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*Dramatic Publishing*

**It's What's for Dinner  
and  
Other Short Comedies**

**Comedy  
by  
Jonathan Graham**

# It's What's for Dinner

## and Other Short Comedies

**Comedy. By Jonathan Graham. *It's What's for Dinner* (4 either gender).** This comedy about the politics of food is set in the refrigerator of a well-meaning, middle-class American family. A locally grown head of kale learns the facts of life from a grass-fed steak, a hunk of brie and an ancient, moldy bit of macaroni and cheese. The play has gentle fun with foodies and the local food movement as food items fantasize about what meals they may be a part of and wonder why people buy food that they never manage to eat. *Approximate running time: 15 minutes.* ***Man Overboard* (1m., 1w.).** In the early morning aftermath of a wild party, a husband and wife must come to terms with their differing views of an important holiday: Talk Like a Pirate Day. For this celebration of buccaneer lingo, there are decorations to hang, annual traditions to attend to, and over-commercialization to worry about. But with a new baby in the picture, the wife decides it's time to reconsider priorities. *Approximate running time: 7 minutes.* ***Poinsettia vs. the Christmas Cactus: A Yuletide Smackdown* (5 either gender).** All is not calm as the Christmas decorations get into a ruckus over their places on the holiday pecking order. Poinsettia and the Christmas Cactus skirmish over which is on the top of the botanical Christmas list. Soon, an Advent calendar and a dancing Santa are ready to jump into the fray, but Mistletoe arrives just in time and manages to keep the peace. *Approximate running time: 10 minutes.* ***The Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations* (1m., 1w.).** An earnest young job applicant encounters an intense human resources representative during the oddest job interview of his life. Enduring a series of bizarre questions and navigating a strange corporate culture, the candidate lands the job in this probing look at the professional world in 21st-century America. *Approximate running time: 15 minutes. Flexible staging. These plays may be performed individually or in any combination, in which case royalties may be adjusted upon application. Code: ID9.*

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*Dramatic Publishing*

311 Washington St.  
Woodstock, IL 60098  
ph: 800-448-7469

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# **It's What's for Dinner and Other Short Comedies**

A collection by  
**JONATHAN GRAHAM**



**Dramatic Publishing Company**  
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For Jennie.  
Always my favorite audience member.

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# **It's What's for Dinner**

## **CHARACTERS**

**GRASSY:** a grass-fed beef steak, freshly butchered.

**KALE:** a head of locally grown kale, picked this morning.

**BRIE:** a hunk of fancy cheese, older than Grassy and Kale.

**NANA MAC:** half a cup of old, leftover, fungus-tinged macaroni and cheese.

## **SETTING**

A refrigerator of a middle-class American home. The present.

Approximate running time: 10 minutes.

*It's What's for Dinner* was first produced by ArtsCenter Stage at The ArtsCenter in Carrboro, N.C., as part of the 11th Annual 10 By 10 in the Triangle, a ten-minute play festival. Sylvia Mallory directed the following cast:

Grassy ..... Page Purgar  
Kale ..... Geraud Staton  
Brie..... Mary Rowland  
Nana Mac ..... Fred Corlett

Other artists who contributed to the production:

Lighting Design ..... Cecilia Durbin  
Costume Design ..... Chelsea Kurtzman  
Properties Design ..... Devra Thomas  
Technical Director ..... John Paul Middlesworth  
Sound Designer ..... Nathan Logan

# It's What's for Dinner

*(Lights up on the inside of a refrigerator. Sitting on the shelf are GRASSY and BRIE. Suddenly, KALE comes tumbling in.)*

GRASSY. Who are you?

KALE. I'm Kale.

GRASSY. What's that?

BRIE. Vegetable.

GRASSY. Hm.

KALE. A dense, green, leafy, extremely healthy ...

BRIE. Which no one likes.

KALE. Hey!

GRASSY. So, you're healthy?

KALE. Very.

BRIE. And you know what that means in this house.

GRASSY. Oh, give the guy a chance. Hi, I'm Grassy. A very flavorful grass-fed steak, raised less than a hundred miles from here, purchased as part of a share of community-supported agriculture. They bought one seventh of a cow! Isn't that exciting?

BRIE. They've got a freezer full of her relatives in the garage.

GRASSY. They bought the freezer just for us. Energy Star. Our carbon footprint is very small.

KALE. Cool. You know, I grew up in a garden only half a mile from here.

GRASSY. Wow.

KALE. A community garden.

GRASSY. Double wow.

KALE. Organic. On a reclaimed vacant lot, smack dab in the middle of a formally blighted low-income neighborhood.

GRASSY. I think this was meant to be. I mean, who wouldn't eat an excellent steak paired with a side of fresh kale?

