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Bear With Me

An Evening of Short Plays About Life, Death, Love, and Estrogen

by

Jill Elaine Hughes

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Bear With Me
by Jill Elaine Hughes

Plays & Characters in Collection

THE PERFECT RELATIONSHIP

MARY ANN; attractive blonde woman, early 20’s, giddy
CHRISTINE; quirky brunette, early 20’s, fashionably dressed
ORCHID: a New-age-looking artist, mid-twenties who hosts a women’s biweekly relationship support group

CIRCLE LINE

ANNETTE (“A”)
BERNARD (“B”)
CATHERINE (C”)
DONALD (“D”)
ENGINEER (“E”)

DOES ANYONE KNOW WHAT’S REALLY GOING ON UPSTAIRS?

GOD; a wise and powerful woman of any age/type
BUDDHA: a plump, jolly man of any age/type
CONFUCIUS; a severe, uptight man, preferably Asian but can be of any age/type speaking in a strong Chinese accent
VIRGIN MARY; a young, beautiful woman
LUCIFER; a sultry, voluptuous woman

THIS IS YOUR LIFETIME

MARISSA; a single woman in her mid-30’s
LIFETIME TELEVISION ANNOUNCER
LIFETIME WOMAN #1; a rich-voiced inhabitant of TV Femme Heaven. She is athletic and of any age/ethnicity (Can double as LIFETIME TELEVISION ANNOUNCER)
LIFETIME WOMAN #2; another inhabitant of TV Femme Heaven. She, too, is athletic and of any age/ethnicity
LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS; a mature, regal woman who rules over TV Femme Heaven

ETC

Early Production History of Plays included at end of script
The Perfect Relationship
by Jill Elaine Hughes

Characters:

MARY ANN; attractive blonde woman, early 20s, giddy.
CHRISTINE; quirky brunette, early 20s, fashionably dressed.
ORCHID; a New Age-looking artist, mid-twenties, hosts the women’s biweekly relationship support meetings.

Setting: Orchid’s living room; comfortable, with New Age décor.

(AT RISE: MARY ANN and CHRISTINE are in ORCHID’s living room for their biweekly relationships support group. MARY ANN and CHRISTINE are seated, munching on cookies; ORCHID is circling them, wafting incense smoke over their bodies.)

ORCHID
As you’ll remember, I said in our last meeting that we were going to try something new this week. What I’m doing right now is perfuming your auras, just allowing the incense to reside in your aura.

MARY ANN
Um, is that supposed to help us?

ORCHID
Of course!

CHRISTINE
How?

ORCHID
Well, Christine, your aura is the energy field that surrounds your body. It is the emotional energy that you produce, and if you are in a bad emotional state, like you both are, then your aura is going to smell bad. It needs perfume. Incense helps with that.

MARY ANN
I can’t smell my aura.

CHRISTINE
I can’t smell my aura, either.

ORCHID
Well, Mary Ann, Christine---let me tell you. I can smell both your auras, and they stink.

MARY ANN
Can you smell your aura?
ORCHID
Of course. My aura is very fragrant. Why do you think my parents named me Orchid?

CHRISTINE
I thought it was because they were hippies who took too much acid.

ORCHID
Well, my parents were very in touch with the spiritual-energy side of life, and drugs did help with that—but remember ladies, we are all here to talk about your relationship problems. I’m just trying to open you both up. Now let’s take a deep, cleansing breath in, deep cleansing breath out——

(MARY ANN and CHRISTINE breathe deeply, then both start coughing.)

ORCHID
What’s the matter?

MARY ANN
(Coughing) Too much incense—

(ORCHID extinguishes the incense in a glass of water.)

ORCHID
Okay, well then I think your auras are probably perfumed enough now, so let’s move on to our rap session. Mary Ann, why don’t you tell the group about your week?

MARY ANN
Well, it was an okay week, I guess.

ORCHID
Go on…

MARY ANN
Well, mostly I just went to work, came home, usual routine. It’s still pretty hard to get out, you know, after—(Chokes up)

ORCHID
It’s okay, Mary Ann. We all support you.

MARY ANN
Well, you know, it’s hard for me to go out, you know, after the incident.

CHRISTINE
I thought we weren’t supposed to call our traumatic relationship experiences “incidents” when we’re in group.
“Bear With Me”

ORCHID
That’s right, Christine. Now Mary Ann, why don’t you try restating what you just said without using the word “incident.”

