complex for even God to protect everyone from tragedy. There are moments of comedy (when God praises the inventor of Imodium and refuses to take credit for it) and haunting beauty (when the man's dead parents appear, at God's behest, for a final glimpse, and dance a lovely tango). The man, deeply touched by God's gesture, hugs God, a lonely being who has never been hugged and is equally moved by that gesture. One critic has described the play as "the story of a man who finally comes to a turning point in his life. A time when all the pain and confusion is to be released." *One int. set. Approximate running time: 30 minutes.*

*Photos: TheatreRats, New York, featuring Vivian Font, David Ian Lee and Matt Mercer. Photos: Jeff Wagenheim.*



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# COFFEE WITH GOD

By  
KAL WAGENHEIM



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## *Coffee With God*

World Premiere by TheatreRats Production Company

First Annual Chester Horn Short Play Festival, June 22, 24, 26, 2005, at American Theatre of Actors, Sargent Theater, New York City. The production was directed by Dan Lavender and included the following artists:

### CAST

Kal . . . . . Matt Mercer\*  
God . . . . . David Ian Lee\*  
Harold . . . . . Brian Lee Elder  
Rozlon/Waitress . . . . . Vivia Font\*

\* Member, Actors Equity Association

### PRODUCTION STAFF AND CREW

Artistic Director . . . . . Alexis M. Hadsall  
Assoc. Artistic Director . . . . . Michael Ruby  
Production Manager . . . . . Sara MontBlanc  
Assoc. Production Manager/IT/Ass't. TD . . . Vince Lingner  
Production Stage Manager . . . . . Lauren Reinhard  
Accordion Player . . . . . Anthony Valerio  
Lighting Designer . . . . . Lance Darcy  
TD/Light Board Operator . . . . . Alexis M. Hadsall  
Sound Board Operator . . . . . Nathan Gismot

# COFFEE WITH GOD

## CHARACTERS:

KAL ..... 20s-40s  
GOD..... any age, race or gender  
ROZLON and WAITRESS ..... 20s  
HAROLD ..... 40s and up

NOTE: Waitress can be a separate actress, but she has no lines and appears only briefly.

SET: Present day. A diner.



# COFFEE WITH GOD

*(A diner. KAL is seated at the counter facing the audience, sipping coffee, chewing on a bagel with cream cheese. He is reading The New York Times.*

*GOD enters, carrying an ultra-thin laptop computer which he places on the counter. GOD sits next to him, nods and KAL nods back.*

*The WAITRESS enters, gives a menu to GOD. Without looking at it...)*

GOD. I'll have the same as him...poppy-seed bagel, cream cheese, decaf.

*(The WAITRESS leaves.)*

GOD *(cont'd)*. How's it going, Kal?

KAL *(chewing, still reading paper)*. Fine... Do we know each other?

GOD. I know everybody. I'm God.

KAL. Ha!

*(The WAITRESS enters, serves the bagel and coffee and exits. GOD takes a bite of the bagel.)*

GOD. Mmmmmmmmm. Yummy! (*Pause.*) You don't believe me?

KAL (*still reading his paper*). If it makes you happy, I'll believe you.

GOD. How's your sister June?

KAL (*turns to GOD*). You know her?

GOD. Know her? I helped you find her a few years ago!

KAL. Who the hell are you?

GOD. How about a little thunder and lightning?

(*GOD waves his hand and suddenly there is a BRILLIANT FLASH OF LIGHT and LOUD THUNDERCLAP. KAL flinches, looks around.*)

KAL. Is this one of those stupid reality shows? Where's the camera?

GOD. There are no cameras, Kal.

KAL. You really are God?

(*GOD nods, smiles.*)

KAL (*cont'd*). I've heard that God does speak to people...

GOD. Not exactly...

KAL. There's this minister who claims God speaks to him...Pat...

GOD. Pat Robertson? I have never uttered a word to that shmuck!

KAL. A shmuck? Are you Jewish?

GOD. I'm like tofu.

(*KAL is puzzled.*)

GOD (*cont'd*). Tofu. You add your own flavor. People see me in their own image... In China, I'm short, chubby, inscrutable. Africa? Tall, muscular, voice like James Earl Jones. In Minnesota, I'm a blonde, blue-eyed goy.

KAL. This has gotta be a gag. Did Marvin put you up to this?

GOD. Marvin Schwartz? 223 West Tenth Street in the Village? Third floor?

KAL. Yeah, Marvin.

GOD. You like tango, right?

KAL. How'd you know that?

GOD. I know plenty about you. Enjoy!

*(GOD snaps his fingers. We hear a lively TANGO instrumental. After a few seconds, GOD waves his hand and the music stops. KAL looks around.)*

GOD (*cont'd*). Don't worry. Nobody else heard that.