BRIE. Nobody in this house.

GRASSY. She will.

BRIE. Oh, she'll cook it. Some elaborate recipe from a glossy magazine. She'll love it. He'll eat enough to be polite. But those little ones?

GRASSY. Please don't let us judge things based on the tastes of those little creatures.

BRIE. I'll have you know the little girl has expressed a real fondness for "white cheese!"

GRASSY. Yeah, well, she also likes hot dogs, so there's no accounting for taste ... (To KALE.) See, the people in this house, they have children.

KALE. Oh yes, I met them earlier. The boy carried me all the way home.

BRIE. Don't talk to me about that boy. He's not going to eat you. Maybe take a "no thank you" bite and barf you down the front of his shirt.

GRASSY. Be nice.

KALE. Did I mention that they *walked* home. He carried me in his little hands. No plastic bag. And before that, this nice hippie girl, rode me from the community garden to the farmer's market in the basket of her bike. So actually, I don't think I have a carbon footprint.

GRASSY. Oh. I see.

BRIE. Yeah, well I think you'll live to regret the no plastic bag thing in a couple weeks.

KALE. I don't really need one. You just pick me, wash me and put me in the pot.

BRIE. That's assuming you're actually ever going to get cooked. Let me tell you something. The only reason you're on this shelf is because the crisper's crammed full of the

wilted, decaying plant matter she's collected over the last several weeks. I dare you to put your nose by that drawer and take a whiff of the funk!

GRASSY. Actually, I think that smell is from Uncle Feta.

BRIE. You shut your mouth about Uncle Feta.

GRASSY (*to KALE*). I think he leaked a little.

BRIE. I'll have you know that earlier, while the father took those noisy little rugrats to the park, the lady of the house made herself a Greek salad—with fresh greens from her own garden—and it was awesome!

KALE. OK, but for the record, the little boy told me that a little fluffy dog's been going poo-poo in the raised beds.

GRASSY. I thought you people called that “fertilizer?” Anyway ... (*To BRIE.*) Are you from around here?

BRIE. Trust me—nobody wants local brie.

KALE. How do you feel about that? That you're getting imported, and the planet's being destroyed, so that somebody can have a canapé?

BRIE. Listen *mon cheri*, you can celebrate your salad days on the vacant lot all you want, but ultimately, I don't care if you got here on a rickshaw made from recycled baby diapers. Unless the patterns of behavior change in this house, you're heading out on the same garbage truck as me!

KALE. Oh.

BRIE. And if these people are so excited about local food, why don't they harvest that dandelion farm out front?

KALE. But I'm not just local. I'm also very hearty. I make a great soup. And I'm historically important. Many believe I was the very first cultivated cabbage.

BRIE. Fascinating.

GRASSY. I'm all for saving the earth, Kale, but food's supposed to taste good, right.

BRIE. I hear that.

# Man Overboard

## CHARACTERS

MEG: a woman in her early 30s.

NED: a man about Meg's age, her husband.

Approximate running time: 6 minutes.

*Man Overboard* was first produced at the Phoenix Theatre, Indianapolis, Ind., as part of A Very Phoenix Xmas, November to December, 2006. Bryan Fonseca directed the production with the following cast:

Meg ..... Emily Ristine  
Ned.....Scott Greenwell

Other artists who contributed to the production included:

Scenic and Lighting Design .....Bryan Fonseca  
Stage Manager ..... Justin Kidwell  
Costume Design .....Lindsey Lyddan

# Man Overboard

*(A living room in the near future. NED is asleep on a couch. He is dressed like a pirate in a billowy white shirt, red bandana, eye patch and so on. MEG enters dressed like a scullery maid in a full skirt, low cut top, kerchief on her head, heeled boots and a sword at her hip. She shakes him by the foot.)*

MEG. Ned, it's time to wake up.

NED. Arrrr.

MEG. I need your help.

NED. Where is everybody?

MEG. They went home. You've got to get up. The kitchen's a disaster.

NED. Aye, that be a job for the saucy scullery maid. You be the one who all the pots need be scrubbing, else the plank you'll soon be walking!

MEG. It's after midnight, Ned.

NED. Nay! Really?

MEG. Talk Like a Pirate Day is over.

NED. Oh. Wow. Why didn't you wake me up?

MEG. I think it's best you had a nap. You had a little too much grog.

NED. Aye, matey.

MEG. It's over, Ned.

NED. Avast! Me knees be wobbly!

MEG. Enough!

NED. Did I tell you how hot you look in that dress?

MEG. You told everybody.

NED. I can't believe it. Another Talk Like a Pirate Day is come and gone. We'll have to take down the decorations.



MEG. I already did.

NED. Oh, yeah. Wow. How long was I asleep?