MARY ANN
(Sniffling) Okay. Well, it’s been hard for me to go out, you know, since the incident—well, since I found out that my last boyfriend was really a married Episcopalian minister—well, technically he wasn’t a minister yet, but he was married and just about to finish seminary and he felt that he had to come clean with me about who he really was and then break up with me so that he would have a clean soul when he went out to minister to his flock and everything—

ORCHID
Good, Mary Ann. Oh, that’s very good that you can talk about it with such detail now. Keep going.

MARY ANN
But even though it’s very hard for me to go out and do anything, since my last boyfriend, “Father Ray” — that’s not his real name, of course — like, totally lied to me and betrayed me and dumped me and everything—but this week, I did go out, once. I went to the Kopi Coffeehouse on Clark Street and had a large chai tea with steamed milk, and I did see one guy that was kind of cute, and I waved at him, but he didn’t see me so he didn’t wave back or anything, but that’s what I did this week. Plus I had four cleansing cries!

ORCHID
Excellent! Mary Ann, that’s just excellent! Going out, making an effort with the opposite sex — totally okay that it didn’t get acknowledged this time, mind you, it’s the act of trying that counts — and four cleansing cries! Wow, Mary Ann. Very, very good work. Let’s all give Mary Ann a round of applause for her wonderful progress.

(ALL applaud; CHRISTINE unenthusiastically.)

ORCHID
So Christine, why don’t you tell us about your week?

CHRISTINE
Well, nothing much happened, really—

ORCHID
Now, now, Christine. You know the rule. During rap session we must all describe our weeks, describe what happened, good, bad or indifferent. Even if it’s mundane things like just going to the dry cleaners or something. Remember — every little step we take in our lives could lead to that perfect relationship!

CHRISTINE
Yeah, well, whatever.
MARY ANN
That’s a nice attitude.

ORCHID
Ladies, ladies! Now let’s not get snippy. We are here to grow, remember?

MARY ANN
Sorry.

CHRISTINE
I’m not like, trying to be difficult or anything, I’m just—I’m just really fed up right now.

ORCHID
Okay, Christine, good, let’s just get everything out in the open. What are you fed up with?

CHRISTINE
Well, for one thing, I’ve been so depressed lately that I’ve run out of clean underwear.

MARY ANN
Huh?

CHRISTINE
What I mean to say is, I’ve been so depressed lately that I can’t get anything done around the house, you know? I just come home from work and turn on the television and watch reality shows on cable while I drink whole bottles of red sangria, okay? And for the past couple days I haven’t even been going to work. I can’t remember the last time I went to a Laundromat, or a dry cleaners, or anything. I can’t bear the sight of anyone except my cat and the guy on the sangria label. How am I supposed to take “little steps toward the perfect relationship” when my apartment is so full of garbage and dirty laundry I can’t even get into my kitchen anymore? Huh?

ORCHID
Now Christine, it sounds like you’re just having a little bit of a setback this week, but—

CHRISTINE
Oh, I think I’m way beyond “setback” here, Orchid. My apartment is filthy and full of dirty clothes to the point that when I look at how bad it is, I get even more overwhelmed, to the point that the only solution I can think of is to charge more clothes and underwear on my credit card instead of actually having to go to a Laundromat and face the possibility that I might run into my ex-boyfriend while I’m there!

MARY ANN
Why are you running out of clean underwear when you can just go buy more?

ORCHID
Now Mary Ann, that’s not positive reinforcement—
CHRISTINE
Because my credit cards are fucking maxed out, okay? Because I lost my job, okay? Because I am so pathetic right now that the only time I can muster enough strength to leave my apartment is to come here. Because I have been wearing the same filthy underwear for a week. Okay?

(ORCHID and MARY ANN are stunned and do not speak for a few beats.)

MARY ANN
I guess it’s not our auras that stink, then.

ORCHID

MARY ANN
I’ll say.

CHRISTINE
Oh, will you just fucking can it?

MARY ANN
Can this, bi—

(ORCHID gets up and places herself between CHRISTINE and MARY ANN.)

ORCHID
Ladies, please let’s just remember why we’re here. Why are we here? I asked you both a question. Why are we here? You know the answer.

MARY ANN
To heal ourselves—

CHRISTINE
—to find the perfect relationship, yada, yada, yada.