KAL. What...do you want?

GOD. Nothing. I'm just looking in on you.

KAL. Looking in?

GOD. You missed the shabbos service on WQXR radio from Temple Emanu-El last Friday.

KAL. I was busy.

GOD. It's okay. I just thought...since you've been listening to it for so many years...

KAL. I can't miss one service?

GOD. Sure. I just thought maybe you were losing your faith a little.

KAL. Who said I had faith?

GOD. Almost every Friday at five-thirty for eleven years, and you tell me...

KAL. It's a habit!

GOD. Ah, a habit. Is it also a habit every time you drive around Manhattan searching for a parking space—I see you!—you rub the steering wheel, *rub, rub, rub*...suddenly a space opens up. You pull in. And—I hear you!—you say “Thanks, God!”

KAL. You hear me?

GOD. Why the hell do you think you get all those parking spaces?

KAL. This is amazing.

GOD. Of course, in the immediate area of the theater district, that's another story. Free parking is impossible. Even I can't help there...

KAL. I noticed.

*(KAL and GOD chew on their bagels.)*

KAL *(cont'd)*. God...

GOD. Yes?

KAL. I was just saying “God”! I'd always hoped you existed, but I wasn't sure. There is a God? My God!

GOD. People believe in God in the most remote parts of the earth...Bali...Mozambique...Tierra del Fuego... Even Hoboken... Just kidding! *(GOD opens laptop, begins typing.)*

KAL. What are you doing?

GOD. Googling you.

KAL. Googling me? God uses Google?

GOD. I just say that. I have my own private account.

KAL. There's stuff there about me?

GOD. Plenty!

KAL. Why do you need Google? (*Points to GOD's head.*)

Aren't you supposed to know everything, right in here?

GOD. After so many billions of years, my noodle's not as sharp as it used to be. I think I have a touch of...of... whatchamacallit...

KAL. Alzheimer's?

GOD. Yeah. (*Points to screen.*) Here's your grades from Bergen Street Elementary School. Almost all A's! Your great-grandma Ida was so proud of you.

KAL. I loved to make her happy. I would run home with my report card and show it to her. She never said an unkind word. If I got a B once in a while, she would smile, look at me over her glasses and say (*imitates Yiddish accent*) "B is goot. But A is bettah!"

GOD (*points*). Here's the time you refused to be bar mitzvahed.

KAL. It wasn't for religious reasons! I took all the lessons in the neighborhood shul. But just before the big day, I panicked. I was too scared to stand up in front of all those old farts with beards, and recite stuff in Hebrew.

GOD. Your great-grandma was so sad. (*Points to screen.*)

And then, in the army, why did you become a Catholic?

KAL. What's wrong with being a Catholic? Do you just favor the Jews?

GOD. No. No. All the religions are fine. I was just curious...why?

KAL. You mean you don't know why people do things?

GOD. I see *what* they do. I can't always see inside their heads. Get it out. It'll make you feel better.

KAL. At Fort Benning, down in Georgia, there was this young Catholic chaplain. I fell in love with him.

*(GOD gives him a look.)*

KAL (*cont'd*). Not in that way. I mean I really loved the guy. He was so...so *holy*! He was pure, and innocent, and, and...so bright! I was just nineteen, and I'd never felt inspired by religion. Somehow, the way he was...I wanted to be part of that! I told him I wanted to become a Catholic!

*(GOD chuckles.)*

KAL (*cont'd*). You saw that?

GOD. I'd sort of forgotten the details. Go on...

KAL. He said this was a very serious decision. But I kept bugging him. I'm a Taurus. Stubborn. Finally he gave me catechism lessons. Not long after that he baptized me! I got a silver crucifix with black rosary beads. For a few months I went to confession, and he would listen to me...*it was wonderful.*

GOD. And then?

KAL. You probably know the rest.

GOD. C'mon. I like hearing you tell it.

KAL. When I got out of the army I attended a church in Elizabeth, New Jersey. There was this grouchy old priest. He would mumble the prayers. During his Sunday sermons, what I remember most was him kvetching about how little money people were donating to the church. So I stopped going.

GOD. And the crucifix?

*(LIGHTS fade, except SPOT on KAL.)*

KAL. I took it off, but I couldn't throw it away. I couldn't! I carried it in my pocket for a couple of years. It must have been the friction in my pocket...little by little, the rosary beads fell off. All that was left was the tiny crucifix with three or four beads on each side...

GOD. That's when your great-grandma became ill, wasn't it?

