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*Dramatic Publishing*

# TEN-MINUTE THEATRE

by  
DAVID S. RAINE



**Dramatic Publishing**  
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# TEN-MINUTE THEATRE

For as few as 6 or as many as 25 actors

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## The Tooth Hurts

### CHARACTERS:

LEON

MAVIS

FRANCINE (non-speaking part)

*(Lights up on a bed with a girl, FRANCINE, sleeping in it. LEON enters and moves stealthily toward the bed. He moves behind the girl and carefully slips his hand underneath her pillow. As he is withdrawing his hand, he stops, discovering that the girl's hair is caught in his watchband. He tries to carefully disengage himself. As he struggles, MAVIS approaches him.)*

MAVIS *(quietly)*. What's the problem, Leon?

LEON. Hmm? Oh...no problem...I just seem to be... well...a little stuck here.

MAVIS. Stuck?

LEON. Yeah.

MAVIS. And why is that?

LEON. Well, see, her hair is kind of caught.

MAVIS. Caught where?

LEON. Um...in...in my watchband.

MAVIS. And didn't I tell you that you couldn't wear jewelry when you were on a job?

LEON. Well, yeah, you did, but...

MAVIS. Of any kind. Including rings, bracelets, necklaces and what else, Leon?

LEON. Uh...watches?

MAVIS. That's right. (*Louder.*) So maybe you'd like to just take a minute here and explain to me why it is that you're standing here with *that* girl's hair stuck in *your* watchband!

LEON. Listen, Mavis, I can explain...

MAVIS. Oh, I have just about had it with you, pal, you know that? Take five, Francine. (*FRANCINE gets up and exits.*)

LEON. See, I just wanted to time myself...

MAVIS. You don't *need* to time yourself. If you've got your act together and you're not *wearing* anything that will slow you down, you'll be in and out in just a couple of seconds. You don't need a watch! (*Pause.*)

LEON (*holds out his hand*). I got the tooth.

MAVIS. I don't care if you got the tooth—you had a girl's entire head stuck to your arm!

LEON. I'll do better next time.

MAVIS. Leon, let me explain something to you. In two days I'm going to officially retire. That means that in two days the world is going to be needing a new Tooth Fairy. I have to be honest with you...as a prospective replacement, you're just not working out.

LEON. It's because I'm a guy, isn't it?

MAVIS. Leon...

LEON. The Bureau said that you weren't allowed to fire me for that. That's diverse recriminations or something.

MAVIS. Leon...

LEON. I'll get the legal department in on this if I have to. I've got my rights.

MAVIS. Leon, it's not a man/woman thing—you suck at the job. We've been at this for six weeks and you still get your head caught in windows. On your orientation you panicked when a child rolled over and ended up locking yourself in a closet.

## Car Pool

### CHARACTERS:

BETH  
CLAIRE  
TISH  
ANNE

*(Lights up on a car. BETH is driving, and her passengers are TISH and CLAIRE. They are parked and waiting for ANNE.)*

CLAIRE. Did you hear that they moved Roxanne over to the  
Caufield unit?

TISH. Oh, no, you're kidding.

BETH. Really?

CLAIRE. Two days ago.

BETH. That quick? I didn't hear about any of this. What  
ward?

CLAIRE. Ambulatory adult.

TISH. You're kidding.

CLAIRE. Can you believe it?

TISH. I thought they only let the men work that ward.

BETH. Apparently not.

TISH. Well, I hope she'll be all right. She's awfully brave.

CLAIRE. Brave, my butt. Over there with all those good-  
looking male attendants?

TISH. Claire!



BETH. That's our Claire. If there's smut to be found, she'll root it out.

CLAIRE. You know it, girls.

BETH (*looking out*). Come on, Anne.

TISH. You don't think they'll send any of us out there, do you?

CLAIRE. They'll send us where they need us.

TISH. But, I mean, I've been on Moorland for nine months now. I really like working with the children.

CLAIRE. You think the supervisors care what you like? We're just attendants. Just numbers in their books. Besides, it's all the same job.

TISH. But some of the clients in Caufield are dangerous.

BETH. Well, some of those Moorland kids'll rip you up pretty good, too. (*Looking out.*) Let's go, Anne.

CLAIRE. Hey, Beth, you remember what happened to old Mrs. Richards out at Caufield a few years back?

BETH. Uh-uh.

CLAIRE. Had her finger bitten completely off.

TISH. Oh my God.

