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BREAKING AND ENTERING

**A Comedy
by
VIN MORREALE, JR.**



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(BREAKING AND ENTERING)

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BREAKING AND ENTERING

**A Comedy in Two Acts
For Two Men and Two Women**

CHARACTERS

WARRENmid-thirties
CRAWFORD an attractive young woman
MR. LAWTONfifty years old
MARY SUE RALSTONlate fifties

TIME: The present.

PLACE: An apartment in Anytown, USA.

BREAKING AND ENTERING was first produced in Louisville, Kentucky in June 1993, as a winner in the Kentucky Contemporary Theater's original play contest, with the following cast:

WARREN *Vin Morreale, Jr.*
CRAWFORD *Susan Morreale*
MR. LAWTON *Norman Igar*
MARY SUE RALSTON *Rita Hottois*

Premiere Production Directed By:
Charlie Douglas and Tom Luce

ACT ONE

AT RISE: *A living room in a tastefully decorated apartment. After a moment, a well-dressed and attractive man enters from the kitchen doorway, UL WARREN looks around the apartment carefully, but does not seem in any particular rush. On his hands, he wears a pair of transparent plastic gloves. He moves to the mantel above the fireplace and picks up a small gold statue.*

WARREN. *Very nice. You have excellent taste, Mr... (He pulls a notepad out of his pocket and refers to the name he has taken from the mailbox.) Crawford Lawton. (He picks up a small crystal figurine.) Very nice indeed. (He returns the statue to the mantel and continues perusing the apartment, picking up only small and expensive items.) Nice television set. Too bad that's not my style. (He pulls the plastic gloves off and returns them to his jacket pocket.) Now. Let's see what you have stashed in the bedroom.*

(As he opens the UC door, he comes face-to-face with an attractive young woman wearing only a towel. They are both so startled, they scream into each other's face.)

WARREN. AAAAAARRRGH!

CRAWFORD. AAAAAARRRGH!

WARREN. Jeez... You scared me to death!

CRAWFORD. I scared you?

WARREN. Give me a second to catch my breath.

CRAWFORD. I just got a blast of your breath. Believe me, it's not worth catching.

WARREN. Uh...I suppose you're wondering why I'm here.

CRAWFORD. Now that you mention it.

WARREN. Let me introduce myself. My name is Warren B. Sandler.

CRAWFORD. Not *the* Warren B. Sandler?

WARREN. Oh. You've heard of me?

CRAWFORD. No.

WARREN (*looking for the exit*). I, um, seem to have caught you at a bad time. Perhaps I should stop by when it's more convenient. (*WARREN gingerly crosses to the front door, but freezes when CRAWFORD yells...*)

CRAWFORD. Wait a minute, buster!

WARREN (*turning to her*). It's not Buster. It's Warren.

CRAWFORD. So I've heard. Were you just gonna walk right out of here?

WARREN. Well, I've obviously interrupted your shower. It would really be no problem for me to come back another...

CRAWFORD. You broke into this apartment, didn't you?

WARREN. I did nothing of the sort!

CRAWFORD. You're just a two-bit burglar. A petty thief.

WARREN. I assure you, madam, you have entirely misread this situation.

CRAWFORD. Then read it to me correctly. Before I call the police, that is.

WARREN. Actually, I'm here to see...(*He pulls out the small notepad again.*) Mr. Lawton. Uh, Crawford Lawton.

CRAWFORD. Oh. Crawford Lawton. Are you a friend of his?

WARREN. No. Not really. We have some business to discuss.

CRAWFORD. Such as.

WARREN. I'm afraid I have to discuss that with Crawford himself.

CRAWFORD. I see.

WARREN. You understand, of course.

CRAWFORD. Of course.

WARREN. So, why don't I just stop by again when I can speak with Crawford personally.

CRAWFORD. Why wait?

WARREN. I beg your pardon.

CRAWFORD. I'm Crawford Lawton.

WARREN. You're Crawford?

CRAWFORD. That's right. Now, exactly what business caused you to break into my apartment...

WARREN. You are Crawford Lawton?

CRAWFORD. Want to see my ID?

