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Sandra Fenichel Asher • Ric Averill • Cherie Bennett
James DeVita • José Cruz González • Calleen Sinnette Jennings
Barry Kornhauser • Mary Hall Surface • Elizabeth Wong • Y York

10 by 10

10 short plays for teens about ethics and values.



Edited by Jeff Gottesfeld

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10 by 10

***Drama/Comedy. Edited by Jeff Gottesfeld.
Written by Sandra Fenichel Asher, Ric Averill,
Cherie Bennett, James DeVita, José Cruz González,
Caleen Sinnette Jennings, Barry Kornhauser,
Mary Hall Surface, Elizabeth Wong and Y York.***

*Cast: 2m., 2w. (if same actors perform all the plays. 30 or more actors if there is a different cast for each play). 10 by 10 meets perfectly the growing demand by presenters and educators for plays that build character. It started with a simple notion: take 10 top playwrights-for-youth and send them on a mission. Write a short play that illustrates an important human value. Honesty. Family. Respect for life. Respect for parents. Truthfulness. Faith. Gratitude. Sanctity. And so forth. Each of these playwrights has risen enthusiastically to the artistic challenge and its profound possibilities. You'll find comedies, dramas and "dramadies." From a girl who steals a cell phone at the school dance and comes face to face with an unexpected higher authority, to the grandmother with a penchant for executing buzzing flies with her swatter, to a couple of young concert-goers waiting to meet their idol, *10 by 10* forms a linked collection of short plays that will delight, astonish, challenge and inspire audiences young and old. *Simple staging. Approximate running time: 10 minutes to 120 minutes, depending on the number of plays presented.**

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10 by 10

Ten ten-minute plays by ten leading playwrights for
young audiences, each inspired by one of the
Ten Commandments

Conceived and Edited
by
JEFF GOTTFELD

Participating Playwrights (in order of commandment)

José Cruz Gonzáles

Mary Hall Surface

Sandra Fenichel Asher

Barry Kornhauser

Ric Averill

Elizabeth Wong

Caleen Sinnette Jennings

Cherie Bennett

Y York

James DeVita



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All producers of any play in this collection *must* give credit to the playwright and editor in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the playwright and editor *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent the size of the title type. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

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FROM THE EDITOR

Ten short plays, ten leading theater-for-young-audiences (TYA) playwrights, ten commandments. Nothing could be simpler. Nothing—in these post 9/11 times, when young people are struggling as never before to orient their moral compasses—could be more relevant.

The memo that follows—with minor editing—are the marching orders these writers received. I have included it here to offer you a view of the framework for our creative process.

We hope you enjoy this collection of diverse, fun, funny, thoughtful, gut-wrenching, imaginative and—most of all—*entertaining* plays by some of the best writers for young people in the world.

Jeff Gottesfeld
authorchik@aol.com

MEMORANDUM

To: the 10 by 10 playwrights

(in alphabetical order): Sandy Asher, Ric Averill,
Cherie Bennett, James DeVita, José Cruz Gonzáles,
Caleen Sinnette Jennings, Barry Kornhauser, Mary Hall
Surface, Elizabeth Wong and Y York

cc: Gayle Sergel

From: Jeff Gottesfeld, Project Coordinator
authorchik@aol.com

Re: Preliminary marching orders!

Hello writers!

On behalf of Gayle Sergel and Dramatic Publishing Company, it's a pleasure to welcome you officially to *10 by 10*, a collection of ten-minute plays by ten leading TYA playwrights, each play inspired by one of the Ten Commandments. As you can see from the list of playwrights above, we've got a powerful assemblage of writers. We look forward to a compelling, moving, funny, and most of all entertaining collection of ten-minute plays.

I've spoken to all of you by telephone, and Dramatic Publishing Company will be sending each of you or your designated representative a contract/letter of agreement for your participation in this project.

Again, to recap, each of you will write a short play (no less than seven minutes and no more than ten minutes),

taking as its broad theme or jumping-off point one of the Ten Commandments of the Hebrew Bible (we'll provide the text).

Each playwright will be assigned a commandment by blind drawing; playwrights will not be “matched” with a particular commandment. When a playwright commits to be a part of this project, he or she commits to having his/her particular commandment assigned by lot.

Each playwright shall create his/her play for a cast of no more than FOUR actors, in order to maximize production options. Two male, two female actors shall be available. That is, the cast may consist of one actor (male or female), two females, two males, one male and one female, one male and two females, or two females and two males. There will be NO one-person monologues.

(With this requirement, a professional company can produce with a cast of four, while a school or other group can produce with up to forty participants.)

NO musicals, though playwrights may specify sound-effects, including music cues (but no specifically named titles).

Each playwright shall include in the cast of his/her play at least fifty percent actual teen characters, to make the plays more producible by school groups.

Casting for all plays will be colorblind.

Each playwright shall write his/her play with language and subject matter suitable for production in professional

companies, in high schools, and sophisticated middle-grade schools.

Along with this memo comes a copy of the Ten Commandments, as we'll be using them for the play. In the interest of hewing to the original text as much as possible, we're going with the version of the Ten Commandments from the 1995 Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) translation, of Exodus 20, as found below. (You can find the whole JTS translation of the Hebrew Bible at <http://www.jewish.com> by clicking on the "Torah" button.)

Do note, though, that there is a plethora of other translations. For instance, the King James approach to #6 is the familiar "Thou Shalt Not Kill," in contrast to the more literal JTS "You Shall Not Murder."

EXODUS CHAPTER 20, TEN COMMANDMENTS
(JTS translation)

- 1) I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage.
- 2) You shall have no other gods besides Me. You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them.
- 3) You shall not swear falsely by (ALT. TRANSLATION FROM HEBREW: take in vain) the name of the Lord your God; for the Lord will not clear one who swears falsely by his name.

- 4) Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God: you shall not do any work you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements.
- 5) Honor your father and your mother.
- 6) You shall not murder.
- 7) You shall not commit adultery.
- 8) You shall not steal.
- 9) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- 10) You shall not covet your neighbor's house: you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female slave, or his ox or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

Go to it.