CLAIRE. 'Course, Caufield is right next to the med station, so they were able to sew it back on.

TISH. Oh my *God*.

BETH. Cut it out, Claire. Tish, she's just playing with you.

CLAIRE. Yeah, Tish, lighten up a little.

TISH. Oh, ha ha, very funny. (*Pause.*)

CLAIRE. But, Tish, if they *do* move you out to Caufield...

TISH. Yes?

CLAIRE. Remember, don't scold the clients like this. (*She shakes her finger in the air, then laughs.*)

TISH. That's awful.

BETH (*looking out*). Finally. (*She waves ANNE toward the car.*) Come on.

## Attic Treasure

### CHARACTERS:

BRIAN

AMY

JESS

*(Lights up on an attic. BRIAN, JESS and AMY enter.)*

JESS. This is too weird.

BRIAN. Tell me about it.

AMY. I swear to God, one rat...a mouse even, and I'm out of here.

BRIAN. There aren't any rats up here.

JESS. We shouldn't be up here either.

BRIAN. Oh, yes, we should. We have to.

JESS. Let me see that again. *(BRIAN hands her a legal document, which she examines.)*

BRIAN. You can read it as much as you like—it's not going to change.

JESS. I mean, what are we supposed to be looking for?

AMY. Hey, you guys, what do rat droppings look like?

BRIAN *(to JESS)*. He doesn't say. Why do you keep asking me? You've got the will right there.

JESS. This is just too weird.

AMY. Are they bigger than mouse droppings?

BRIAN. Amy, I promise you there are no rats up here.

JESS. So we're supposed to, what, just look around for a while?

AMY. 'Til we find it.

JESS. Find what?

BRIAN. Don't get her started again.

JESS. Well, is this the dumbest thing, or what? Look 'til you find something, but we don't even know what we're looking for.

AMY. Dad's as mysterious in death as he was in life.

BRIAN. Dad wasn't mysterious. He was just never there.

JESS. I still think this is all some kind of game, and we're either gonna find something really great, or end up feeling like idiots.

AMY. You know, you don't *have* to be here, Jess. The will said...

JESS. I know what it said, but I want my share of whatever's up here, just like you guys.

BRIAN. Well, I guess we'd better get to it, then. Sooner we root around, the sooner we can go home.

AMY. Where to start? There are so many boxes and trunks.

BRIAN. Why don't you start over there. Jess, try over there.  
*(They all begin looking through boxes.)*

JESS. Man, where'd he get so much stuff?

AMY. He's been around the world more than a couple of times.

JESS. Most of this stuff is just junk. Knick-knacks.

AMY. Maybe it wasn't junk to him.

JESS. Don't even look like expensive knick-knacks...just lots of 'em. How rich was he?

AMY. Not very when he died. Still, there was a time when...

BRIAN. Hey, why don't we concentrate on going through all this and save the biography for later, okay? I want to get out of here as soon as possible. *(JESS moves over to AMY.)*

JESS *(quietly)*. What's up his butt?

AMY *(quietly)*. Y'know, Dad and everything.

## Insight

### CHARACTERS:

BECKY

JANICE

*(A dark room. A door is opened, letting some light into the room. JANICE turns on the lights. She is carrying groceries, and discovers BECKY sitting in a chair.)*

JANICE *(startled)*. Oh! Jesus, Becky, you gave me a start.

BECKY *(distracted)*. Sorry.

JANICE. No, that's okay. *(Pause.)* You're sitting in the dark.

BECKY. I know. *(Pause.)*

JANICE. Your eyes?

BECKY *(nodding)*. They get sore.

JANICE. The doctor said that would happen. *(Pause.)* Still, not a bad price to pay, huh? *(No answer.)* I'm going to put this stuff away...you want anything?

BECKY. No.

JANICE. Okay. *(She begins to put the groceries away.)*

BECKY *(starting to rise)*. Let me help you with those.

JANICE. No, no, you stay right there. Just take me a minute.

Boy, the lines today! Must've waited ten minutes at the deli counter, but I got that pressed ham you like.

BECKY *(her thoughts elsewhere)*. Hmm? Oh...Thank you.

JANICE. Oh, it was no trouble. Hey, guess who I ran into while I was there? Mrs. Trumbull. You remember her?

BECKY. Uh...no, not really.

JANICE. She used to be Mother's supervisor at the payroll office. Well, she asked how we were getting on.