MEG. About an hour.

NED. Oh, honey, that must have been so sad for you. To fold up the Jolly Roger and carry treasure chest down into the basement. I hate to think of you doing all that alone.

MEG. It's OK. Like I said, I left the dishes for you.

NED. Yeah, but there are dishes to do everyday.

MEG. These you need to do tonight. And sweep the floor in the dining room. Your friend Peter eats like a pig.

NED. That's why we call him Dirty Pete.

MEG. I should have guessed. I'll see you in the morning.

NED. No, just sit with me a little.

MEG. I have to be at work early.

NED. But I hardly saw you all night. It wasn't the same without you. I miss the way Talk Like a Pirate Day used to be. Just the two of us, in a dark booth, in the corner of Red Lobster.

MEG. Those days are gone.

NED. It's gotten so commercial now. The season starts earlier every year, but we spend all this time buying gifts, sending out cards and making maps for our buried treasure. We barely have time to enjoy it as a family.

MEG. How exactly would we enjoy it as a family?

NED. Quiet times. Like this, Meg. Of course, kids love big parties. Kaitlyn had a good time.

MEG. You think so?

NED. Absolutely. She really enjoyed herself today.

MEG. How could Kaitlyn possibly enjoy Talk Like a Pirate Day? She can't even talk!

NED. She liked that funny hat I gave her.

MEG. She liked chewing on it.

NED. She understands the holiday on her own level.

# **Poinsettia vs. the Christmas Cactus: A Yuletide Smackdown**

## **CHARACTERS**

*(The characters are in order of appearance. All could be played by actors of any gender.)*

**POINSETTIA**

**CHRISTMAS CACTUS**

**ADVENT CALENDAR**

**DANCING SANTA**

**MISTLETOE**

Approximate running time: 6 minutes.

*Poinsettia vs. the Christmas Cactus: A Yuletide Smackdown* was originally produced at the Phoenix Theatre, Indianapolis, Ind., as part of A Very Phoenix Xmas, November to December, 2007. The production was directed by Bryan Fonseca with the following cast:

Poinsettia.....Gayle Steigerwald  
Cactus.....Bryan Fonseca  
Advent Calendar and Dancing Santa ..... Michael Shelton  
Mistletoe .....Jamison Kay Garrison

Other artists who contributed to the production are:

Scenic and Lighting Design.....Bryan Fonseca  
Sound Design.....Bryan G. Hartz  
Properties Design.....Justin Kidwell  
Costume Design and Stage Management ... Deborah Sargent

## Poinsettia vs. the Christmas Cactus: A Yuletide Smackdown

*(A family room in Middle America; Christmas decoration is in process. Boxes brimming with garland, strands of lights, etc. are evident. POINSETTIA and CHRISTMAS CACTUS sit by a window. POINSETTIA is posing and preening and crowding CACTUS.)*

POINSETTIA (*singing*). It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas!

CACTUS. Hey!

POINSETTIA. Everywhere you go ...

CACTUS. You're killing my buzz, man.

POINSETTIA. Maybe you'd be more comfortable out on the sun porch.

CACTUS. No way, dude. Cactus needs a little heat.

POINSETTIA. Sure, but in here, it's for Christmas.

CACTUS. Totally.

POINSETTIA. You notice the stockings, hung by the chimney with care. And I'm the poinsettia.

CACTUS. Oh, I know all about you.

POINSETTIA. Really? Oh, you must have read about me in the church bulletin. I was given in memory of Great Aunt Velma.

CACTUS. Ah, jeez.

POINSETTIA. I understand that she was a very important person.

CACTUS. That crazy old lady tried to kill me with that watering can. Sprinkling me two, three times a week. And I'm yelling, "What part of *cactus* don't you understand?"

POINSETTIA. OK ... but how exactly are you Christmassy?

CACTUS. Flowers! Hello?

POINSETTIA. Oh, I see now. You got yourself a few pathetic little flowers. Cute.

CACTUS. I'd like to see you survive for a month on half a cup of water!

POINSETTIA. I'm very delicate. That's what makes me special.

CACTUS. You're not so special, sweetheart. Every year they bring home a poinsettia, but they never last long. But cactus is here for the long haul.

POINSETTIA. I think you're just jealous of the beauty and joy I bring.

CACTUS. You mean like when you poisoned the cat?

POINSETTIA. Is it my fault I look good enough to eat? What I don't understand is, if you're a Christmas cactus, why do you stick around all year?

CACTUS. That's my job. I'm here everyday, keeping up the Christmas spirit all by myself.

POINSETTIA. But Christmas comes but once a year.

CACTUS. Ever heard of Christmas in July?

POINSETTIA. What's that?