Yours,
Jeff G.

10 by 10

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KELSO AND CASE-TEC

By
José Cruz González

Inspired by the First Commandment

© 2003 by José Cruz González

For Tia Licha and Vic

* * * * *

CHARACTERS

KELSO, a boy of 15

CASE-TEC, a boy of 17. Watches over his brother Kelso

SETTING: A bedroom.

TIME: The present. Early night.

Kelso and Case-Tec

AT RISE: *Night. The glow of a television set. KELSO and CASE-TEC sit watching the screen. KELSO surfs the channels by remote. There is no sound coming from the television.*

KELSO. See there he is again.

CASE-TEC. No way.

KELSO. It looks just like him but younger.

CASE-TEC. Go back.

KELSO (*changes the remote*). See!

CASE-TEC. That's impossible.

KELSO. Dude, I'm telling you it's him.

CASE-TEC. Give it here! (*CASE-TEC takes the remote from KELSO.*)

KELSO. Okay, there he is as an old man with a white beard carrying two stone tablets.

CASE-TEC. He's Moses, right?

KELSO. Here, the apes put him in prison.

CASE-TEC. It's *Planet of the Apes*.

KELSO. I like Marky Mark's version better.

CASE-TEC. Wow, check her out.

KELSO. Who?

CASE-TEC. The babe wearing the bikini in jail with him, stupid.

KELSO. Oh, yeah.

CASE-TEC. And now, he's really old holding a musket over his head smiling like an idiot.

KELSO. Weird.

CASE-TEC. What's his name?

KELSO. I don't know.

CASE-TEC. Who cares? *(The phone rings. They both jump to get it. CASE-TEC grabs it.)* Hello? Yeah, it's me. He's here too. Ah-huh?

KELSO. Let me listen.

CASE-TEC. Shhh! Yeah. Okay. Ah-huh. Ah-huh. Okay. *(CASE-TEC hangs up the phone.)*

KELSO. Well?

CASE-TEC. Nothing's changed.

KELSO. How long do we gotta wait?

CASE-TEC. 'Til something changes.

KELSO. Is Mom going to—

CASE-TEC. I don't know.

KELSO. Did we do the right thing?

CASE-TEC. We had to do it.

KELSO. But what if Pop hadn't—

CASE-TEC. It wouldn't have mattered. He always blows up.

KELSO. What's going to happen to us?

CASE-TEC. Why are you asking so many questions?

KELSO. I just want things the way they were.

CASE-TEC. We're never going back to that house. *(KELSO crosses to the television picking up a game controller.)* What are you doing?

KELSO. I'm playing a video game.

CASE-TEC. Dude, the thing's broken.

KELSO. I know that.

WONDER ON PAPER

By
Mary Hall Surface

Inspired by the Second Commandment

© 2003 by Mary Hall Surface

CHARACTERS

SHELLY, 14 years old

RUSSELL, 16 years old, Shelly's brother

Two actors are costumed as statues of RA and BASTET,
gods of ancient Egypt.

SETTING: The Egyptian gallery of a museum.

TIME: Today.

Wonder on Paper

AT RISE: *SHELLY sits on a bench in the Egyptian gallery of a museum. A statue of the Egyptian sun god, RA, and the cat-goddess BASTET, are the centerpieces of the gallery. Around her on the floor are crumpled sheets of paper. SHELLY sketches furiously in her sketchbook, but flips the pages, starting over and over, then finally rips yet another page and crumples it up, tossing it on the ground. RUSSELL rushes into the gallery.*

RUSSELL (*entering*). Shel? (*Sees her.*) Great. Got the right gallery. Thought I'd taken a wrong turn at the sphinx. What's up with the litter?

SHELLY (*drawing*). I'll pick it up. What time is it?

RUSSELL (*checking the clock on his cell phone*). Three o'clock. Exactly. I had my phone alarm programmed to beep in increasingly smaller intervals, with a mounting sense of urgency.

SHELLY. It can do that?

RUSSELL. Man and machine. We can do anything. Come on, we gotta go!

SHELLY (*drawing*). Can't.

RUSSELL. We promised Dad in blood we'd taxi back to the hotel by 3:30.

SHELLY. Can't.

RUSSELL (*rapidly picking up SHELLY's discarded drawings, shoving them into her backpack*). Shelly, if we blow this, our vacation is doomed! They won't let us out of their sight again!

SHELLY. I can't leave until I draw "beauty."

RUSSELL. Do what?

SHELLY. "Beauty." What is it? I want to draw it.

RUSSELL. It's summer, Shel. Honors art class is over.

SHELLY. This is for me! I've spent all day in this museum filled with gorgeous paintings and sculptures that artists have made for thousands of years—

RUSSELL. So draw one of those. (*Checking his clock*.) Quickly!

SHELLY. But they're beautiful *things*—not beauty itself. That's what I want to capture!

RUSSELL. OK. We'll look it up.

SHELLY. What?

RUSSELL (*punching keys on his cell phone*). Oxford English Dictionary. On-line. Mobile access. Definition: "Beauty."

SHELLY. Russell—

RUSSELL. Shelly. I have the information. The Knowledge.

SHELLY. You have a cell phone.

RUSSELL. I have the Holy Grail of access, a golden bowl of answers. But I can sign off—

SHELLY. Wait! What does it say?

RUSSELL (*reading from his Web access*). "Beauty: A quality that pleases the mind or senses." There you go. (*SHELLY does not move.*) So draw!

SHELLY. How do you draw that: a "quality"?

RUSSELL. You're an artist, Shel. Figure it out or give it up.

SHELLY. Is that your philosophy of life?

RUSSELL. Excuse me?

SHELLY. Anything you can't figure out, you just don't think about?

RUSSELL. Yes. Exactly! (*Looking at his phone.*) Depleting power bar. Now we really have to go.

SHELLY. Look at this statue.

RUSSELL. Shelly—

SHELLY. I need five minutes. Time me!