ORCHID
Good. Now that’s what I want to hear. So Christine, you’re having a—difficult time right now. I think what you need to do is revisit the source of your depression. Just face it, dead-on. Let’s talk about what happened between you and—what do you call him again?

CHRISTINE
“Steve.” Not his real name, of course.

ORCHID
Right. “Steve.” Tell us what happened between you and “Steve.”
Christine
But I already talked about this in group like, *eight times* before—

Orchid
Well, yes, but I like I said, I still think you need to revisit it. So you can break through this cycle of crippling depression that you’re in.

Mary Ann
Yeah, and so you can get some new underwear. Phew.

Orchid
Mary Ann, let’s be supportive of Christine while she gets ready to tell her story.

Christine
Okay, well I think you all know my pathetic relationship story, being as I’ve already told it in here I don’t know how many times before, but here goes. “Steve” and I met when I was in graduate school down at the University of Chicago. He was on faculty at the divinity school, specializing in like Biblical literature or something. He wasn’t religious at all—he viewed the Bible as like, nothing but a historical document for studying the ancient world or something. So anyway, we got involved, we dated for like, eight years, you know, nothing big, just spending almost every weekend together for like, eight years, and when I finally asked “Steve” if we were ever getting married, he told me no, because he was already married! He’d been married for the *entire time* we’d been dating!

Mary Ann
What I still don’t understand is, how can you date a guy for eight years and not know that he’s married?

Christine
Well, you dated a married man too and didn’t know until he told you!

Mary Ann
Not for *eight years*!

Orchid
Okay, ladies, okay. Now Christine, you’ve revisited what happened with Steve. Why don’t you try talking about how that’s affecting you right now?

Christine
I already did.

Orchid
Well, you *did* kind of talk about how you’re having some very strong depression, so strong that it’s affecting your home and your—personal hygiene, obviously. You talked about how you’re afraid that if you go to the Laundromat you’ll run into Steve. Why is that?
CHRISTINE
Well, it’s kind of a really weird thing; I’d rather not talk about it—

ORCHID
It’s okay, Christine. Nothing is too weird to discuss in group.

CHRISTINE
Well, this is pretty damn weird.

MARY ANN
Weirder than not changing your underwear in a week?

CHRISTINE
Look. Why don’t you just shut up?

ORCHID
Okay, I’m sensing a little conflict in the room. Why don’t we do some deep cleansing breaths, try to clear the air a little. Deep cleansing breath in, deep cleansing breath out—

MARY ANN
Can you burn some more incense or something? I keep smelling Christine’s underwear every time I breathe in.

ORCHID
No, I think that we all need to experience Christine’s—uh, aura together, so that we can all—uh, empathize with her—uh, situation. You know, actually, I do have some orange spray around here somewhere that might help us—uh, experience Christine’s aura a little more intimately—

(ORCHID finds a can of natural orange air freshener behind the couch and sprays it liberally.)

ORCHID, Continued
There. Now doesn’t that make you feel so much closer to Christine’s aura? Christine, now that we’ve all had some—uhhh, cleansing breaths, why don’t you tell us about this “weird thing” that is causing your little, tiny, emotional block right now?

CHRISTINE
Well, my ex-boyfriend – you know, “Steve”— he kind of has this odd fetish.

ORCHID
Oh, I see.

MARY ANN
What kind of a fetish?
CHRISTINE
He ummm—he ummm—he sort of, ummm—

ORCHID
Go on…

CHRISTINE
He’s sexually fascinated with the underwear of middle-aged obese women. He isn’t sexually fascinated with middle-aged obese women, themselves—just their underwear.

MARY ANN
Just their underwear?

CHRISTINE
Yep. He liked the smell. It turned him on. Something about the combination of fat-woman smell with menopause hormones or something—it made him feel primal. Anyway, that’s how he explained it to me.

ORCHID
Uh huh. Well. That’s very interesting. So—did he need to uhhh—experience the—scent of middle-aged obese women in order to—ahhh, achieve satisfaction?

CHRISTINE
Yep.

MARY ANN
Well, if he wasn’t like, dating middle-aged obese women, how did he get hold of their underwear?

CHRISTINE
Well, for a long time he just placed ads in the Chicago Reader Adult Services personals asking for middle-aged obese women to mail him their dirty underwear, and that did work for a number of years, but ummm—then he sort of got into trouble with the postal service. You know, after 9/11 they got pretty strict about sending organic material through the mail. So, then he just started hanging out in Laundromats late at night and stealing them out of washing machines when you know, the fat middle-aged women weren’t looking. He has to switch Laundromats every day so that the managers don’t get suspicious.

