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*Dramatic Publishing*

BEWARE  
THE  
LICORICE  
VINES

**Drama/Comedy by Eddie Zipperer**

# BEWARE THE LICORICE VINES

**Drama/Comedy. By Eddie Zipperer.** *Cast: 2m., 2w., 1 either gender.* Hudson Manning once loved to paint. Now, he draws a comic book, paints motel art and argues with his wife, Laura—who died two years ago! He has become a recluse, hiding from the outside world and sinking into the darkness of his self-pity. But he begins to emerge from his darkness when Katie Evans, a film student from Cornell, crashes her car into the ditch in his front yard. Energetic, vivacious and excited about art, Katie resembles the artist Hudson was before Laura's accident. As his bond with Katie grows, Laura becomes jealous, and Hudson—wracked with guilt—is afraid she might disappear forever. In the end, Hudson must choose between reality and the world he has created in his mind. *One interior set. Approximate running time: 90 minutes. Code: BL5.*

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# **Beware the Licorice Vines**

A play in two acts by

**EDDIE ZIPPERER**



**Dramatic Publishing Company**

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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*Beware the Licorice Vines* was winner of the 2012 Neil Simon Festival's New Play Contest. It was performed as a stage reading at the Neil Simon Festival (Cedar City, Utah) by the following artists:

Director ..... TJ Penrod  
Hudson ..... Nathaniel Tenenbaum  
Laura ..... Wendy Penrod  
Katie ..... Selena Rae Price  
Tom ..... John Terry

*Beware the Licorice Vines* was originally produced at Georgia Military College in 2012 by the following artists:

Director ..... Amy Zipperer  
Hudson ..... Bradley Adams  
Laura ..... Shonie Mason  
Katie ..... Paige Morrow  
Tom ..... Zack Pursley  
Radio Voice ..... William Edwards  
Waiter ..... Andy Niehus  
Yeti Crew ..... Bladen Steed,  
Samantha Edwards, Carlos Rogers

*Beware the Licorice Vines* was the 2014 winner of Southeastern Louisiana University Theatre Department's Inkslinger Playwriting Competition.

# Beware the Licorice Vines

## CHARACTERS

HUDSON MANNING: An artist who has lost his will to paint.

KATIE: A lovely 22-year-old film student.

LAURA: Hudson's jealous former wife.

TOM: Hudson's agent and Laura's brother.

RADIO: A voice that does the weather report.

Scene: Hudson Manning's living room.

Time: The present.

# Beware the Licorice Vines

## ACT I

### SCENE 1

SETTING: HUDSON MANNING's living room. The walls look like brick. There is a large window with a beautiful nighttime view of New York City. The place is a mess. There are several canvases, an easel and other art supplies strewn about. There is also a sofa and a small bar. Several blank canvases hang on the wall.

AT RISE: The living room is dark because the power is out. HUDSON is sitting on the couch talking on his cellphone. He's wearing boxer shorts and a T-shirt, and he has an old afghan wrapped around him. HUDSON is fiddling with a battery powered radio trying to get a signal.

HUDSON (*into the phone*). I can't go to the meeting because I can't go outside, Tom ... Why can't I go outside? It's my crippling anxiety. Oh, and also the giant blizzard ... Yes, it is a blizzard! The snowflakes are like giant snowball meteorites. (*Makes an explosion sound.*) One just came through the ceiling! I gotta go! Have fun at the meeting.

(HUDSON turns off the phone and tosses it. He finally gets a signal on the radio.)

RADIO. Waycross Elementary, West Lincoln Junior High and Westside High School are all closed today due to the snow storm that formed early this morning. The Department of Transportation has issued a warning for all motorists that—

*(The voice turns to static. HUDSON gives up and turns it off as LAURA enters. HUDSON sees her and makes a cross with his fingers.)*

HUDSON. No! Leave me alone. I'm not going!

LAURA. So you escaped the meeting again. What was it this time? Tummy ache? Was your back feeling ouchie again?