RUSSELL (*programming the phone*). Deal. Four fifty-nine and counting.

SHELLY (*looking at the statue*). Do you see?

RUSSELL (*reading the label*). "Egyptian. 2500 B.C. Sandstone. Ra, the sun god." And?

SHELLY. Whoever carved this wanted to know how the sun rises and sets. So he made a god.

RUSSELL. Who sailed in a golden boat across the sky, until sunset. I know all about him. Then he road down into the underworld, and rose again at sunrise. Sunset. Sunrise. But! Science has subsequently explained the actual patterns of the earth's rotation. So that's why this statue is no longer worshiped, but sits in a museum. Can we go now?

SHELLY. But did the artist really believe in Ra or was he trying to do what I'm trying to do?

RUSSELL. I'd call this guy "beast" before I'd call him "beauty."

SHELLY. Stop joking, Russell! Look at this one. She's Ra's daughter, Bastet.

RUSSELL. Who were the first people to keep cats as pets? (*Before SHELLY can answer.*) Egyptians! (*Congratulating himself.*) Score!

WAITING FOR BOBO

By

SANDRA FENICHEL ASHER

Inspired by the Third Commandment

© 2003 by Sandra Fenichel Asher

CHARACTERS

DANIELLE, 15 years old

JESSICA, 15 years old

SETTING: Outside of the Svmor One-Stop, a combination gas station, convenience store, roadside restaurant and Greyhound bus station in a small Midwestern town. The store may be represented by a glass door at center. The door sports a large, brightly colored poster showing a guitar and boldly proclaiming “Bobo Taylor! One Night Only!” A smaller sign on the door indicates that this is an official bus stop and displays the schedule; another gives the store hours and reads “Closed.”

TIME: The present.

Waiting for Bobo

AT RISE: *Past midnight, early spring, and it's turned chilly. DANIELLE is pacing up and down in the parking lot in front of the Savmor. Occasionally, she peers off L, searching the street in vain for signs of Bobo Taylor's tour bus. JESSICA has her back to the audience. She's reading the bus schedule. The door and area in front of it are bathed in eerie after-hours light. JESSICA has a sweater over her shoulders; DANIELLE does not.*

JESSICA. Danielle?

DANIELLE (*impatiently*). Yeah?

JESSICA. What time is it?

DANIELLE (*holds her wrist up to the light to read her watch*). One...fifty...seven.

JESSICA. The last bus left at twelve forty-three.

DANIELLE. So?

JESSICA. We should've been on it.

DANIELLE. He'll be here.

JESSICA. Next one's not until 7:09. In the *morning*.

DANIELLE. So we'll be home by eight. No problem.

JESSICA. That's not my point.

DANIELLE. What *is* your point, Jessica?

JESSICA. We may be stuck out here all night.

DANIELLE. He'll be here.

JESSICA. When?

DANIELLE. *Soon.*

JESSICA. The concert ended over two hours ago.

DANIELLE. There's a lot to do after a concert, you know?

They have to take down all that equipment, pack everything on the bus...and you saw how many people were trying to talk to him.

JESSICA. If you knew it was going to take so long, why did you tell him to meet us here?

DANIELLE. I thought this place stayed open all night.

JESSICA. Should've read the sign.

DANIELLE. It *looks* like a place that stays open all night!

JESSICA. Who'd come here after the last bus?

DANIELLE. We're here, aren't we?

JESSICA. Oh. Right. (*Muttering to herself.*) The Idiot Patrol.

DANIELLE. I figured it was a good location. Right on the highway. Easy to find.

JESSICA. So why hasn't he found it?

DANIELLE. *He will be here.*

JESSICA (*starts digging around in her purse*). I don't think so.

DANIELLE. What are you doing?

JESSICA. Looking for my cell phone.

DANIELLE. Why?

JESSICA. I'm going to call my mom.

DANIELLE. Jessica! You cannot call your mom!

JESSICA. Oh, no? Watch me.

DANIELLE. What are you going to say to her?

JESSICA. I'm going to ask her to come pick us up, what do you think?

DANIELLE. You told her you were spending the night at my house! I told *my* mom I was spending the night at *your* house! How are you going to explain being *here*?

JESSICA (*after a moment's thought*). She'll understand.

DANIELLE. Well, my mom will *not*! Do you want to get me grounded for the rest of my life?

JESSICA. No, but I don't want to spend the night in a parking lot, either.

DANIELLE. You promised, Jessica! You *swore* you wouldn't tell.

JESSICA. I know, but it's *creepy* out here. Everything's gone *dark*. And it's getting *cold*!

DANIELLE. You swore to *God*!

JESSICA (*a pause as she considers this—and slowly lets her purse slide to the ground. She plops down beside it*).

I don't know why I stay friends with you.

DANIELLE (*grinning, she sits beside JESSICA, bumping her a little in a teasing way—and also to get closer for warmth. She pulls half of JESSICA's sweater around her own shoulders*). Because it's fun, that's why.

JESSICA. You get me into more trouble—

DANIELLE. And you love it. You know you do! You loved sneaking out to go to this concert, and you loved talking to Bobo. Admit it!

JESSICA (*nodding*). It *was* fun. It was cool.

DANIELLE. Yes! And you're going to love being my best friend when I'm a rich and famous country star, touring coast to coast in my very own private bus, *just like Bobo!* (*Beat.*) You can be my manager, if you want.

JESSICA. I don't know anything about that stuff—

LAST MINUTE

By
BARRY KORNHAUSER

Inspired by the Fourth Commandment

© 2003 by Barry Kornhauser

For David and Lee

* * * * *

CHARACTERS

NARRATOR, female

ELECTRIC GUITAR PLAYER, female

ELECTRIC BASSIST, male

DRUMMER, male

The three actors portraying the musicians each need to be able to play sixty seconds of a hard-rock sound (although not necessarily well). This same minute of music is repeated in various permutations throughout the scenes. If that cannot be accomplished, it is possible for the sound to be pre-recorded with the actors miming the action of playing their instruments.

