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Whistle Stop

(One-Act Version)

By
TRACY WELLS

Dramatic Publishing Company
Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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TRACY WELLS

Printed in the United States of America
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(WHISTLE STOP [ONE-ACT VERSION])

ISBN: 978-1-61959-350-3

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Whistle Stop was premiered by the Green Room Theatre Company at Grayslake North High School (Grayslake, Ill.) in November 2024.

CAST:

SHEILA.....	Siena Pietraszak
DOLORES	Tamara Tan
FRAN	Alexys Wiggins
EDIE.....	Kiley Wollner
SANDY FLETCHER.....	Phoebe Draper
TERRY	Mara Cardenas-Castro
ROBERTA.....	Delaney Obrycki
GRADY BRIGGS	Matthew Bergst
JULES	Emily Meneses
MEL.....	Reagan Morris
VICTOR PRESTON	Grayson Kent
JAMES	Andrew Wilson
CHRIS CONNORS	River Finan
CANDIDATE	Owen Obrycki
REPORTERS.....	Natalia Chavez,
	A.J. Lemer, Maggie McNiece

PRODUCTION:

Director	Clare McConville
Technical Directors	Patrick Blake, Patrick Green, Cher Schwartz
Costumes/Makeup.....	River Finan, Natalia Chavez, Mara Cardenas-Castro, Kiley Wollner, Phoebe Draper, CeCe Tyndal, Fiji Diep, Reagan Morris, Jamie Retana
Construction.....	Khloe Fernandez, Tamara Tan, Grayson Kent, Ren Ryan, Owen Obrycki, Andrew Wilson, Noah Mataya, Jay Arboleda
Paint	Alexys Wiggins, Denora Manjali, Kylie Krebs
Props & Set Pieces	Siena Pietraszak, A.J. Lemer, Sarah Hansen, Lauren Harms, Emily Meneses
Lighting.....	Grey Jakubisin, Julian Ayala, Addy Kamilis
Sound	Chase Wiggins, Matthew Bergst
Publicity/Program	Delaney Obrycki, & Front of House Gray Waldenstrom, Gillian Gatewood
Stage Management Team	Addy Kamilis, Maggie McNiece, Amber Johannsen

Whistle Stop

(One-Act Version)

CHARACTERS

SHEILA (w): No-nonsense waitress of the Whistle Stop Diner who's not easily fazed.

DARRYL/DOLORES (a): Gruff cook at the Whistle Stop who says little but, at the same time, says a lot.

FRANK/FRAN (a): Diner regular who humorously offers commentary on town goings-on.

EDDIE/EDIE (a): Another regular. Friend of FRANK/FRAN.

SANDY FLETCHER (a): Town councilperson who wants to make a good impression.

TERRY (a): Local reporter ready for a headline.

ROBERTA/ROBERT (a): Sweet, good-natured local florist.

GRADY/GABBY BRIGGS (a): Bumbling police deputy who takes their job very seriously.

JULES (a): Member of the Purple Hat Society and competitive friend to MEL.

MEL (a): Also a member of the the Purple Hat Society and competitive friend to JULES.

VICTOR/VICTORIA PRESTON (a): Local business owner who's ready to seize an opportunity.

JANE/JAMES (a): Energetic high-school senior and student-body president.

CHRIS CONNORS (a): Campaign volunteer enlisted to get the diner ready for the candidate.

CANDIDATE (a): The candidate.

HANDLERS (a): For the candidate; no lines; at least two of them.

REPORTERS (a): Flock the candidate; at least three of them.

MARCHING BAND (a): Optional high-school band members. Music can be played offstage.

DINERS (a): Extra diners at the Whistle Stop.

PLACE: Interior of the Whistle Stop Diner—a simple, rundown, yet clean diner in a small town.

TIME: Modern day, or any presidential election year after 1960.

Whistle Stop

(One-Act Version)

Scene 1

(ATRISE: FRANK and EDDIE are seated at the counter, with one stool between them. They each have a cup of coffee in front of them. EDDIE is eating pancakes. FRANK is looking at a menu. There is a newspaper on the counter near them. SHEILA is working behind the counter. Throughout the scene, as diners enter and food is ordered, when she is not speaking, SHEILA is delivering food, refilling coffee, wiping the counter, etc. SANDY is seated at a table reading the newspaper, drinking coffee and eating dry toast. ROBERTA is at another table looking at a menu.)