HUDSON. Chronic rheumatism is no laughing matter, Laura, but if you must know, there happens to be a blizzard outside.

LAURA. That explains the romantic lighting. I thought maybe you had a date. *(Silence for a moment.)* If you just went to the meeting, it would be over in a few minutes, and then you could return to the safety of your sofa.

HUDSON. Why does everyone keep acting like I control the weather? Turn on the weather channel people. There's one of those giant blue spiky lines munching on the entire state of New York!

LAURA. I guess this is your chance then. You're all alone. No power. No distractions. All you do is gripe about how you don't have time to paint.

HUDSON. Absolutely not!

LAURA. Why not?

HUDSON. I didn't tell you this because I didn't want to scare you, but I can't keep it to myself anymore. The last time I tried to paint ... the canvas tried to eat me.

LAURA. You're an idiot.

HUDSON. You don't believe me. That's fine. Then maybe you'll believe this!

*(HUDSON picks up a canvas for her to see. There is a painting of a monster with his giant mouth open wide. Very big teeth.)*

LAURA. It's been two years. You never paint anything.

HUDSON. I never paint anything? Who do you think painted all these?

*(He indicates all the blank canvases on the wall.)*

LAURA. Those are old.

HUDSON. It's too cold in here to paint. Do you have any idea what these cold bones do to my arthritis? I've got the porcupines in my joints. Now leave me be. I need my rest.  
*(He clutches his afghan.)*

LAURA. You're 27.

HUDSON. I need some socks. What the hell did I do with my socks? The ones that help my circulation. Have you seen them anywhere?

LAURA. Bye, Hudson.

HUDSON. Don't go, Laura. Talk to me until I fall asleep.

LAURA. I used to never be able to get you to take a break from painting.

HUDSON. OK, I'm asleep.

*(LAURA walks over to the blank canvases and points at one.)*

LAURA. Look at this one. Do you remember when you painted this one?

HUDSON. Which one?

LAURA. *Future Pancake.*

HUDSON. *Future Pancake!* I love that one!

LAURA. Look at it. It's a young guy just like you. Sitting on the couch just like you, and through the window you can see a giant meteor is about to smash his house. Look at it.

HUDSON. Don't read into it. It's just a painting.

LAURA. Do you remember what it means?

HUDSON. I paint.

LAURA. You paint? You mean that hotel wall painting. Yeah.  
That's great art.

HUDSON. I also draw.

LAURA. The comic book.

HUDSON. Yes.

LAURA. It's dumb.

HUDSON. You're dumb. I just don't want to paint until I feel alive again. Until I escape from the dark place. Right now, there's just too much I don't want to capture on a canvas. I just want to forget.

LAURA. How do you feel about me being here with you?

HUDSON. I feel like you could be quieter while I'm sleeping.

LAURA. I understand. You can't put it into words. Without me, everything would be meaningless. Your job, this house, your art, everything. It's all for me. It always has been.

HUDSON. Someone has a high opinion of herself.

LAURA. Instead of the dark place, can't you paint this? Can't you paint that you love me and that I'm here with you?

HUDSON. Maybe. If it weren't for ... the porcupines.

LAURA. What are you afraid of?

HUDSON. The canvas monster.

LAURA. He can't find you in your "dark place."

HUDSON. You make fun of me, but what if my dark place is what's keeping you here? What if I start painting again, and you stop coming to see me? Maybe you don't care about that, but I do.

LAURA. You can't control—

HUDSON. I need to sleep!

*(There is a crashing sound from outside. HUDSON jumps to his feet and looks around. His rheumatism is gone. He looks out the front door.)*

HUDSON (*cont'd*). Somebody drove their car into the ditch!

Should I call the police?

LAURA. Go help!

HUDSON. But I can't.

LAURA. Because it's outside?

HUDSON. It's not that bad.

LAURA. Go!

*(LAURA and HUDSON exit through the front door; a few moments pass. The front door opens again, HUDSON and KATIE enter. KATIE is bundled in jackets, scarves and other warm clothes from head to toe. Only her face is visible. She wears glasses. As they enter, they shake snow off of themselves.)*

HUDSON. I can't believe you're outside during this blizzard.