SETTING: A stage.

TIME: Seven minutes from Now.

Last Minute

AT RISE: *A dimly lit stage. Lingerin UC is a heavy-metal teen band comprised of a female ELECTRIC GUITAR PLAYER, male ELECTRIC BASSIST and male DRUMMER. Once they begin playing, their music should have a sound Rolling Stone magazine once described as “dinosaurs eating cars.” Over the musicians’ heads, across the width of the stage, hangs a single string of unlit Christmas lights. Downstage to one side, the set model of this production sits on a podium. Other than this, the stage is bare, void of any apparent design—all of which is replicated on the model, of course. A teenage female NARRATOR, carrying a clipboard and wearing a stop-watch around her neck, enters opposite the podium.*

SCENE 1

NARRATOR *(starting the watch; addressing the audience).* One. *(After assuring that the watch is running, she turns her attentions to the clipboard’s checklist, and calls.)* House up! *(The houselights turn on. The NARRATOR makes an affirmative checkmark on the clipboard list.)* House out! *(The houselights turn off again. The NARRATOR marks another check.)* Works, please! *(The stage brightens in a bland wash of work light. Another*

check.) Works out! (The stage dims even more darkly than before. Check again.) Dimmer check! (A pin spot comes up on the NARRATOR who makes another mark of approval.) Next! (A light comes up on the band. The GUITAR PLAYER begins a solo. Pleased, the NARRATOR makes another mark.) Next! (A special comes up on the set model. The NARRATOR looks at it, then the rest of the lit stage, and lastly into the darkened house. She makes her check, then lowers the clipboard.) Good! (She crosses to the model, the spotlight following her, places the clipboard inside the podium, and again addresses the audience.) In theater, an important tool of the scenic designer is the set model. (A brief but distinctive guitar flourish serves as a “fanfare.”) On this model of our set, built to scale, one inch equals one foot. If this play were to have a temporal model, one minute would equal one day. (The NARRATOR looks at her watch. When sixty seconds have passed, she stops it.) Time!

(The GUITAR PLAYER stops.)

SCENE 2

NARRATOR *(starting the watch)*. Two. *(A drum solo begins.)* In attempting to accomplish the task of interpreting the Word on the page as Action on the stage, we struggle to render in performance the text’s very atmosphere *(reaching into the podium, she produces an aerosol air freshener which she then sprays over the stage)* and also to actively engage you, the audience, in the process. *(She produces a Super-Soaker and sprays it across the audience. After a good squirting, the NARRATOR*

puts the water toy away and looks once again at her watch. When sixty seconds have passed, she clicks it off.) Time!

(The DRUMMER stops.)

SCENE 3

NARRATOR *(starting the watch)*. Three. *(The BASSIST begins his solo. The NARRATOR removes a large flowerpot and places it on the podium, then loads it with a few spadefuls of dirt also drawn from inside the podium. She plants a seed in that soil and then starts to cross the stage with the flowerpot. As she does so, she also begins speaking.)* In the building of this piece... *(She exits, but immediately reenters, crossing opposite and carrying what appears to be the same flowerpot, only now a small plant is growing in its soil. She continues speaking as she does so.)* ...we have worked slavishly... *(She exits again and instantly reenters with the plant, which has now grown considerably. In fact, it is so large it is cumbersome to carry. Once again, she continues as she crosses.)* ...to assemble and/or construct... *(She exits one last time, only to return right away, this time pulling a rope tied to a wheeled platform upon which sits that same flowerpot—now containing a young tree! One apple grows on its leafy branches. As she maneuvers the cart into position, she finishes her speech.)* ...production elements that are both utilitarian and aesthetically apt. *(She readjusts the tree's position until satisfied and then looks at her watch. When sixty seconds have passed, she stops it.)* Time!

(The BASSIST stops)

SITTING WITH BERTIE

By
RIC AVERILL

Inspired by the Fifth Commandment

© 2003 by Ric Averill

CHARACTERS

WILL
MOM
DAD
LIZ

SETTING: The action takes place in three areas: One—a kitchen table with four chairs, Two—several chairs arranged to look like a “bus” and Three—a pool of light on the other side of the bus representing “Day Camp.”

TIME: Summer.

Sitting With Bertie

AT RISE: *Lights come up on area One. DAD is reading a Civil War magazine and MOM is chopping some vegetables. WILL enters, flopping down a fish wrapped in newspaper. MOM opens it up, grimaces slightly.*

WILL. I really caught two, but the other got away. *(DAD smiles and nods.)*

MOM. I'll fry it up if you like.

DAD. Bones and all it's at least twelve ounces—camp record?

WILL. My first fish this summer, Pops—so I suppose that makes it a record.

DAD. Catch two tomorrow, set a new one.

WILL *(in DAD's face)*. I'd be better if you'd ever taken me fishing as a kid.

DAD. You are a kid. And I paid for camp.

MOM. *We* paid for camp?

DAD *(smiles at her)*. That's true, so true. *(To WILL.)* You man enough to scale it?

WILL. We did the gross stuff at the dock—slit it, gutted it and washed it off with the hose. I'm gonna dry the scales and hot-glue them to Iggy.

MOM. In the garage. Dry them in the house and it'll smell worse than Libby's diapers.

WILL. No. Nothing smells worse—

DAD. Iggy will be the world's first fish-a-saurus.

WILL. He's a dragon, Dad, not a dinosaur. Dragons have scales. You had no childhood.

MOM (*handing DAD a piece of carrot*). He's still in it.

DAD. Ah, I forgot the progression—you give up dinosaurs when you notice girls and... (*Looks at MOM.*) you don't need dragons once you're married.

WILL (*pause*). I wanna take two Fishing sessions tomorrow. Will you write me a note?

MOM. What would you have to miss?

WILL. Just Horsemanship.

DAD. You love Horsemanship. I'm making a trophy case for all your badges.

WILL. If I catch three fish we can all have one for dinner tomorrow. Please.