SHEILA. What's it gonna be, Frank?

FRANK. Not sure yet.

SHEILA. You eat here every day, breakfast, lunch and dinner, and order the exact same meals.

FRANK *(putting down his menu, indignantly)*. I do not!

SHEILA. Breakfast.

SHEILA & EDDIE *(in unison)*. Two eggs over easy, home fries and a side of toast.

SHEILA. Lunch.

SHEILA & EDDIE. Tuna on rye, open faced, with a pickle spear and a side of potato chips.

SHEILA. Dinner.

SHEILA & EDDIE. The daily special.

FRANK. See! I order the daily special. That's a different meal every day.

SHEILA. Three times a week it's chicken, twice a week it's ham and the other two days it's meatloaf.

EDDIE. Face it, Frank. You're predictable.

FRANK. Can it, Eddie. I'm not predictable. In fact, I thought I'd try something new today.

EDDIE. The day you try something new is the day I eat my own shoe.

FRANK. Well, I hope you wore your tastiest pair 'cause today is that day. (*Opening the menu.*) I just need a few minutes to decide.

SHEILA (*with an affectionate smirk*). I'll come back around in a bit. (*Picks up the coffee pot and a mug and crosses to ROBERTA.*) Mornin', Roberta. What can I getcha?

(SHEILA puts down the mug and fills it with coffee, then puts the coffee pot on the table and pulls out a pad from her apron and a pencil from behind her ear and gets ready to take the order.)

ROBERTA. I'll have the scrambled eggs and an English muffin.

SHEILA. Coming right up!

(SHEILA tears off the ticket, picks up the coffee pot, takes the ticket to the window and hits the bell.)

SHEILA. One order of broken hen-berries and burn the British.

DOLORES (*grabbing the ticket, grumpily, with a scowl*). Hrmph.

ROBERTA (*turns to SANDY*). Hey, Sandy, if you're done with the weather section, can I take a look? I'm expecting a delivery of some orchids later this week, and I want to make sure they'll arrive safely.

SANDY. Sure thing. (*Passes ROBERTA a section of the newspaper.*) I'm more focused on national politics anyway.

EDDIE. Just what the world needs ... more politicians and their back-door deals with lobbyists.

SANDY (*rolling his eyes*). I'm a small-town city councilman, guys. I'm more concerned with the lobby of the local library than political lobbies.

(*SHEILA crosses to SANDY with the coffee pot.*)

SHEILA. Got any important city council business to take care of today?

SANDY. I don't know about important ... I have a face-to-face with the mayor to discuss the broken parking meters followed by a meeting with the chamber of commerce to discuss that empty lot on the corner of Elm and Maple. And then there's a lunch with the Purple Hat Society where they'll as for a daily tea time with mandatory work stoppage and my head on a platter. (*Grimaces.*)

SHEILA. Those purple hatters aren't big fans of yours, huh, Sandy? Sounds like you could use a refill.

SANDY (*holds up his cup*). Better make it a double.

(*SHEILA refills the cup as the door opens with the sound of a tinkling bell. SHEILA turns. TERRY enters, rubbing her hands and brushing off her coat.*)

SHEILA. It's really comin' down out there, eh Terry?

TERRY. You know it! I'm gonna wring Gary's neck! It's his job at the paper to predict these things. He totally missed this entire snowstorm!

SHEILA. Well, you can hardly blame him. It is the end of March, after all.

TERRY (*crossing to a table or counter*). Yeah, but you know we're always good for one last snowfall before spring settles in.

(*TERRY sits and opens a menu as SHEILA crosses to FRANK.*)

SHEILA (*cont'd*). You ready to order yet, Frank?

FRANK. Maybe. (*Points to something on the menu.*) Can you tell me what's in the blueberry pancakes?

SHEILA. Blueberries.

FRANK. Right. (*Points to another item.*) And what about the fruit cup? What's in that?

SHEILA. Fruit.

FRANK (*looks at the menu again*). I'm going to need a few more minutes.

(*SHEILA grabs a mug and crosses to TERRY. She pours coffee into the mug as TERRY looks up from her menu. SHEILA pulls out her pad and pencil.*)

TERRY. I'll have the western omelette with onions and a side of fries.