Are you OK?

KATIE. I can't believe I drove my car into a ditch! I was just sitting behind the wheel listening to the radio. Hands at 10 and two just like they're supposed to be. I'm normally a really safe driver. Especially in inclement weather. I just had brand new snow tires put on a couple weeks ago. I felt completely safe and in control, then, BAM! Out of nowhere comes this giant white wall right out in front of me. I could hear the wind screaming as it lifted my car right off the road and dropped it into your ditch. I feel so bad for it. Do you think it'll be OK?

HUDSON. Are you OK?

KATIE. I think so. I haven't completely regained my senses yet, and I'll have to wait for the adrenaline to subside before I'll be able to feel anything. It's amazing how one second can change everything. I might have been inches away from death, but I think I'm OK. I'm a little cold.

HUDSON. Do you feel like you might be suffering from frostbite or hypothermia?

KATIE. I don't think so. I was only outside for a minute. I do feel a sort of all over tingling, but I think it's just from the shock of the whole situation.

HUDSON. A minute is all it takes in a storm like this. The wind chill out there must be—no frostbite?

KATIE. I don't think so.

HUDSON. Let me feel your fingers.

KATIE. What? Feel my fingers? Are you being creepy?

HUDSON. Creepy? No, I want to see if you have frostbite.

*(KATIE holds up her hand elegantly. HUDSON removes her glove and feels her hand.)*

HUDSON. They feel pretty warm. Can you feel your toes?

KATIE. Yes. Are you OK?

*(They both look down at HUDSON's bare feet.)*

HUDSON. I'll be right back.

*(HUDSON limps into the other room. KATIE looks around for the first time since she came in. She is taken aback by the giant window. She feels the wall to see if it's really brick. HUDSON re-enters with a bucket of water, sticks his feet in it and stands there in it.)*

KATIE. Oh my God. Do you have frostbite?

HUDSON. No. Maybe just a little first degree frostbite. I'll be fine as long as I get their temperature back up. You want to use lukewarm water for this. Never hot water. Never. You want to warm them up gradually.

KATIE *(indicating the giant window)*. This has to be the greatest first floor view in all of Ithaca.

HUDSON. What on Earth were you thinking trying to drive in this? There's zero visibility out there.

KATIE (*indicating the "brick wall"*). I actually thought this was real brick at first.

HUDSON. You could really have gotten hurt. Are you sure you're OK?

KATIE. Shut up! I'm fine. How are you?

HUDSON. How am I? Now that we've established nobody's hurt, I'm suddenly very aware of the fact I'm wearing my underwear and standing in a bucket. Would you mind?

*(He points to the sofa. KATIE sees his pants there and tosses them to him. He puts them on.)*

KATIE. Look at the bright side. Even if we never see each other again, I'll always remember the day I met you. You're my blizzard hero forever. You're my crazy penguin guy.

HUDSON. I'm your—

KATIE. It's just like that scene from *Blizzard '77*. Have you seen it?

HUDSON. I don't think so.

KATIE. You should. It's awesome. It's a Blake Neals documentary about the Great Lakes Blizzard of 1977, hence the name, and there's this scene where the snow is falling like God is spraying it out of one of those high pressure hoses at the car wash and it's stacked up almost to the power lines, and the wind is blowing so hard not even the brick house pig would be safe. It cuts to crazy penguin guy—I call him that because he was wearing this black and white wet suit and yellow goggles—You see crazy penguin guy going out the dormer window of his two story house—and the storm is such a force, you know crazy penguin guy is going to die. You just know it. So you're like, "Dude, what the hell are you doing? Go back inside!" But he doesn't! So you're

like, “OK, what business can crazy penguin guy have outside that’s this important?” Can you think of what could be that important? (*She waits for an answer.*)

HUDSON. Me?

KATIE. Yeah. Can you think of it?

HUDSON. No.