DAD (*looks up at MOM*). Just follow the normal rotation. It can't hurt to do what the counselors expect.

WILL. Maybe I don't even want to go.

DAD (*looks up from magazine*). Really. (*Pause.*) What's going on? Horses bite or something.

WILL. No. It's just fishing's more fun.

DAD. More fun. And?

WILL. Paul Kahn isn't there.

DAD. Don't let him give you any trouble this year.

WILL. Too late. Him being there is trouble.

MOM. What about Liz? She'll be riding, won't she?

WILL. She's hardly talking to me. Will you just write the note?

DAD (*looks at MOM, they come to a silent agreement*). Just stay in the rotation and I'll take you fishing Sunday.

Really—borrow Uncle Tom’s gear. Promise. (*WILL thinks for a minute, looks up, nods reluctantly.*)

MOM. Give it one more day.

WILL. I suppose. (*WILL walks over to area Three—“Day Camp”—where LIZ walks into the scene.*) Hey, Liz, walk you to Fishing?

LIZ (*a little surprised, looks around*). Will. No, I mean, uh, I’m not going. I’m taking double Horsemanship. (*Holds up a note.*) Dad wrote me a note.

WILL. Why?

LIZ. Fish smell.

WILL. Horses don’t?

LIZ (*looks around*). Look, I gotta go. I don’t want to be late. (*Starts to leave.*)

WILL (*stops her with his voice*). For Paul? What’s he been saying about me?

LIZ. Nothing, I don’t know. (*Pause.*) I guess you just gotta think a little before you pick your friends.

WILL (*slightly sarcastic*). Yeah, well I’m sure Paul’s a fine friend.

LIZ. Look, I’ll see you at Youth Group, OK? Just not here. I really gotta go. (*She leaves. He kicks the ground.*)

WILL. Stupid. (*He walks to area One—the kitchen.*) Stupid, stupid, stupid me.

(*MOM is standing, arms crossed. DAD is seated, doodling with a pen. WILL sits across from him.*)

MOM. A fight. That’s just not like you.

WILL. Is today.

DAD. Don’t take that tone with your mother.

WILL. Sorry, can I go?

“QUICK-DRAW GRANDMA”

By
ELIZABETH WONG

Inspired by the Sixth Commandment

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CHARACTERS

GRANDMA, 80s, a white-haired, sweet-faced bubbeh/abuelita/nen nen/nonna/nanna/oma. She can be Jewish or Mexican or Chinese or Italian or German. In other words, Granny was born elsewhere. English is her second language.

KEVIN, 13 years old, a kindhearted kid with a logical mind, born here in the United States to first-generation American parents. His idol is extreme pro-skater Tony Hawk, and he dreams about doing scary tricks on his skateboard. He uses the word “Grandma” and its language equivalent interchangeably.

SETTING: On the porch, on the stoop, or a backyard patio, USA.

TIME: A hot summer day.

NOTES

Costumes should be contemporary, not cartoon-y. Do not costume for ethnicity or ethnic origin. No babushka attire for Granny! Imaginary flies are best, suggested by the sound of buzzing. Props: (minimal to none), except a skateboard, jar of flies and an accordion-style handheld Asian fan.

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“Quick-Draw Grandma”

AT RISE: *GRANDMA, sitting on a low stool. She finds relief from the summer heat by cooling herself with a pretty fan.*

GRANDMA. Two eighty-one. Two eighty-one. Two eighty-one. *(Loud buzzing from an unseen black fly.)* Two eighty-one. Two eighteeeeeeee... *(Suddenly, she snaps shut the fan, and WHAM!!! This fly is finito.)* Two. Two eighty-two. *(She flicks the unseen fly into a jar black with its dead brethren.)* Two eighty-two. Two eighteeeeeeee... *(Multiple buzzing. With her eyes, GRANDMA tracks three separate flies zipping around in a complicated trajectory. Suddenly, she wields her deadly fan! BAM! BAM! And...BAM! GRANDMA, pointing to each carcass.)* Three, four, and FIVE!

(Seated or standing, GRANDMA does a delightful butt-wiggling victory dance. KEVIN enters, riding a skateboard.)

KEVIN *(overlapping)*. FIVE-forty varial McTwist from the vert, takes big air, the crowd goes wild, land the revert with awesome style, yaaaaay. And, for the grand finale, I bust a 360 one-wheel one-handed handstand! *(Beat.)*

Awright! (*He hops off his skateboard. To GRANDMA.*)
Waaaaaassup, “Gee.” (*GRANDMA holds up her jar, shakes it. KEVIN peers into jar.*) Whoa. That is a whole lot of dead flies. How many you got?

GRANDMA. Two hundred eighty-five, and counting.

KEVIN. Whoa, Grandma Bin Laden. What’s up with the mass extermination?

GRANDMA. I don’t like the way they think.

KEVIN. Whoa. (*Beat.*) Huh?

GRANDMA. The mind of a fly works like the mind of the criminal. They sneak like a thief into your house. They fly everywhere, land on everything, create crazy chaos!

KEVIN. Okaaaay. (*Beat.*) I don’t get it.

GRANDMA. Come, my Kevin. Come look. Closer. Closer. Close enough.

KEVIN (*looks at a fly on the ground*). Little dude is just chillin’.

GRANDMA. See how he’s rubbing his hands. Like this. (*She demonstrates the movements of a fly with reasonable facsimile.*) Do you know why? Because first, they load up on rotting stinking rotting garbage, and then, over there, they see fresh steaming doggie doo, oh ho, let’s go land on it. So they rub rub rub rub, clean clean clean all that disgusting doggie doo right into your dinner.

KEVIN. Grosssssssss, Grandma.

GRANDMA. That’s nothing. When I was your age, in the old country, because we were soooooo hungry, we had to eat food even though there were flies in it, big dead flies and some even still wiggling. In order to survive, we had to eat flies.

KEVIN. Grosssssssss. So that’s why you kill flies?