SHEILA. You got it.

(*SHEILA writes the order then tears off the ticket and brings it to the window, hitting the bell.*)

SHEILA (*cont'd*). One cowboy with spurs and make it cry.

TERRY. Hey, Sheila, can you put a rush on that?

SHEILA (*hitting the bell*). On the fly!

DOLORES (*grabbing the ticket, grumpily, with a scowl*).
Hrmph.

TERRY. Thanks. I gotta meet the mayor in thirty minutes.

SANDY (*turning*). I've got a meeting with the mayor in thirty minutes too!

TERRY. Is it about the parking meters? I'm covering it for the paper. (*Rolls her eyes and sighs.*) That'll probably be the headline for tomorrow's edition.

SANDY (*holds up his paper*). Slow news day, huh?

TERRY. Isn't it always? (*Leans over to look at his section of the newspaper.*) Reading up on the presidential primaries?

SANDY. Yep. It's pretty much all that's been in this section the last couple of weeks.

FRANK. Well, I, for one, don't know why we have to go through all this for a year or more. Just pick two candidates and let us vote for one.

SANDY. That's literally what the primaries are for, Frank.

FRANK. Still ... I don't see why they gotta drag it out so much. Seems like all we hear about on the news these days is who wants to be president.

TERRY. Well at least today there's a bit of a local spin on the story.

ROBERTA. Oh, yeah! The campaign trail is making its way through Fairview today, isn't it?

TERRY. Yep. I'm sure the Gold Star Café is getting ready for their big visit from this year's candidate.

ROBERTA. Lucky them. If only President Eisenhower had stopped here back in 1952 instead of two towns over in Fairview, then we'd be the ones in the midst of all the excitement.

EDDIE. Yeah, the only exciting thing happening in the Whistle Stop today is watching Frank pretend he's going to order something different for a change.

FRANK. I *am* ordering something different. Just give me a minute.

DOLORES (*putting a plate on the sill and hitting the bell*).
Order up!

(FRANK looks at the menu as SHEILA grabs the plate and delivers it. GRADY BRIGGS enters, hiking up his pants a little while trying to look official. He looks around.)

SHEILA. Just sit anywhere, Grady. There's plenty of room.

GRADY. Oh, I'm not here to eat. I'm here on official police business. (*Crosses to EDDIE.*) That your Buick parked out back, Eddie?

EDDIE. You know it is, Grady. My car is right there, in the same spot, every day.

GRADY. You're double parked.

EDDIE (*indignant, turning*). Am not!

GRADY. How would you know? The entire parking lot is covered in snow.

EDDIE. Then how do you know I'm double parked?

GRADY. Fine. Why don't we head out there and have a look?

EDDIE (*stands*). Happy to.

(EDDIE crosses to the hooks and takes down his coat, hat, etc., and starts to put them on.

As GRADY and EDDIE exit, JULES and MEL enter, both wearing purple hats. GRADY bumps into them.)

GRADY (*cont'd*). Sorry, ladies, official police business!

(GRADY rushes out the door as JULES and SHEILA hang up their coats.)

JULES. Is he trying to write Eddie up for loitering again?

SHEILA. Nope.

MEL. Jaywalking?

SHEILA. Nope. Double parking.

DOLORES (*putting a plate on the sill and hitting the bell*).
Order up!

JULES (*seeing SANDY; narrows her eyes and sneers*). Sandy.

SANDY (*annoyed*). Don't start with me. It's way too early for this.

JULES. I don't see what the big deal is about setting aside time in the day to relax and enjoy a little tea!

SANDY (*holds up his cup*). Sorry, Jules. But I'm a coffee drinker.

(JULES stomps to her chair and sits with MEL. They open menus as SHEILA crosses behind the counter to get mugs. As she does, VICTOR enters carrying a briefcase and crosses to the counter. All in the diner are obviously not happy to see him.)

VICTOR. One coffee, black, to go.

SHEILA. Don't you want to sit and relax, Victor? Maybe have a nice warm blueberry muffin with your coffee? Just this once?

VICTOR. Time is money, Sheila.