KATIE. Well crazy penguin guy takes off running through the snow, and the camera zooms out and the guy looks like a period in the middle of a blank piece of paper and he’s running around and swimming in the snow like a—Hell, like a penguin, but a fat awkward penguin—and then you hear him yelling “Sparky!” “Sparky!” “Come here, boy!” Crazy penguin guy went out to find his dog!

HUDSON. Whoa!

KATIE. I know.

HUDSON. Did he?

KATIE. Did he what?

HUDSON. Did he find his dog?

KATIE. I don’t want to spoil it. You might watch it someday.

HUDSON. I have to know.

KATIE. Forget it! I never spoil a movie, and people who do should burn in hell. I feel awful about your feet. This is all my fault. I feel like I should take off my shoes and go stand outside. It’s not fair that I’m fine and you have frostbite when it’s my stupid driving—

HUDSON. No need for that. They’ll be fine. No permanent damage. Most likely. So, what was important enough to bring you out in a blizzard?

KATIE. It was an accident for me. I was on my way back from Florida, and the storm came out of nowhere. I mean, I’ve lived in Ithaca for three years. I’ve seen snow before, but never like this. Do you think I should call a tow truck to come rescue my car?

HUDSON. They're not going to come out in this. Actually, I'm afraid you might be stuck here for a while. It's fine though. You're welcome to stay until the storm passes. Again, not being creepy. Just thinking of your safety.

KATIE. I can't stay with a stranger.

HUDSON. Oh. I understand. I guess—

KATIE. What's your name?

HUDSON. Hudson Manning.

KATIE. Shut up! great action hero name. (*Imitating movie preview voice over.*) "He hates the cold, but on June 15th he'll have to brave the storm of the century." Then it cuts to you and your friend, and your friend is like, "You can't go out there in this blizzard!" Then cut to a close up of you where you wrap your scarf around your head and go, "There's no snow days when you save lives for a living." Then super the title over a black screen, Bruce Willis as Hudson Manning in ... *The Blizzard.*"

HUDSON. I'd see it.

KATIE. I'm Katie Evans. Thank you so much for coming out there to save me.

HUDSON. There's no snow days when you save lives for a living.

KATIE. And thanks for checking my fingers for frostbite.

HUDSON. So, home is in Florida, but you go to school here?

KATIE. Yeah. I go to Cornell.

HUDSON. You're not a film major are you?

KATIE. I know, I'm a total movie geek. Believe it or not, I actually try not to talk about movies all the time, but everything makes me think of some movie or TV show or comic book I've seen, and once I've thought of it, I have to say it. it's a compulsion. I know that nobody's ever going to say, "It is like that! Thank you so much, Katie. You've really given me a template to solve my problem. All that movie

knowledge has really paid off in its application to real life problems.” It drives my mom nuts, and whenever my dad would tell a story, he would always end it with, “And I don’t care what movie it’s like.”

*(KATIE walks over to the hat rack by the front door and begins taking off all her winter clothes: Gloves, scarves, hats. One of her scarves is pink.)*

HUDSON. You’re lucky. I went to Cornell too. My favorite part—

*(KATIE finishes shedding her outer layer and turns around. She’s beautiful to HUDSON, who loses his train of thought.)*

KATIE. What’s your favorite part?

HUDSON. My what?

KATIE. You were saying your favorite part of college was ...

HUDSON. Oh. Right. All of it I guess.

KATIE. Is that where you met your wife?

HUDSON. What? How—

KATIE. I saw your ring.

HUDSON. Oh. Yeah. That’s where I met my wife.

KATIE. How did the two of you meet? I always ask that. How the lovers meet is probably the most important part of any love story. Get that part wrong and you’ve got a dud.

HUDSON. She was my best friend’s sister.

KATIE. Did he get angry with you? That’s an old sitcom device. You know, where there’s like an unwritten man code that you don’t date your buddy’s sister—or sometimes they change it up like it’s their ex-girlfriend or their mom—the guy with the sister gets really mad, but at the end he accepts it with the caveat that “if you ever hurt her I will beat you down.”