GROWN UP TREE

By

CALEEN SINNETTE JENNINGS

Inspired by the Seventh Commandment

© 2003 by Caleen Sinnette Jennings

CHARACTERS

BITTY, age 11 (played by a girl 11-13)

BILLY, age 16 (played by a boy 16-18)

BETH, 40 (played by a woman 35-45)

SETTING: An oak tree dominates the stage. It has a thick trunk and roots deep into the ground. It looks embracing and menacing at the same time. On the ground beneath the tree is a rumpled sheet.

TIME: The early 1960s.

Grown Up Tree

AT RISE: *BITTY sits on the sheet rubbing her arm. She catches a glimpse of a gold wedding band, grabs it and holds it up to the light. BETH runs in from R, still looking over her shoulder at someone offstage. She is breathless and disheveled. BITTY quickly hides the ring in her pocket and rubs her arm again.*

BETH. Is it broken, Bitty? Let me see?

BITTY. It's just sore. *(BETH checks BITTY for broken bones, BITTY eases away.)* I'm all right, Mama.

BETH. Get off the sheet. *(BETH pulls the sheet out from under BITTY and bundles it up.)* Why aren't you in school?

BITTY. Half day. *(Pointing offstage R.)* Who's that, Mama?

BETH. I'm calling the school so you'd better be telling the truth. *(BETH starts to exit. BITTY grabs her arm and points offstage R.)*

BITTY. Who's that man running?

BETH. I ought to spank you for sitting up there.

BITTY. I like being up in my tree. Daddy promised to make me a swing, but he didn't.

BETH. Maybe he'll make it when he gets better.

BITTY. Is he gonna die?

BETH. Hush now, Bitty. Come in the house.

BITTY. The sky's mad today.

BETH. It's gonna rain.

BITTY. Who was that man?

BETH. Nobody.

BITTY. Mr. Nobody?

BETH. Look, Bitty... It was nothing. We were just talking.
(Starting to exit.) Now come on in. You're just getting over a cold.

BITTY. You kissed him.

BETH. No, honey, I...

BITTY. I saw you. You kissed him and then he... *(BETH puts her hand gently over BITTY's mouth. Then she smooths BITTY's hair and hugs her.)* If you hadn't screamed, I wouldn't have fallen out of my tree.

BETH. I'm sorry. I was surprised to see a face in the branches.

BITTY. I was surprised when you and Mr. Nobody found my secret tree.

BETH. Let's forget about it, okay? *(BETH glances at her left hand and jumps. She spreads out the sheet and looks, then she searches the ground all around the tree.)*

BITTY. What's wrong?

BETH. Nothing. Go inside now.

BITTY. I love Daddy.

BETH. I know, honey.

BITTY. Do you love Daddy?

BETH *(continues searching the ground)*. Yes.

BITTY. Then why did you kiss Mr. Nobody?

BETH. Mama can't talk about this now, Bitty-baby.

BITTY. Don't call me that! I'm not a baby!

BETH. I'm sorry. You're Bitty-Big Girl, okay?

BITTY (*cries in frustration*). I've got underarm hair, and leg hair, and I got a boyfriend named Raymond Branch, and he's gonna marry me, and he kissed me too, nicer than Mr. Nobody! (*BETH, startled by the outburst, hands BITTY a handkerchief.*)

BETH. Bitty, please don't cry. Blow your nose. I know you're upset. I'm sorry. Hush now. (*She drops to her hands and knees to search again.*)

BITTY. What are you looking for?

BETH. Nothing.

BITTY. Maybe Mr. Nobody took your nothing. (*BITTY stretches out her arms and circles around the tree. BETH searches the ground but occasionally glances at BITTY.*)

BETH. Have you seen my ring?

BITTY (*chanting as she circles her tree*).

What you doing?

I don't know.

Ring around my tree I go.

Daddy says my tree has rings, and every ring tells you what happened to my tree each year it was alive—if it had too much rain, if it was thirsty, if it got hit by lightning. The rings tell me secrets. I'm making rings around the rings. (*BITTY makes circles around the tree as she chants.*)

Ring around my big oak tree

Who is going to marry me?

BETH. Help me look for my ring, Bitty. Please? (*BITTY joins BETH on her knees. BETH searches, BITTY talks.*)

Promise not to say anything about what you saw.

BITTY. 'Cause you'll get in trouble?

BETH. You don't want to hurt Daddy, do you?

OUT OF ORDER

By
CHERIE BENNETT

Inspired by the Eighth Commandment

© 2003 by Cherie Bennett

CHARACTERS

ZOEY, age 14

EVE, about the same age

SETTING: The girls' bathroom of a school.

TIME: The present.

Out of Order

AT RISE: *Rock music plays. Lights up on a school bathroom. There is a full-length mirror and a toilet stall with a large OUT OF ORDER sign on it. ZOEY DEAN, dressed for a school dance, stomps in, livid. She pulls a cell phone from her purse and pushes in a number.*

ZOEY (*into phone*). Heather? It's me... At the school dance. You're never going to believe who... In the john... No, the one in the basement... So I could have *privacy*. Are you ready? *Jason is here*... No, I am not kidding. And he came with Beth Bingham... Yeah, Beth Bingham with the red hair and the really big... I'm *totally* serious. So he sees me and his face gets all red, and he goes: "Oh hi, Zoey, I was going to call you." So I go: "Oh hi, Jason, I was going to hold my breath." So then *Beth* goes: "Zoey, could you watch my purse while Jason and I dance?" Can you even believe the nerve? So I go: "Sure," like I could care less, because I'm not going to give either one of them the satisfaction of— (*There is a sudden pounding from inside the toilet stall. ZOEY yelps, startled. Into phone:*) Heather? Someone is in here! I'll call you back. (*She drops the phone into her purse. Calling:*) Who's in there? (*Even louder pounding on the door.*) What is your problem? Just open the door! (*A hand appears over the door, points at ZOEY and*

mimes that she should open it.) You want me to open it? (The hand makes the “Okay” sign. Exasperated:) Fine.