BECKY (*exasperated, remembering now*). Oh, God, Mrs. Trumbull. The one who called every week for a year to ask how we were "getting on."

JANICE. That's her. So I told her that...

BECKY (*amazed*). She still asks. Did you remind her that Mom's been dead for almost nine years? (*Pause.*)

JANICE. Well...no. I mean, that wouldn't have been...

BECKY (*hard*). She has, you know. Almost nine years. (*Pause.*)

JANICE. I know. (*Pause.*) Anyway, she asked about you in particular.

BECKY. Me?

JANICE. Mm-hmm. Asked about your training and so forth. And, you know, as I talked to her, I suddenly realized how behind the times she really was. I mean, she was asking about your O&M classes, for God's sake. Doesn't she read the paper? So I said, Mrs. Trumbull, Becky hasn't used a cane in quite a while. Hasn't *needed* to. I told her about the insurance money and Dr. Adamson and the retinal graft. (*Laughing.*) You should've seen her expression. (*Mimicking her.*) "The girl can see? The girl can see?"

BECKY (*rises and moves to JANICE*). Janice...I have to tell you something.

JANICE. Sure, but can it wait for a couple of minutes? Some of this stuff will go bad...

BECKY. No, I really think we need...

JANICE. I think we're pushing the expiration date on the milk as it is.

BECKY. I'm leaving. (*Pause.*)

JANICE. Excuse me?

BECKY. I said I'm leaving.

## Cuttin' Line

### CHARACTERS:

TOM

LIZ

SUSIE

BUSTER

EUNICE

LEONA

*(Lights up on a family standing in a line.)*

TOM. We're dead.

LIZ. Of course we're dead. You don't just drive off the side of Pike's Peak, have your gas tank explode when you hit the ground and then just stroll away from the wreckage.

TOM. The day isn't going well, dear, I can do without the sarcasm.

LIZ. I'm sorry, sweetheart. This isn't easy for me, either.

SUSIE. I'm pretty bummed out myself.

TOM *(noticing SUSIE)*. Excuse me?

SUSIE. What happened, Dad? You get the brake and the accelerator mixed up?

TOM. Dad? *(Pause.)* Susie?

SUSIE. Well, don't act so surprised.

LIZ. Susie? It can't be.

SUSIE. It can't? Why not?

LIZ. Honey, you're only eighteen months old.

SUSIE. Duh, Mom. You think I don't know how old...*(Notices her hand.)* Wait a minute. *(She pulls her collar and looks inside.)* Whoa, that's new!

TOM. You're all grown up. What's going on here? Hey, who's in charge here?

EUNICE *(turning around)*. You can't be serious.

TOM. Say, do you know what's going on around here, miss...?

EUNICE. Eunice. Well, I guess I know as much as you do. We're dead, there's obviously an afterlife, it has its own set of rules...

LIZ. Rules? What rules?

EUNICE. Oh, that's right, you just got here. Hang on. *(She reaches down and hands TOM a tremendous sheaf of papers—maybe even several stacks.)* The rules.

LIZ. All of this?

EUNICE. Nah, just the top sheet. End of the line always gets the extras, y'know. Take what you need and pass 'em back. *(Everyone takes one and passes them on.)*

SUSIE *(looking back)*. Wow, look at the line already.

TOM *(studying his sheet)*. Okay, let's see where we stand here...

LIZ *(looking at her sheet)*. Oh, look, hon, there's no hell.

TOM. Well, that's a relief.

SUSIE. Where's the part about me getting bosoms?

BUSTER *(looking at his sheet)*. This is probably it...number fourteen...“Souls will be returned to their original departure forms regardless of chronological age at time of demise.”

TOM. Oh...yes, I see. Thanks, friend.

BUSTER. Hey, no problem.

SUSIE. You mean this is what I'm supposed to look like when...when I'm not living?

## Crosswords

### CHARACTERS:

KATE, late middle-age

BOB, late twenties

DOCTOR

*(Lights up on a hospital waiting lounge. KATE is seated on a cushioned bench, working on a crossword puzzle. BOB is nervously pacing. KATE watches BOB pace for a moment, then studies her puzzle.)*

KATE. What's a four-letter word for pocket catchings?

BOB *(as if noticing KATE for the first time)*. Huh? What did you say?

KATE. A four-letter word for pocket catchings? *(She indicates the puzzle.)*

BOB. Oh. Uh...I...I don't know. Sorry. *(He resumes pacing.)*

KATE. You ought to relax, you know.