ORCHID
Uh huh. So, I guess this is why you aren’t going to the Laundromat to do any of your own wash?

CHRISTINE
Well, yeah, because given the way he rotates Laundromats every single day, and there only being so many Laundromats on the north side of Chicago, the chances of us running into each other at one of them are actually pretty good.
MARY ANN
You know, you could just send your laundry out. They have services, you know.

CHRISTINE
Well, that would be fine, if I actually had any money, but—

ORCHID
Christine, I think you’ve just made an important breakthrough.

CHRISTINE
What? No I didn’t.

ORCHID
Yes, oh yes, you most certainly did! You just faced head-on why you are so emotionally crippled that you aren’t even changing your underwear! You articulated it; put it out there, right in front of us, without being afraid! That’s wonderful, Christine! Good for you! Let’s all give Christine a hand!

(ALL clap; MARY ANN unenthusiastically.)

MARY ANN
Breakthrough, schmakethrough. Now maybe if you actually bathed, that would really be something.

CHRISTINE
I bathe—I’m just not changing my underwear right now, that’s all.

ORCHID
Now ladies, we’re almost at the end of our rap session, so let’s just try to remain positive for a little while longer, okay? And since you’ve both made such good progress today, I have an extra-special treat for both of you.

CHRISTINE
What’s that?

ORCHID
Well, I know that in group it can seem a little one-sided that I am the one that drives the conversation all the time, that I’m always the one that chooses the topics for discussion. So today, for our final two topics of discussion, I’m going to let each of you choose what we talk about. So, you both get choose a topic!

MARY ANN
It can be anything we want?

ORCHID
Yes! Assuming of course that it remains within the sphere of our relationships.
CHRISTINE
What about your relationships, Orchid? Can it be about your relationships?

ORCHID
I don’t see why not.

CHRISTINE
Okay. Well, then for my topic, I choose that Orchid tells us all about her worst relationship, ever. She has to tell us about her Relationship from Hell.

ORCHID
Okay then. Mary Ann, what about you? What topic do you want to see discussed?

MARY ANN
Well, Orchid can talk about her relationships first, but when she’s done, I want everyone – including Orchid – to tell us the real names of our Worst Relationship men. You know, no more fake names like “Father Ray” and “Steve.” The real deal.

ORCHID
I’m comfortable with that as long as everyone else is.

CHRISTINE
Hell, now that you all know about my underwear I don’t see why you can’t know “Steve’s” real name. That’s fine. Orchid, go ahead and tell your bad relationship story.

MARY ANN
If you even have one to tell.

ORCHID
Oh, like any other human being on this small planet, I have had my share of relationships, believe me. Some good, some bad, some indifferent. But there was one relationship in particular, one in particular that led me to become a New Age healer hosting these weekly group sessions to help other women break past their crippling emotional firewalls and find the Perfect Relationship. But in order for me to do that, first I had to have the Relationship from Hell.

CHRISTINE
You had the Relationship from Hell? Ha. That hardly seems possible.

ORCHID
Oh, it’s definitely possible.

MARY ANN
But how? You’re like—perfect. You never have any problems.

ORCHID
No, no, no! Not true.
CHRISTINE
So when did your Relationship from Hell happen?

ORCHID
Well, I was in massage therapy school, and I met who I thought was a wonderful man – another massage therapy student – who well, let’s just say he did not turn out to be who I thought he was going to be. In fact, he turned out to be much different from the man he said he was.

MARY ANN
Who did he say he was?

ORCHID
He said that he was the latest incarnation of Hare Krishna.

CHRISTINE
And he wasn’t?

ORCHID
No.

MARY ANN
Who was he, really?

ORCHID
Well, no one, actually. He was an amnesia patient, so he didn’t even know who he was. One day when I went to meet him for coffee he didn’t remember who I was. He completely forgot that we were in a relationship! When I kissed him hello he got scared and ran away. That was the end.

(There is a pause. MARY and CHRISTINE show noticeable disappointment.)

CHRISTINE
That’s it?

MARY ANN
That’s your Relationship from Hell? That’s not a Relationship from Hell!

CHRISTINE
That—that’s nothing! That’s like—that’s like saying World War III has broken out when you run out of coffee.