(ZOEY pulls on the door, it’s stuck. She finally yanks it open. A girl tumbles out, clad in the school’s gym uniform. Sewn to it is a bikini made of leaves.)

EVE. Jeez, it took you long enough. *(ZOEY helps the girl up and takes in her bizarre outfit.)*

ZOEY. Michael Green told you this was a costume dance, didn’t he? He pulls that every year. He’s such a—

EVE. Who’s Michael Green?

ZOEY. You mean you wore that *on purpose*?

EVE. I have a limited wardrobe.

ZOEY. Oh. Sorry. I’m Zoey Dean.

EVE. Yuh, I know. I’m Eve.

ZOEY. Eve what?

EVE. Just “Eve.”

ZOEY. Like, just “Madonna” or just “Pink”?

EVE. They totally copied that from me. I would have made such an awesome rock star. *(ZOEY decides the girl is crazy and backs toward the door.)*

ZOEY. Uh-huh. Well...nice meeting you...uh...Eve.

EVE. Hey, I’m really sorry about what happened with Jason. *(ZOEY crosses back to EVE.)*

ZOEY. That conversation was *private*.

EVE. I was eavesdropping. Get it? *Eavesdropping*?

ZOEY. *So* not funny. Do you even go to this school?

EVE. ...no.

ZOEY. Then you shouldn’t be here.

EVE. It’s not like I have a choice.

ZOEY. What are you talking about?

EVE (*exasperated*). Let's review, shall we? I'm *Eve*. Wearing *fig leaves*. Banished from the *Garden*. No *bellybutton*. Do the math. (*Back to the audience, EVE lifts her T-shirt so that ZOEY can see she doesn't have a navel.*)

ZOEY. Whoa, you really don't. That's horrible!

EVE. No kidding. Forget a navel ring.

ZOEY. I mean you're like, deformed. How were you even born?

EVE (*beyond exasperated*). I *wasn't*. I'm *Eve*.

ZOEY. Please. If you were *Eve*, you'd be a gazillion years old.

EVE. A gazillion and one on my last birthday, but who's counting?

ZOEY. Then why do you look like a teenager?

EVE. If you're not born, you can't die. Plus, once we got kicked out of the *Garden*, I didn't get much sun.

ZOEY (*highly dubious*). Uh-huh. After you got kicked out of the *Garden of Eden*, you were banished to my school.

EVE. Technically, the *basement* of your school.

ZOEY. So you're telling me *Adam's* down here, too.

EVE. Yep.

ZOEY. And the snake.

EVE. No. He's crawling around under [name of rival school]. *Much* worse. It's a weird theological space-time-continuum thingie.

ZOEY. You don't really expect me to believe that.

EVE. You want me to explain a weird theological space-time-continuum thingie when you got a C in English?

ZOEY. How'd you know about that?

EVE. You told *Heather*. I was in the heating vents, listening through the grate.

ZOEY. I thought you were supposed to stay down here.

FORK IN THE ROAD

By
Y YORK

Inspired by the Ninth Commandment

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CHARACTERS

DESIE, 17, dressed for school

IAN HASKEL, 17, dressed in grease-covered overalls.

Although similar in intelligence, they cope with the pain of reality differently.

SETTING: Along a moderately traveled road in a moderately sized town.

TIME: The present. Early morning.

Fork in the Road

AT RISE: *Early morning along the road. DESIE watches cars drive by, waves. Unseen by her, IAN HASKEL stops to watch. She lets a few cars pass, then she waves again.*

IAN HASKEL. I don't get it.

DESIE (*jumps in surprise*). Ah!

IAN HASKEL. What are you doing?

DESIE. ...Nothing.

IAN HASKEL. Yeah you are—you're waving at cars. I saw you... Do you even know those people?

DESIE. Yeah.

IAN HASKEL. Who are they?

DESIE. ...They're the people who live across the street.

IAN HASKEL. Across what street?

DESIE. Across the street.

IAN HASKEL. Across the street from you?

DESIE. Yeah.

IAN HASKEL. ...The blue car or the white car?

DESIE. What?

IAN HASKEL (*slowly*). Do the people in the blue car or do the people in the white car live across the street from you?

DESIE. ...Both.

IAN HASKEL (*laughs*). So what's their name?

DESIE. Jones.

IAN HASKEL. Jones is your name. Desie... You crack me up.

DESIE. I didn't mean to.

IAN HASKEL. So how come you're waving? How come you wave when two cars pass and not when one car passes? (*Silence.*) Come on, spill. (*Silence.*) Hey, I don't care. I'm not going to "turn you in to the authorities."

DESIE. Were you in jail, Ian Haskel?

IAN HASKEL. Jeez, who said that?

DESIE. Nobody. I saw the police car. Then you weren't there anymore.

IAN HASKEL. Don't believe everything you hear.

DESIE. I didn't hear it, I thought it.

IAN HASKEL. Then don't believe everything you think.

DESIE. I don't know how to do that—

IAN HASKEL. Bunch of guys stand up and point their finger, doesn't mean it's true. I was no "danger," no danger to anybody. I punched the wall. That's all who I punched, the wall.

DESIE. ...The hole between the boys' room and the girls' room?

IAN HASKEL (*checks his fist*). Hurt like crazy. But I didn't punch a guy. None of them were ever in any danger, and they knew it—

DESIE. It was a plaster wall. Very thick.

IAN HASKEL. I wouldn't ever hurt a person, I wouldn't. Mike McKeon wasn't even there. The other guys just told him about it, and he's the one everybody believed...! almost believed him myself, he told such a good story. What are you supposed to do when somebody tells a good story like that on you? Under oath!

DESIE. Mike McKeon is a very good speaker.

IAN HASKEL. See. You believe him, and you didn't even hear what he said.

DESIE. They fixed the hole.

IAN HASKEL. I don't care—I'm not going back. I'm in the real world now. I fix engines. I punch a clock. (*He makes a fist and jabs the air.*) I'm there on time because they pay me to be there on time, which is a better reason to be on time than school reasons, which I never even knew what they were. (*He jabs the air. For the first time, DESIE is a little scared.*)

DESIE. What time is it?