BOB *(stops)*. Hmm? What?

KATE. A watched pot never boils.

BOB. What are you talking about?

KATE *(kindly)*. I mean, pacing isn't going to speed things up around here. They're trained to take no notice of it. Come sit.

BOB. Look, lady...

KATE. Oh, just for a moment or two. If you don't like it, you can always go back to your little hike. *(She pats the seat beside her.)* Come on. Please. Humor me.



BOB (*grudgingly*). If it'll make you feel better.

KATE. Oh, it will. (*BOB sits next to KATE, but continues to fidget.*) I'm Kate.

BOB. Bob.

KATE. Hello, Bob. (*Pause.*) You certainly have all the earmarks.

BOB. All the what?

KATE. I get the distinct impression that you're about to become a six-letter word for male parent.

BOB. Six let...(*He thinks for a moment.*) Oh. Yes. (*KATE watches BOB, becoming concerned that he remains so grim.*)

KATE. There's something else, isn't there?

BOB. Excuse me?

KATE. Something troubling you...I can tell.

BOB. Look, would you mind terribly if we...if we didn't talk about it? (*Pause.*)

KATE. All right. (*KATE looks at BOB a moment longer, then stares off into space.*) Lint. (*BOB slowly looks at her.*) A four-letter word for pocket catchings. Lint. (*She writes the answer into the puzzle.*) I love crossword puzzles. (*Pause.*) They tend to keep me up at night, but what can I do? I'm hopelessly addicted. (*BOB is still distracted, but nods.*) Do you enjoy the crosswords?

BOB. 'Fraid not.

KATE. Oh, what a shame.

BOB. Takes too long.

KATE. That's part of their challenge. Do you know that I once worked on a crossword for two solid months? It was a positively hellish poser from a literary magazine. The theme was the Italian Renaissance. A real contest, that one. Two solid months. (*Pause.*) I love them.

BOB. Mmmmm. (*Pause.*)

## Writer Left

### CHARACTERS:

TRUDY

ALICIA

SAMANTHA

RENEE

*(Lights up on two desks. The desks represent two distinct and separate playing areas. SAMANTHA is seated at one of the desks and is busily writing in a notebook. After a moment, TRUDY and ALICIA enter the other playing area.)*

ALICIA. Okay. So what's the problem?

TRUDY *(nervously)*. Well...it's hard to know where to begin...

ALICIA. Begin at the beginning, I guess.

TRUDY. Okay. *(She pauses, still unsure.)*

ALICIA. Do you want to sit down? *(TRUDY nods. ALICIA starts to walk her over to the desk, but TRUDY suddenly pulls free.)*

TRUDY. No! *(Pause.)* Not there. *(She indicates a couple of chairs.)* Over there.

ALICIA. All right. *(They move to the chairs and sit.)* Trudy, what is it? Are you okay? You look really tired.

TRUDY. I'm just afraid that you'll think I'm making it up.

ALICIA. Making what up?

TRUDY. Or that it's my imagination...or that I've cracked...

ALICIA. I won't. *(Pause.)* Trudy? *(As TRUDY begins to speak, SAMANTHA stops writing, rises from her desk, crosses to a water pitcher, pours herself a glass of water, drinks, returns to her desk with the water and resumes writing.)*

TRUDY. I'm telling you this because I've got to tell somebody. You're my best friend. You know me. If you think I'm screwed up, you'll tell me straight out, right?

ALICIA. Uh...yeah, right. What's going on?

TRUDY. I took that creative writing course a few months ago, remember?

ALICIA. Sure.

TRUDY. Good course. Gave us some good writing advice. Maybe too good.

ALICIA. Too good?

TRUDY. One thing in particular. We got to the part about characters and characterization. The teacher, Mr. ...*(Pause.)* Huh.

ALICIA. What?

TRUDY. That's funny...I can't even remember his name. But I remember what he said. In the best writing, characters are as real as we are. We feel as if they are real people, with personalities and objectives that are so strong, they don't always seem to do what we dictate. They sometimes seem to write themselves.

ALICIA. I guess that's true. I know I've read some books where I'd swear...

TRUDY. It's not just true. It's happening.

ALICIA. Happening?

TRUDY. Yes. *(Looking anxiously over at the desk.)* Over there.

ALICIA. You mean in that story you've been writing? *(TRUDY nods.)* And that's why you brought me up here?