SHEILA. There's also something to be said for taking it all in and appreciating the world around you. (*Fills a to-go cup with coffee and puts on the lid.*)

VICTOR. If you focused more of your energy on work and less on (*Condescendingly.*) *taking it all in*, then maybe you'd be running this place instead of slinging coffee.

(VICTOR pays and exits. SHEILA shakes her head then crosses to JULES and MEL with two mugs and tea bags.)

SHEILA. You gals decided? *(Takes out her pad and pencil.)*

JULES. I'll have two fried eggs and a side of bacon.

SHEILA *(calling out toward the window)*. Two dots and a dash!

MEL. And I'll have buttered toast and jam.

SHEILA. And a shingle with a shimmy and a shake. *(Shakes a hip then tears off the order, crosses to the window with the ticket and hits the bell.)*

DOLORES *(grabbing the ticket, grumpily, with a scowl)*. Hrmph.

(EDDIE and GRADY enter, arguing. EDDIE takes off his coat and hangs it on the hook as they argue, then crosses back to his seat and sits with GRADY following.)

EDDIE. I told you I wasn't doubled parked! I could call the chief, you know. This is harassment.

GRADY. I'll have you know I'm just trying to do my job as a civil servant of this fine town.

EDDIE. Then stop bothering the locals and go find an actual crime.

GRADY. I would ... but there's never any crime in this town.

EDDIE. Then ... I don't know ... help Frank decide what to order for breakfast.

FRANK. I think I know what I'm getting. Two eggs over easy, home fries and a side of toast.

SHEILA *(turns to the window and hits the bell)*. One Frank Special.

DOLORES *(grumpily, with a scowl)*. Hrmph.

FRANK. Maybe I'll try something new for lunch.

EDDIE. And maybe something interesting will actually happen in this town today.

(The door opens and the bell is heard. CHRIS CONNORS enters, timidly. She holds a phone and a large, overfilled binder.)

CHRIS. Um ... hello?

SHEILA. Sit wherever you'd like. There's plenty of room.

(SHEILA rushes past CHRIS, busy with the other customers.)

CHRIS. Oh, um, I'm not here to eat—

SHEILA. I'll be by with coffee in a minute, darlin'. Just pop a squat.

CHRIS. I really just need to talk to the owner.

FRANK. The owner of the Whistle Stop hasn't set foot in here for years. It's Sheila that runs the place. *(Indicates SHEILA.)*

CHRIS *(trying to get her attention)*. Miss ... Sheila, is it?

SHEILA. Menus are right on the table, or you can ask anyone here what's good. Just don't ask Frank. He gets the same thing every day.

FRANK. The Frank Special *is* good!

CHRIS. But—

EDDIE. The only way you're getting Sheila's attention is if you sit down and order something.

DOLORES *(putting a plate on the sill and hitting the bell)*. Order up!

(CHRIS sits at a table or counter. SHEILA grabs the plate and delivers it then crosses to the table, holding the coffee pot and a mug. When she reaches the table, she pours the coffee.)

SHEILA. Not from around here, eh?

CHRIS. No. In fact—

SHEILA. I wasn't tryin' to be rude back there. It's just that everyone knows the Whistle Stop gets a big rush right at breakfast time.

CHRIS. That's all right. I—

SHEILA. I'll be right back to take your order. And don't worry, it'll all be worth it. I promise. (*Rushes back to the counter.*)

GRADY. Any good stories from around town in that paper, Sandy?

SANDY. In this town, you mean? (*Chuckles.*) Um, no.

TERRY. Trust me, the biggest news story of the day is going to be those parking meters. Now over in Fairview, they've got the real headline.

SANDY (*reading from the paper*). The Gold Star Café in Fairview is expecting the candidate and his team to arrive shortly before five p.m. where he will dine on their world-famous burger and fries. The Gold Star has become a required stop for presidential candidates on the campaign trail, giving them a chance to dine on local cuisine and meet and greet with prospective voters. Since 1952, every presidential candidate has made a stop at the Gold Star, and we have no doubt this tradition will continue for years to come.

ROBERTA. Just once it would be nice if something exciting like that were to happen around here.

GRADY. No kidding. This is depressing.

SHEILA (*crossing to the pie*). How about a slice of pie, Grady?

GRADY. A little early for pie, isn't it?

