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Dramatic Publishing



Take Five

A One-Act Play

By

WESTLEY M. PEDERSON



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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WESTLEY M. PEDERSON

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(TAKE FIVE)

ISBN 0-87129-268-8

TAKE FIVE

A One-Act Play for Four Men and Two Women

C H A R A C T E R S

MIKE *stagehand with acting aspirations*

LESTER *not-too-bright assistant stagehand*

GREG. *a person in the audience*

ALEX CANE *husband of Sharon*

SHARON CANE. *Alex's pregnant wife*

GLADYS. *Sharon's sister*

TIME: The Present

PLACE: The Cane's living room.

TAKE FIVE

SCENE: The stage curtains are open to allow a full view of a telephone on an end table UL. The telephone cord runs off L. The end of an extension cord lies UC. UR are two flats forming a right angle. The upstage flat depicts a living room scene and supports a coat rack. The other flat contains a door leading outside. No other props are seen as the lights come up. After a moment, MIKE, barking orders past the ever-present cigar stub protruding from the corner of his mouth, and LESTER, high on weight, medium in years and low on brains, are heard offstage. They enter from behind the door carrying a large sofa. A small reading lamp and shade are lying on the sofa.

MIKE. Easy, Lester. It goes next to the phone. Geez! Must weigh a ton. (The sofa is placed to the right of the end table.) Now, give it a little shove. (He and LESTER move the sofa.) Little more. (They move it again.) That's good.

LESTER. Can we stop for a while? I'm hungry.

MIKE. You're always hungry. We'll grab a bite when we get this set finished. Now, bring in that other end table. When you get that done, start bringing the chairs out here. (MIKE takes a screwdriver from his pocket and begins to put the lamp together.)

LESTER (starting off R, then stopping suddenly, noticing the stage lights for the first time). Hey, Mike? How come the lights are on?

MIKE (looking up). Oh, they're probably setting lights for the show. Hurry up with that table, will you? (LESTER exits R. The phone rings, startling MIKE.) What the . . . (Puzzled, he sets the lamp and screwdriver on the sofa, goes to the phone, and examines it carefully. He notices the phone cord, picks it up, and shouts off R to LESTER.) Lester! Did you put this live phone out here?

(LESTER enters R with the end table which he sets to the right of the sofa as the phone rings again.)

LESTER. Not me. Ain't you gonna answer it? (He places the lamp on the end table and plugs it into the extension cord.)

MIKE (uncertain, cautiously answering the phone). Hello? . . . Just a minute. (He covers the mouthpiece.) Lester? You know anyone named Greg Baxter? (LESTER shakes his head. MIKE returns to the phone.) Sorry, lady. No one here by that name. . . . Yes, this is the (insert name of theatre.) . . . He's what? (MIKE laughs and covers the phone again.) Lester, get this. This lady says her husband went to the show tonight! She wants me to page him! To *page* him! (MIKE laughs hysterically. LESTER looks puzzled.)

LESTER. Mike, there ain't no play tonight.

MIKE. I know that! Don't you get it? (LESTER still looks puzzled.) Look, dummy. The guy is feeding her a line. Five will get you ten, her husband is seeing a show all right! (He makes a suggestive figure eight with his hands.) But what a show!

LESTER (suddenly understanding). Oh! I get it! Yeah! (He laughs along with MIKE.)

MIKE (controlling himself and returning to the phone). Listen, lady, there isn't any show tonight . . . I said there is no show.

We're just setting the stage for tonight's rehearsal . . . (He loses his patience.) I don't care if it is an emergency! I'm telling you there is no Greg Baxter here!

GREG (from the audience). I'm Greg Baxter! (LESTER and MIKE freeze. LESTER shields his eyes from the lights, sees the audience, backs behind the sofa, and points at the audience with a look of sheer terror.)

LESTER. M . . . M . . . Mike? There's p . . . p . . . people out there!

MIKE (shielding his eyes, peering out). Oh, no! It is tonight! (He drops the phone on the sofa and runs off L. LESTER stands frozen in fear. From offstage L.) Psst! Hey, dummy! Get out of sight! (LESTER looks around like a cornered animal and ducks behind the sofa.)

(GREG BAXTER leaves his seat in the middle of the audience and walks hesitantly onto the stage by means of stairs or a ramp DR. Pointing to the phone and making slight, nervous bows, he crosses to the phone.)