ORCHID
It was very traumatic for me. It took me years to get past it.
CHRISTINE
Well, what the hell am I doing here telling you all about my ex-boyfriend’s underwear fetish when all you’ve got as your Boyfriend from Hell is some sweet innocent little Hare Krishna amnesia victim? Jesus, it wasn’t even his fault he forgot who you were!

MARY ANN
Yeah, he only forgot you because he had a disease! Our ex-boyfriends were evil, manipulative, adulterous, liars! Yours just lost his memory!

ORCHID
(Tearing up) Well, it might not seem like a lot to you, but it hurt me very badly. And I’m afraid I can’t tell you his real name, since I never found out what his real name was. I just knew him as Hare Krishna Doe.

CHRISTINE
Well, everybody has to give the real names of their Boyfriends from Hell. We all agreed.

MARY ANN
I guess you could just make up a real name for him. Make up a name that he might have had, in real life.

ORCHID
Well, in compromise, I will tell you the name of the absolutely wonderful man I’m with now. How’s that?

CHRISTINE
That’s fine. Who’s he?

ORCHID
Well, he’s a born-again Christian—except he’s the liberal kind of born-again Christian, not one of those kooky right-wing evangelist types. He’s very into the-Earth-as-God’s-temple, that sort of thing. His name is the Reverend Doctor Evan Eagle.

MARY ANN
What?

CHRISTINE
What did you say his name was?

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

Continue to next page for
“CIRCLE LINE”
Circle Line
by Jill Elaine Hughes

Characters:

ANNETTE (“A”)
BERNARD (“B”)
CATHERINE (“C”)
DONALD (“D”)
ENGINEER (“E”)

Setting: A subway platform at Central Station, Amsterdam

Production Note: “Circle Line” is a “circular” play meant to run in a continuous loop although it can also be run only once.

(AT RISE: ANNETTE, BERNARD, CATHERINE & DONALD on the platform; ANNETTE and BERNARD are at one end of the platform, CATHERINE and DONALD at the other. THEY are all leaning over the tracks and staring down the line, bewildered.)

ANNETTE
We’re going to be here a long time.

BERNARD
Yes, dear.

CATHERINE
We’re going to be here a long time.

DONALD
We’re going to be late.

CATHERINE
Obviously.

DONALD
We’re going to be late.

ANNETTE
This line is running slow, isn’t it?

BERNARD
Can’t we switch to the other line?
The other line goes to Belgium. We’re not going to Belgium, dear. We’re going to The Hague.

Can’t we go to Belgium instead?

No, dear.

They’ve been having problems with the engineers, you know.

What do you mean?

The engineers. They’ve all been on strike.

They can’t be on strike now.

Why not?

If they were, the trains wouldn’t be running at all.

This train doesn’t seem to be running.

But some of them are.

This one isn’t.

But some of them are.

But this one isn’t.

I think we should go to Belgium instead.
ANNETTE

No. We’re going to the funeral.

BERNARD

I think we should.

ANNETTE

No. We’ve been through all of this already.

BERNARD

It would be so nice, dear.

ANNETTE

We can’t. That’s not where we’re going.

BERNARD

You never do anything I want to do.

ANNETTE

It’s a funeral. It’s not about what anybody wants. Somebody died.

BERNARD

I’ve always loved looking at all the pretty houses on the way to Belgium.

ANNETTE

Your brother’s funeral is not in Belgium, dear.

CATHERINE

None of the engineers are working.

DONALD

Some of them are.

CATHERINE

They’re not. They can’t be.

DONALD

They’re back at work. The strike ended on Tuesday. It was in the paper.

CATHERINE

The engineers on this line must have stayed on strike.

DONALD

Nobody stayed on strike, dear.

CATHERINE

If I were an engineer, I would have stayed on strike.
DONALD
Nobody stayed on strike. The union won all its demands.

CATHERINE
Then there is a new strike. An insurrection.

DONALD
No one is having an insurrection.

ANNETTE
Your dead brother’s funeral is not in Belgium, Bernard.

BERNARD
I’ve always been partial to Belgian beer.

ANNETTE
You can buy some Belgian beer in The Hague. I’ll buy you a case of it when we get to The Hague. I’ll even order some lace for you after the funeral. There are lace stores in The Hague, you know. They import everything from Belgium. It’ll be like you were really there.

BERNARD
No it won’t.

ANNETTE
Yes it will.

BERNARD
It won’t and you know it. Why don’t we ever do anything I want to do? It’s always you you you, all the time.