WARREN. No, of course not. That won't be necessary. *(Beat.)* If you don't mind my asking, how did such an attractive young woman get stuck with a name like Crawford?

CRAWFORD. My dad was a big fan of that old TV show, "Highway Patrol." He wanted to name me Broderick, but Mom wouldn't let him.

WARREN. So he named you Crawford.

CRAWFORD. It could have been worse. His second favorite show was Beanie and Cecil. *(Reaching for the telephone.)* So, now that we have been properly introduced, you have exactly ten seconds to convince me why I shouldn't call the police.

WARREN. Oh, I wouldn't do that. *(He moves close to her and gently but firmly hangs up the telephone.)* You know how cranky they get over false alarms. *(Changing tactics.)* That sure is an attractive towel. Canon?

CRAWFORD. No. That's my brother's name. My father really loved shows about fat cops.

WARREN. Mine did, too. That's why he was so happy when I took this job with the government.

CRAWFORD. Uh, you're a cop?

WARREN. No. Not a cop, per se.

CRAWFORD. As I understand it, you are either a cop or not a cop. It's like being partially pregnant. "Per se" doesn't count.

WARREN. Well, fortunately, I'm not even slightly pregnant. I'm an investigator for the Federal government. Special Agent Warren Sandler. *(He quickly pulls a badge and ID from his inside jacket pocket. He flashes it in front of her and stuffs it back, just as quickly. They engage in a cat and mouse game throughout the following dialogue. He tries to get closer, she finds different reasons to back away.)*

CRAWFORD. Gee.

WARREN. That's right. Warren G. Sandler.

CRAWFORD. And what are you supposed to be investigating in my apartment? Don't tell me it's illegal to wear only a towel in your own living room.

WARREN. Illegal, no. If anything, it's encouraged. Although the smaller washcloths are usually preferred.

CRAWFORD. About the investigation, Mr. Sandler?

WARREN. Warren, please.

CRAWFORD. Warren. You still didn't answer my question.

WARREN. Well, Crawford...May I call you Crawford?

CRAWFORD. It's as good a name as any.

WARREN *(trying to be charming)*. I must say, not everyone can bring such...definition to terry cloth. *(No reaction.)* Anyway, you may not have realized that this entire complex is under a government subsidy grant.

CRAWFORD. I thought that was just for slums and low-income housing.

WARREN. Most are. But this particular apartment complex qualifies for a Section 221(d)(3) special financing subsidy on the underlying construction loan. They send special agents like myself to periodically evaluate the property to make sure it is being properly maintained. We have to protect the government's interest, you know.

CRAWFORD. Assuming I believe you...What gives you the right to just walk into this apartment? Even the FBI needs a warrant to enter a private residence.

WARREN. A warrant? No, this is far too preliminary for that. Although, if we were to find any violations of, say, the health or electrical code, we could conceivably bring charges against the landlord. Do you have any complaints about the apartment, Ms. Lawton?

CRAWFORD. Complaints?

WARREN. For the report. Anything that doesn't meet your satisfaction must be forwarded to my superiors. Anything at all.

CRAWFORD. Well, uh. There doesn't seem to be enough hot water for a decent shower.

WARREN. I see. That's a violation of code 827-dash-6.

CRAWFORD. They won't send Mister Volgaropoulos to jail for that, will they?

WARREN. No. I can't see him doing time for an 827-4.

CRAWFORD. Six.

WARREN. Excuse me?

CRAWFORD. The first time you said 827-dash-6. The second time you said 827-dash-4.

WARREN. You are very observant.

CRAWFORD. I have to be.

WARREN. I was, uh, referring to the mis-matched shag carpeting. That's a dash-4 violation if I ever saw one. But don't worry. I pulled Mister Volgaropoulos' file and he's been pretty clean up to this point. I'm sure they'll ask him to just fix up a little and send him off with a small fine.

CRAWFORD. I'm glad. Mister Volgaropoulos really isn't a bad guy, you know.

WARREN. I know. I read that in his file.

CRAWFORD. You know, you're very cute for a G-man.

WARREN. Thank you. You should see me in a G-string. (*His warmest smile.*)...That's a little interdepartmental humor.