KAL. She was ninety-two. Slipped and fell in the kitchen. That Labor Day weekend, my buddies had gone down the Jersey shore. I told them I'd see them later. I went to visit Grandma in the nursing home. She was fading, but sweet as ever. I kissed her on the forehead, went out, and got into my car. It was late. Driving south on the highway, it was misty. (*KAL walks in front of the counter.*) When I got to Bradley Beach and parked... (*We hear the sound of the OCEAN, waves lapping against the shore.*) The boardwalk was dark...it must've been nearly midnight. I didn't know where my buddies were. (*KAL spreads out an invisible towel and lies down on the floor.*) I walked onto the beach, spread a big towel on the sand, lay down and fell asleep. (*KAL rises, and we see him doing what he describes.*) Early the next morning, the sun woke me. My wallet and car keys had fallen out of my pocket, into the sand. I groped around and found them. Then I noticed, my crucifix was gone! I reached into the sand again, searching, searching...and I felt something. But it wasn't the crucifix. It was a round shiny piece of metal. I picked it up and it was...

GOD. A Star of David medal.

KAL. I was amazed! I stared at it, then I looked up at the heavens. I was all alone. The sun was shining down on

me through the clouds. It was as though something really incredible had happened.

*(LIGHTS back up. OCEAN sounds end. KAL returns to sit next to GOD at the counter.)*

KAL (*cont'd*). I kept poking around in the sand, trying to find the crucifix. But it was gone.

GOD. I left it there for a good Christian. He found it a few weeks later.

KAL. You did that? Why?

GOD. You figure it out.

KAL. I can't. It's a mystery!

GOD (*sings*). "Ah! sweet mystery of life, at last I've found thee... Ah! I know at last the secret of it all..."

KAL. It's about love?

GOD. Rida Johnson Young wrote those lyrics. Wasn't it divine when Nelson Eddy and Jeanette McDonald sang it?

KAL. C'mon, tell me.

GOD. You loved your great-grandma, didn't you?

KAL. I adored her... She was dying. I had let her down when I didn't get bar mitzvahed. When I reached into the sand and found the Star of David...I was...returning to who I was? To please her?

*(GOD pats him on the shoulder.)*

KAL (*cont'd*). That's it?

GOD. If that's what you think, that's what it is!

KAL. Why are you so mysterious?



GOD (*sings*). “Ah, sweet mystery of life at last I’ve found thee...”

KAL. God?

GOD. Yes?

KAL. Why do you let such terrible things happen?

GOD. You know what bugs me? When there are huge disasters... Earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tsunamis...and so many people die. They call them “Acts of God.” Can you imagine that? *Acts of God!* As if I wanted them to happen. *Me!*

KAL. I thought you were all powerful.

GOD. There are six billion people on earth. If I devoted just one second to each person—*one second!*—it would take me two hundred and six *years* to get around to everyone. People are constantly calling out to me. In the desert of the Sudan, dying of thirst or hunger... In Africa, India, Greenwich Village, young men and women dying of AIDS... In Iraq, wounded soldiers writhing in pain... In the casinos of Atlantic City, desperate gamblers losing their shirts. They all want something. “Help me, God!” I try! I’m pretty good at multi-tasking, but sometimes it’s...overwhelming.

KAL. I guess it keeps you very busy...

GOD. It was so simple when I created the universe... The earth, rotating around the sun at exactly 67,000 miles per hour. I cooked up just the right temperature and the right mix of gases, allowing for life. The plants...and the animals. (*Pause.*) Then, when I decided to create humans, I got this *fercockta* idea...start them off ignorant—*tabula rasa!*—but with creative minds, and give them free will.

KAL. Why are you telling me this?

GOD. I'm trying to help you understand. At first humans lived like animals. Bare asses in the wind. Hunters and gatherers. Millions died of hunger and disease. But with creative minds and free will, humans developed clothing. Farming. Medicines. Electricity. Radio. The movies. Now the Internet. Blogging! Sometimes it doesn't seem so, but life is changing...mostly for the better...

KAL. But why do you allow so many different religions?

GOD. Religions? That's nothing. You know how many different languages there are? Free will! Everybody has a different take on things.

KAL. You think that's good?

GOD. It's out of my hands.

KAL. But there's so much injustice in the world...

GOD. Talk about injustice. They erect statues to great warriors. But do they put up a statue to the man who invented Imodium?

KAL. Imodium?

GOD. Just a century ago, you know how many people died of diarrhea? Or pooped in their pants! I can't count the times nowadays that people cry out: "Thank God for Imodium!" It wasn't me! It was some scientist who had free will!

KAL. But there's been such evil in the world. African slavery! The Holocaust! Monsters like...Hitler...

GOD. When Hitler was a young man, his mother was dying of cancer, in terrible pain. I sent a Jewish doctor to his house. He made more than forty visits, never charged a penny. Hitler said he was grateful. But later...free will! A mass murderer who was a vegetarian! I still don't understand the guy.

KAL. Did you actually talk to Hitler?