GREG. Uh, excuse me. I . . . um . . . my wife. She said it was an emergency. (He picks up the phone, turns slightly upstage and speaks in a stage whisper.) Pam? . . . It's me. What is it? . . . (He shouts.) You *sank* the station wagon? What do you mean you *sank* the station wagon? . . . And what is our car doing at the bottom of the river? . . . For heaven's sake, Pam, it was brand new! We haven't even made the first payment on it! How could you let it roll into the river? You didn't set the emergency brake, did you? How many times have I told you whenever you park on a hill you have to . . . Pam? . . . Pam, listen . . . (He is angry.) All right! Go ahead and pull your sob act. (He imitates his wife.) Boo, hoo! You don't love me anymore. I'm going to call your

mother . . . (He is apparently stung by an insulting name.)
Yeah? Well, I've got news for you. You're nothing but a
. . . (He turns toward the audience, becomes aware of where
he is, and dons a sudden smile, his voice flowing with charm.)
. . . a . . . Ah, pussycat? . . . Pussycat, I'm sorry.
Honest . . . I said, I'm sorry. (He speaks through clenched
teeth, with a forced smile.) Of course I mean it! Now listen.
I have to go. I'm on stage . . . On stage! . . . No, I haven't
been drinking! Look, I've got to go. (In an urgent whisper.)
Everyone is staring at me!

(ALEX CANE enters through the door. A junior executive for an
advertising firm, and married a little over nine months, he has
just come home from work. He carries an attaché case and a
newspaper. Oblivious to GREG and the unfinished set, ALEX
sets the attaché case down and closes the door, his back to
GREG. GREG, mouth agape, stares.)

ALEX. Honey, I'm home! (He turns toward GREG.) What's for
dinner? I'm . . . (He drops character at the sight of GREG
and the incomplete set.) . . . starved.

GREG (matter-of-factly). Pam? You're not going to believe this.

(SHARON CANE enters from the kitchen off L. Wearing a kit-
chen apron, and very much nine-months pregnant, she waddles
up to GREG, stirring something in a bowl. She does not notice
the set, or the fact that GREG standing with his back to her,
is not her husband.)

SHARON. Hi, dear. Where's my kiss? (Standing directly behind
GREG, she raises her head, closes her eyes, and puckers her lips.
GREG turns, nearly bumps noses with her, and looks around
helplessly. ALEX, now back in character, crosses to SHARON

and motions GREG to step back. GREG steps up onto the sofa while ALEX kisses SHARON.)

GREG (still holding the phone to his ear). What? . . . No! She's kissing him! . . . The actor and actress! . . . In the play! See? (He holds the phone out above ALEX and SHARON, who loses character as she notices GREG and the incomplete set.)

ALEX (feeding SHARON a cue). Honey? Honey, aren't you going to ask me how my day went?

SHARON. What? . . . Oh . . . (She gets back into character.) . . . How did your day go, dear?

ALEX. Fantastic! (He sits on the right end of the sofa.) This morning I closed the deal on the Jefferson-Wyatt contract, with a sizable commission. And Mr. Almon, the vice-president, asked me to play golf with him Saturday!

GREG (momentarily caught up in the play, still holding the phone out). Golf? (Suddenly, into the phone.) Pam! My golf clubs! Were they still in the station wagon?

ALEX (trying to ignore Greg's outburst). Sharon, I think your husband is about to be promoted.

SHARON. That's wonderful!

GREG (in anguish). That's terrible!

ALEX (with an air of importance). Yes, it is wonderful, isn't it?

GREG (sitting opposite ALEX, growing angry). Wonderful. Just wonderful!

ALEX (finding it harder to ignore GREG). Speaking of something wonderful, how's my little mother-to-be? Any pains yet?

GREG (oblivious to his surroundings). Pam? You know, sometimes you give me a pain in the —

SHARON (interrupting). Not yet! But . . . (She becomes calmer.) . . . she has been kicking a lot today.

ALEX. Come here. (He motions for SHARON to sit on his lap.)

Let's see if I can feel him moving around. (SHARON sits.)

Hoo, boy! My, but we are getting heavy, aren't we?

SHARON (teasingly). Well, it's not entirely *my* fault I'm so heavy.

GREG (into the phone). Don't blame me! I wasn't the one who wanted to park by the river!

ALEX. I know. I'm just teasing you.

GREG. If you had used the emergency brake, none of this would have happened!

ALEX. You'd think he'd get awfully tired being cooped up in there, wouldn't you? When do you suppose little Johnny will want to come out?

SHARON. Rebecca is not a "Johnny."

ALEX (chuckling). All right, Rebecca. You still haven't answered my question.

GREG (into the phone). I don't know how they'll get it out. They'll probably use a crane!

ALEX (impatient with GREG). He . . . She is about a week overdue now, isn't she?

GREG. Maybe they'll leave it in there.

SHARON. Patience, dear. Rebecca will come when she gets good and ready. Besides, I saw Dr. Gilbert this morning and he says everything is fine. He says it's not unusual to be a week or two late. So, don't worry about it!

GREG (simultaneously with Sharon's last line). The important thing now is to get in touch with the insurance agent. Do you have his home phone number? . . . Try the top drawer in my desk . . . Yes, I'll wait. (GREG sits back, tries to look inconspicuous, and listens to ALEX and SHARON.)

ALEX (sticking his finger into the bowl). What's this? (He licks his finger and makes a face.)

SHARON. Custard pudding. (LESTER pops his head up briefly to lick his lips and hungrily eye the bowl.)