CRAWFORD (*seductively*). How would you like to stick around for a few minutes, Mr. Sandler? I'd like to slip into something more comfortable. That is, if you don't have something more interesting to investigate...?

WARREN. I don't think there is anything on earth I'd rather investigate, Ms. Lawton.

CRAWFORD. Good answer. I'll be right back. (*She crosses to the bedroom door, UC. She turns and blows him a kiss before exiting. WARREN smiles as she disappears offstage. Then he jumps in the air.*)

WARREN. Ye-e-e-es! The jackpot!

CRAWFORD (*calling from offstage*). What did you say, Warren?

WARREN (*calling to her*). Uh...I said, "Where's the teapot?" I figured I should probably boil us some tea.

CRAWFORD (*calling from offstage*). What I have in mind is hotter than that, sugar.

WARREN (*softer than before, but just as excited*). Ye-e-e-es!

CRAWFORD (*calling from offstage*). I'm sorry I was so suspicious before. But you know how it is. A girl has to be careful these days. What with all the crime and burglaries

around. Just the thought of some stranger's hands on my personal things makes me quiver.

WARREN (*calling to her*). I'm quivering myself, Crawford.

CRAWFORD (*calling from offstage*). Would you be a dear and hang up that towel for me? (*The towel she was wearing flies through the open door into the living room. WARREN picks it up and rubs his face in it. He sighs heavily, then flings it into the corner.*)

WARREN (*calling to her*). It'd be my pleasure! (*To himself*). God. The guys are never going to believe this set-up. (*Calling to her.*) Should I slip into something more comfortable, too, Crawford?

CRAWFORD (*calling from offstage*). If you think that's best. (*WARREN hurriedly begins pulling off his jacket, tie and his shirt. He ends up wearing a white, V-neck undershirt.*)

WARREN. You haven't seen the best until you've been with me, sweetheart! (*He starts pulling his pants off over his shoes. He is wearing a ludicrous pair of oversized boxer shorts covered with big red hearts.*)

CRAWFORD (*calling from offstage*). What did you say, Warren? (*He hesitates, then...*)

WARREN (*calling to her*). I said "Have you ever expressed an interest in seeing the Wal-Mart?"

CRAWFORD (*calling from offstage*). Uh...Not really. (*He frowns at the stupidity of his cover up. However, his expression brightens when he sees a shapely leg appear in the doorway. He jumps onto the sofa and attempts a sexy pose. Still offstage...*) Close your eyes.

WARREN. They're closed. They're thankful, but they're closed.

CRAWFORD (*calling from offstage*). Good. Here I come.

(She re-enters the room wearing a modest skirt, oversized blouse and a worn jacket. WARREN opens his eyes and it is clear by his expression that this is not at all what he expected. By contrast, WARREN wears only a T-shirt, brown socks, black shoes, and the garish heart-splattered boxer shorts.)

WARREN. *That's more comfortable than the towel?*

CRAWFORD. No. But this is. *(She reaches into her jacket pocket and pulls out a large pistol. She aims it at him.)*

WARREN *(stunned)*. That's a gun.

CRAWFORD. I find it rather comforting. Nice shorts by the way.

WARREN. What is all this?

CRAWFORD. My guess would be a Valentine's Day present from your mother.

WARREN. Not the underwear. I mean, why are you pointing a gun at me?

CRAWFORD. So many reasons. For one thing, this apartment complex does not receive government subsidies. I know, 'cause my dad owns the building.

WARREN. What about Mister Volgaropoulos?

CRAWFORD. No such guy. I made him up. It has a real Mediterranean flair, don't you think? Besides, you're badge was a phony. I used one just like it for a costume party last Halloween.

WARREN. I suppose this means we're not going to make love?

CRAWFORD. No. But once they throw you in jail, you'll probably be able to interest a lot of guys named Butch and Bubba in the idea.

WARREN. You tricked me!

CRAWFORD. Don't be so indignant. You're the one breaking and entering here. Then you spout some crazy story about government apartment inspectors and shag rug violations. Did you really expect me to believe all that? Does my hair look blonde or something?

WARREN. I was under pressure. It was the best I could do.