SHEILA. Here at the Whistle Stop there's nothing that a hot cup of coffee and a warm slice of apple pie can't fix. (*Taking out a slice of pie and plating it.*)

(*SHEILA hands GRADY the pie and a fork and pours him a cup of coffee.*)

SANDY (*closes the paper and turns to TERRY*). You ready to head over to that meeting with the mayor, Terry?

TERRY. Let me just get one more cup of coffee. I need to get those creative juices flowing if I'm going to make broken parking meters sound interesting. Sheila, can I get a refill?

SHEILA. Be there in a minute, hun.

ROBERTA (*turns to JULES and MEL*). Hey Jules, do you guys need any flowers for your next tea party?

JULES. It's tea *time*, Roberta, and I'd love to hire you to make some centerpieces, but I can't get the city *councilman*—to approve the work stoppage so that it can be properly observed.

SANDY. We're not stopping the workday so that everyone can drink tea, Jules.

MEL. Sorry, Roberta. It looks like we don't need any flowers at the moment.

ROBERTA. That's all right. Business is a little slow this time of year so I just thought I'd ask.

(SHEILA crosses to CHRIS with the coffee pot and an extra mug. She puts down the mug and pot and pulls out her pad and pencil.)

SHEILA. So what can I get you?

CHRIS. Actually, I'm here with an offer for you. You see—

(CHRIS opens the binder as JANE rushes in through the door, excitedly.)

JANE. Did you guys hear?

SANDY. Hear what?

TERRY. Is it headline worthy?

GRADY. Is someone committing a crime?

JANE. No, nothing like that.

GRADY. Darn.

JANE. But it's *definitely* headline worthy. The Gold Star's pipes are frozen solid! They won't be able to host the candidate later today as planned.

MEL. I guess the candidate will just have to come back some other time.

JANE. That's the thing ... the primary is in a few days and the candidate doesn't have room in his schedule.

JULES. So that means ...

JANE. For the first time in recent history, the Gold Star Café won't host a presidential candidate!

TERRY. That *is* a headline!

SANDY. So that's it? The candidate moves on to another city and forgets all about us?

SHEILA. I'm sure we're all capable of casting a vote without the candidate, and his team of reporters and yes men, making a pit stop for a quick photo opp.

EDDIE. Fine by me. I wasn't a big fan of his anyway.

FRANK. Really? You didn't like his platform?

EDDIE. I didn't like his hair! Did you see that little wave thing it does in the front? He's a city boy for sure. (*Shakes his head.*) Can't trust him.

JULES. You're voting for his ideas and his abilities, not his haircut.

SHEILA (*to CHRIS.*) Would you like some more coffee, hun?

CHRIS (*taking a deep breath, summoning strength and standing*). Actually, I'd like to offer the Whistle Stop Diner the opportunity to host the candidate later today for a meet-and-greet since the Gold Star is no longer available.

JULES. The candidate?

MEL. Right here in the Whistle Stop?

CHRIS. That's right!

TERRY. Now, *that's* a headline! (*Turns to SANDY.*) Sorry, Sandy, but I won't be able to make the meeting about the parking meters. (*Pulls out her recorder and points it toward CHRIS.*) I've got a *much* bigger story to cover.

SANDY. Forget the parking meters! We've got a candidate to prepare for. (*Stands and tosses some money on the table.*) We're going to need decorations and a podium, and buttons!

ROBERTA. I can bring the flowers!

GRADY. I can help with security!

MEL. And I can bring the Whoopie Pies!

JULES. Everyone knows I make the best Whoopie Pies in town. I'll bring them.

CHRIS (*closes up her binder*). Great! Then it sounds like we're all set. The candidate will arrive promptly at five o'clock. (*Stands and holds out her hand, which SHEILA ignores.*) My name's Chris Connors. Sorry to dash, but there's a lot to prepare before this evening. (*Drops her hand and starts to cross to the door.*)

SHEILA. Wait just a minute! I never agreed to your candidate's visit!

CHRIS. Well, with all due respect, this is a public establishment. And besides ... it seems to me that a visit from the candidate is just what this sleepy little town has been hoping for.

SHEILA. So that's it? The candidate is coming here, to the Whistle Stop.

CHRIS. Looks like it. (*Pulls out her phone.*) I have a couple of phone calls to make and then I'll be back to walk you through it.