CACTUS. It's big. Not like this, but it's all over the papers. But you try to get Santa out there in that velvet suit. It's hot and sticky ... and that's freaking awesome, because I'm a cactus!

POINSETTIA. So people exchange gifts for Christmas in July?

CACTUS. No.

POINSETTIA. Are there carols?

CACTUS. Not really.

POINSETTIA. Then that so doesn't count. (*Beat.*) Look, you may as well admit it ... you're just bitter.

CACTUS. Have you tasted yourself lately?

POINSETTIA. You wish you were purely seasonal. I mean, who wants to live past New Year's, anyway?

# **The Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations**

## CHARACTERS

HE: a job applicant dressed in a dark suit and an American flag tie. Early 20s.

SHE: a human resources person dressed in a dark suit and an American flag scarf. Late 20s.

## SETTING

A corporate office suite. The present.

Approximate running time: 10 minutes.

*The Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations* was first produced as part of the New York City 15 Minute Play Festival at American Globe Theatre in 2007. Kefah Crowley directed the following cast:

She..... Liz Lord

He.....Adam Hardin

# The Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations

*(Lights up on an empty office. HE enters.)*

HE. Hello?

SHE *(appearing from beneath the desk)*. What are you doing here?

HE. I'm here about a job.

SHE. I don't have anyone on the schedule now.

HE. Oh, I'm sorry. I spoke to ... Charlotte.

SHE. You mean Charlene.

HE. That's it!

SHE. She's dead. Have a seat. Someone will be with you shortly.

*(HE sits. SHE disappears beneath the desk. Pause. An alarm sounds. SHE springs to her feet.)*

SHE. May I help you?

HE. I have a 10:15 appointment.

SHE. You must be George.

HE. That's right.

SHE. Nice to meet you, George. I'm Condi. Here at Continuum Incorporated, we have developed an interactive to identify the next generation of professionals who will continue our Continuum. Are you ready to have some fun?

HE. Absolutely.

SHE. We have several positions open, and, so as not to jump to any conclusions about your skills and abilities, I'm just going to interview you for all of them at once.

HE. I appreciate the opportunity to exceed your expectations.



SHE. I like the way you talk! Question one: Have you ever been vice president of a huge multinational corporation?

HE. I was vice president of the Spanish Club.

SHE. Have you ever handled hazardous materials?

HE. Maybe in the junkyard when I was a kid.

SHE. We love previous experience. Speaking of which, do you have any experience shutting down a nuclear reactor?

HE. No.

SHE. Do you like the feeling of sand in your pants?

HE. Not particularly.

SHE. Have you ever managed the layoffs of more than 1,000 employees?

HE. No.

SHE. Can you lift 100 pounds?

HE. Yes.

SHE. Off the ground or over your head?

HE. Oh ... I meant with a dolly.

SHE (*writing*). Re ... source ... ful. Have you ever smashed an atom?

HE. Not on purpose.

SHE. With which of the following abbreviations do you have experience: ICU, IED or DOA?

HE. Um ... none of the above?

SHE (*pulls out a toilet brush*). Please identify which end you hold and which goes in the toilet.

HE. Excuse me?

SHE. Just take a guess. You've got a 50/50 shot.

HE (*indicating*). Handle ... brush.

SHE. That's right. Catch!

*(SHE throws the brush, but HE can't catch it. HE goes to retrieve it. SHE writes.)*

SHE. Poor hand/eye ... coordination ...

HE. Do you have any positions that are non-janitorial, non-vice presidential and non-nuclear?

SHE. So what if I do?

HE. I'd like to be considered for something like that. If you'll look at my resume, you see that I did an internship last summer and worked in the admissions office at my college.

SHE. I'll look at your resume after we're finished with my questions.

HE. Before you do, I would just like to say that I know that "interdisciplinary studies" sounds completely bogus, but I believe I have what it takes to be a successful person.

SHE. We'll see about that.

HE. I'm sorry I interrupted.

SHE. Cooler heads and deeper breaths will do *all* of us a lot of good. (*A bell sounds.*) Perfect timing. (*Pulls a dented car fender and a rubber mallet from under her desk.*) Pardon me, George. It's time for my bodywork. (*Puts on eye protection and pounds on the fender. The bell rings. SHE returns to her seat, still holding the mallet.*) The company sets aside time every afternoon to allow us to pursue our personal interests. People do yoga, knitting, model building. One guy even reads novels. It's fantastic. Now, back to you. We have so many candidates coming in and so many positions to fill, I get a little mixed up. Do you tan, burn or freckle?

HE. Actually, I use sun block.

SHE. Excellent. Are you the one who speaks Farsi?

HE. Nope.

SHE. You must be the one with just one kidney.

HE. That's not me.

SHE. OK, George. Why don't you tell me a little something about yourself.