ALEX. Sharon, you know I don't like custard. (LESTER disappears behind the sofa again.)

SHARON. I know, but Bernard does.

ALEX. Who is Bernard?

SHARON. Why, Gladys' boyfriend, of course.

ALEX (sardonically, to no one in particular). Oh, of course!
(A pause.) Wait a minute! Is that husband-hunting sister of yours bringing over another of her *prospects* tonight?

SHARON (rising, slightly hurt). *Husband-hunting?*

ALEX. Sorry. I withdraw that. Well? Is she coming over?

SHARON (deciding to let the offending remark pass). Yes. We invited them over last week, remember?

ALEX. *We* did?

SHARON. Yes. Well, maybe *I* did. But I told you about it, didn't I? (ALEX shakes his head.) I didn't tell you about it, did I? You don't mind, do you, Alex?

ALEX. No, I really don't mind having your sister over. It's those weird boyfriends of hers that get to me.

SHARON. Her boyfriends aren't weird.

ALEX. Oh, no? What about that political science nut? Remember him? He spent all evening trying to convince us that Mickey Mouse was a Republican! The guy was crazy!

GREG (resuming his conversation, simultaneously with ALEX). What do you mean you couldn't find the number? I distinctly remember putting it in that top drawer . . .

ALEX (trying to compete with GREG, increasing his volume until he shouts "*shut up!*" directly at GREG). I'm surprised he didn't bring a soapbox into the living room! I spent all night trying to get him to shut up! (GREG meekly obeys and pantomimes a whispered conversation as ALEX composes himself and continues.) Bernard? Say isn't he the crackpot who thinks he's an inventor?

SHARON. He's a very nice boy. And Gladys likes him. So be nice to him when he gets here, all right? For Gladys' sake?

ALEX. Oh, all right. (He strikes a serious pose with his right hand raised.) I hereby promise I will not laugh when Bernard explains to me how another of his inventions is going to revolutionize the world. (He puts his hand down.) I'll just chuckle quietly under my breath.

SHARON (threatening him with a spoonful of custard in the face). Oh, you . . . you . . . (SHARON closes in on ALEX with one knee on the sofa. She waves the spoon near the back of the sofa. Lester's hand reaches up and snatches the spoon from her hand. ALEX doesn't notice. SHARON stares dumbfounded at her empty hand. She peers over the top of the sofa, spots LESTER, and turns back to the audience with a bewildered look.)

ALEX (his arms protecting his head, laughing). All right! I give! I give! (He looks up at SHARON. When he sees the bewildered look on her face, his laughter dies.) Ahem. Just how much longer before dinner is ready?

SHARON (coming around). Wha . . . Oh. Probably a couple of hours yet. Why don't you go ahead and read your paper? I'll fix you a sandwich and a glass of milk to tide you over, okay?

ALEX (picking up the paper). Sounds good. (SHARON starts to exit L.) Do we have any bologna left?

SHARON. You want cheese with it?

ALEX. That's fine. (He starts to read.)

SHARON (stopping). Your eyes, dear.

ALEX. What?

SHARON (pointing to the lamp). The light. You don't want to wear glasses, do you?

ALEX. Thank you, Nurse Cane. (SHARON exits. ALEX turns the light switch, but nothing happens. He tries twice more with no results, shrugs, and begins to read. The light comes on.

ALEX gives the lighting booth a sharp look and returns to the paper.)

GREG (talking aloud). Is that what you told the police? . . .

But that's falsifying an accident report! It's illegal! . . . You couldn't have set the emergency brake! . . . Pam, use your head. It was a brand new car. Brakes just don't fail on . . . I'm not accusing you of lying! I'm merely trying to say . . . Hello? . . . Hello? . . . Pam, did you hang up on me? (GREG looks at the phone in disbelief, hangs up, and starts to walk DC to the ramp or stairs.)

SHARON (offstage L). Anything of interest in the paper, dear?

ALEX. Well, let's see. It says here that General Motors is recalling this year's station wagon. Seems they have discovered a malfunction in the . . . (He realizes what he is about to say and looks toward GREG, who is about to leave the stage.) . . . emergency brake system.

GREG (turning around, crossing to the sofa, and sitting next to ALEX with his hand out for the paper). May I? (ALEX reluctantly hands over a section of the paper. GREG begins to read intently.)

ALEX (visibly frustrated, continuing to read). Honey? Did you hear about the new restaurant opening downtown? It says here they are having their grand opening tonight. All the food you can eat for two dollars! (LESTER sticks his head up behind the couch. With custard pudding all over his chin, he tries to read over Alex's shoulder.) Maybe that's where we should take Gladys and Bernard. (He mutters to himself.) It'd sure be a hell of a lot cheaper.

SHARON (offstage L). What's that, dear? (LESTER ducks down behind the sofa.)

ALEX. I said . . . never mind. It wasn't important.

(SHARON enters with a sandwich and glass of milk.)