IAN HASKEL. I don't know. It's early yet.

DESIE. I should go to school.

IAN HASKEL. Don't be scared—I told you I didn't punch anybody—

DESIE. No, I just have to get there before the bell.

IAN HASKEL. Yeah? You going to meet somebody? Somebody going to share their morning muffin with you?

DESIE. No muffin.

IAN HASKEL. You going to let somebody copy your homework? Some friend?

DESIE. They look at you if you get there after the bell.

IAN HASKEL. You're not going to miss the bell.

DESIE. What time does your work start?

IAN HASKEL. I just got off. Ian Haskel works while the rest of the world sleeps. Does that make you feel safer? To know that Ian Haskel works while you sleep?

DESIE. I wasn't feeling unsafe—I told you—I don't want to be late for school is all I'm feeling.

GET

By
JAMES DEVITA

Inspired by the Tenth Commandment

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CHARACTERS

JESSE, a boy of about 14 or 15

KEVIN, his brother, high energy, mid- to late 20s

CLAUDIA, their sister, about 17

SETTING: A lawyer's office.

TIME: Now.

Get

AT RISE: *A lawyer's office. JESSE is sitting on a bench listening to a portable CD player. He wears loose-fitting clothes, a wild-colored tie-dyed T-shirt and a funky loose-knit cap. His eyes are closed as he sways back and forth listening to his music. KEVIN is on his cell phone mid-conversation. He is dressed extremely smart in a suit and tie, professional but very hip.*

KEVIN. I want champagne. Yeah. No, no, champagne the color. It's a color. What are you talking about? Every exec in the building has one. *(To JESSE.)* You believe this guy? *(Into phone.)* No, it's nothing like that, it's kind of, you know, it's kind of...it's champagne-y—it's like a light tan, like a kinda light gold...gold-ish, kinda light tan, you know? *(JESSE starts making percussive sounds with his mouth. He will do this wherever appropriate whenever he speaks his hip-hop.)* Like champagne. Yeah. That's why they call it that.

JESSE. Champagne be the name say the man on the train...

KEVIN *(into phone)*. Look, okay, okay—stop! Stop! Look out your window.

JESSE. His face lookin' pained as he tries to explain...
(Percussive sounds.)

KEVIN (*overlapping percussive sounds*). Just, just look out the—

JESSE. ...this game named fame... (*Percussive sounds.*)

KEVIN. Jesse, please?

JESSE. ...it's a shame it's so lame... (*Percussive sounds.*)

KEVIN (*into phone*). You looking?

JESSE. ...it's drain on the brain... (*Percussive sounds.*)

KEVIN (*giving JESSE a look, but into the phone*). The company parking lot—you looking at it? Okay, good—look to your right. See where the VIPs park? The president, vice president? Look at their cars. That's champagne. Yeah. Get me one. (*Shaking his head in disgust and dialing another number on his phone as he looks at his watch. JESSE continues soft percussive sounds, entertaining himself.*) These interns working for me are about this (*holds up a pen*) smart. I wheeler-dealed a company car with my new contract. Two of the guys in marketing had one. I figure why should they get one and not me, right?—management went for it. Hey, give me a break with the rapping, would you, Jess?

JESSE. It's true what I do may be voodoo à la you but the reason for ma' teasin' is you gotta getta clue, get a clue, get clue, gotta gotta getta clue.

KEVIN. C'mon already—

JESSE. Don't be a moo in a zoo.

KEVIN. Make yourself useful and help me find a phone-book in here.

JESSE. Be the bro that can-do.

KEVIN. I need a— (*Into his phone.*) Hi. Yeah, it's me.

JESSE (*softly, to himself*). The bro that can-do- (*Rapid-fire percussive.*) -do, do, do, do, do, do, do.

KEVIN. I'm going to be late. (*Louder. Looking for a phonebook.*) LATE. Yeah, I'm going to have to get a ride. (*Of phone.*) Great, this thing is dying. (*Into phone.*) What? I can't hear you.

(*CLAUDIA enters. She is wearing helmet, sunglasses and a backpack.*)

KEVIN. I'm going to call you on the land line. Yeah, call you right back. (*He uses a phone on the desk. To CLAUDIA.*) Hey.

CLAUDIA (*doesn't acknowledge KEVIN. She speaks to JESSE*). Hey.

JESSE (*high-fiving CLAUDIA*). I weigh what you say and I lay the trey—hey. (*She sits on the bench.*)

KEVIN (*into phone*). Yeah, it's me. Hold on. (*Finding and giving phonebook to JESSE.*) Jesse, could you look me up a limo service— (*Into phone.*) What? You gotta talk louder.

CLAUDIA (*to JESSE of the music he is listening to*). What? (*JESSE holds up the CD cover. CLAUDIA takes it, removes her sunglasses and examines it.*)

KEVIN (*into phone*). Can you hear me? I can't hear you.

CLAUDIA (*to JESSE, handing the CD back*). Are they here yet? (*JESSE shakes his head "no."*)

KEVIN. Hey, Jess, do me a favor and look up a— (*Into phone.*) What? No, just stay where you are; I'm not going to get dropped off like some car-pooling office goon. I'm looking up a— (*JESSE gives him the phonebook having looked up the number. KEVIN grabs it.*) Thanks. (*Into phone.*) Got a pen? Okay, call this number and get me a limo: 555-XXXX. (*Spelling it out slower.*) 555-

XXXX. All right? Good. Have them meet me here after one-thirty. Yeah. Okay. Okay. Yeah. 'Bye. (*Sits between CLAUDIA and JESSE. JESSE takes off his headphones. All looking straight ahead.*) It's a wonder. You know that? Working with people like this? It's a wonder we've come this far. The human race. We're doomed. I actually think we're doomed. (*Pause.*) "Doom on you." Wasn't that from—did you see that movie? We took the kids to it? The one with the penguins? The extinct penguins?