CRAWFORD. Improvisation is an art, Warren. A few years of practice in the state pen will help you perfect that art.

WARREN. You seem to be taking this rather casually, Crawford.

CRAWFORD. Actually, I'm enjoying the diversion. It isn't every day I have a seven break into my apartment.

WARREN. A seven?! Whatta ya mean, 'a seven'?!

CRAWFORD. On a scale of one to ten. You know, Hunkability.

WARREN. Listen, lady! I don't know where you learned the male meat scale, but I ain't never rated under a nine in my life.

CRAWFORD. I'm sure that's true, Warren. I just happen to be a little harder to please than most girls. And those boxer shorts are good for at least a one point deduction on their own.

WARREN. Okay. You've had your little laugh. Now, put that thing away, Crawford. You're too nice a girl to shoot anybody.

CRAWFORD. That's what the last man who broke into my apartment thought.

WARREN. The last man?

CRAWFORD. Check out the red stain on the shag carpet over there. *(He bends over to examine the carpet stain with a worried expression. The cat and mouse game has changed. Now CRAWFORD will pursue and WARREN has to back away.)*

WARREN (*not too sure*). That's just a little red wine.

CRAWFORD. That's what Daddy told the police when they couldn't find the body.

WARREN. You expect me to believe that you are the kind of woman who could shoot me down in cold blood?

CRAWFORD. If only to save you the embarrassment of riding to the police station in that ridiculous underwear.

WARREN. Enough with the shorts, will ya? My mother gave me these!

CRAWFORD. Ha! I knew it!

WARREN (*changing tactics*). Okay, Crawford. You win. The truth is...I'm not really a government agent.

CRAWFORD. Then why are you here?

WARREN. This is hard for me to admit...

CRAWFORD. I'm sure.

WARREN. I broke in...(*With big, sincere eyes.*)...to see you.

CRAWFORD. Oh?

WARREN. There's a note in my jacket pocket telling you exactly how I feel. I didn't have the guts to tell you to your face.

CRAWFORD. Somehow I think if I had come back out in the towel, you might have been able to stand up for yourself.

WARREN. You don't know me, Crawford. Or how long I have admired you from afar. Please, just look in my jacket pocket. (*She reaches into the pocket and pulls out the pair of plastic gloves.*)

CRAWFORD. I suppose you have a good explanation for these?

WARREN (*shrugs*). I'm an amateur proctologist. Just read the note. (*She reaches deeper into the pocket and pulls out a folded piece of paper.*)

CRAWFORD (*reading the note aloud*). "My dearest one: Of all the love-inspired acts my heart has ever led me to, this is perhaps the most desperate. My passion for you knows

no bounds. My soul is forever incomplete without the soft glow of your idyllic face to charm my worthless existence. I love you, though you do not even know I exist. Yet, I will remain true to your perfect inspiration all the days of my life. With undying love...your secret admirer."

WARREN. So now you know.

CRAWFORD. I don't know what to say.

WARREN. Say nothing. Let's just savor the moment. A love that was hidden in the shadows may now blossom in the pristine light of day.

CRAWFORD. You spelled 'worthless' wrong.

WARREN. Come again?

CRAWFORD. In this love note. You talk about your worthless existence. You spelled 'worthless' with two 'l's.

WARREN. Look, this is supposed to be romance, not Grammar 101. If I wanted proof-reading, I would have sent it to my sixth grade English teacher.

CRAWFORD. I'm sorry. That was very sweet.

WARREN (*muttering, with hurt feelings*). Damn right...

CRAWFORD. I guess I have met so few genuine romantics in my life, that I'm a little swept off my feet...But how do I know this isn't just another lie? It could be a fall-back plan in case you're caught. After all, my name isn't even on the note.

WARREN. You still doubt my love? After all I've risked to share this intimacy with you?

CRAWFORD. I'm just a suspicious kind of girl. (*He moves towards her.*) Stay where you are! Remember, I'm a suspicious kind of girl with a gun.

WARREN. Crawford...Crawford...Crawford...What can I do to prove my devotion?

CRAWFORD. I don't know. I'm still trying to sort through the government agent story.