ANNETTE
It’s not my fault your brother died in a country other than Belgium, dear.

CATHERINE
There must be a miniature political movement associated only with this specific set of tracks.

DONALD
There are no more political movements, Catherine.

CATHERINE
There are plenty of movements these days, Donald. The working classes are all so agitated.

DONALD
Not anymore, dear. Maybe in America they are, but not here.
CATHERINE
The engineers on this line must have found another union to back their strike.

DONALD
You’re talking in circles, Catherine.

CATHERINE
Yes, that must be it! The engineers and the sandwich salesmen, Donald. They must be conspiring to strike together. They’ve taken all the sandwich and cake carts and blocked the tracks with them. A new political movement, dear!

DONALD
There are no more movements, Catherine.

CATHERINE
Yes, blocking the tracks with their little carts. How romantic!

DONALD
All the political movements fled to America years ago.

CATHERINE
Blocking the tracks. Just like the French.

ANNETTE
Your brother hated Belgium, you know. And furthermore, I despise the place. Everyone is so----well, I don’t like the sound of Flemish.

BERNARD
Well, I adore Belgium, Annette. And I adore Flemish, too.

ANNETTE
You would. We are not here to adore Belgium, Bernard. We are here to go see your brother’s dead body.

BERNARD
Belgium is a beautiful little country that deserves to be adored.

ANNETTE
All right, Bernard. I’ll tell you what. After the funeral, after we’ve buried your brother, we will go to Belgium and order waffles and speak Flemish and tell everyone there how much we adore their little country. Would you like that?

BERNARD
You can be so romantic sometimes, Annette.

ANNETTE
Yes, I suppose that’s why you love me, dear.
CATHERINE
Do you think they’d let me cross their picket line?

DONALD
Whose picket line?

CATHERINE
The engineers who are on strike with the sandwich salesmen. Do you think they’d let me cross their picket line?

DONALD
If they were in fact on strike together, which they are not, then I suppose they would be rather cross with you if you tried to cross their picket line.

CATHERINE
“They’d be cross if I cross. . .” Oh how charming, Donald. You made a pun.

BERNARD
I really could never stand my brother, Annette.

ANNETTE
Then why did you volunteer to give the eulogy?

BERNARD
So I could finally humiliate him without fear of retribution.

ANNETTE
There are ghosts, you know. He could become a ghost and haunt you. Then there would be retribution.

BERNARD
My brother didn’t believe in ghosts.

ANNETTE
But you do.

BERNARD
Well, yes, but he didn’t, so I can’t imagine him going round haunting anyone, now can I?

CATHERINE
I’ve always wanted to be tied down to the railroad tracks before an oncoming train.

DONALD
You’ve always wanted to be a prima ballerina too, but look what happened to that.

CATHERINE
Just like in the old movies. Oh, that was the life.
DONALD
Perhaps you can ask the engineer to do that for you when he arrives.

CATHERINE
But you would come and rescue me, wouldn’t you Donald?

DONALD
If it seemed worth doing at the time, I suppose I would.

CATHERINE
Don’t you think I’m worth saving, dear?

DONALD
Some days, no.

CATHERINE
What about today?

DONALD
No, not today.

ANNETTE
There was a ghost in that old manor we stayed in last year. You remember the old manor.

What manor?

ANNETTE
The one outside Utrecht. The one your brother owned.

BERNARD
I don’t recall my brother ever owning a manor.

ANNETTE
Well, he did. He invited your whole family round to stay with him there for the weekend, and then all those dishes turned up mysteriously broken and the family sword melted into the tabletop, and those strange Latin phrases floating all round the hallways all night long? Don’t tell me you don’t remember that.

BERNARD
Oh yes, yes---I remember now. Whatever happened to that old place?

ANNETTE
Your brother sold it because of the ghosts.

BERNARD
My brother didn’t believe in ghosts.
ANNETTE
He still sold that manor. Not three months after he moved in.

BERNARD
Well, yes I suppose you’re right. Your memory has always been much better than mine, dear.

CATHERINE
I can’t believe you wouldn’t save me from the tracks, Donald.

DONALD
Some days I would be better off letting you get run over, dear.

CATHERINE
How can you say such a thing?

DONALD
If you had to listen to your conversation for ten years on, you would be happy to see a train go over your belly, too.

CATHERINE
We’ll see about that, dear. *(SHE climbs down from the platform onto the tracks, lays down on them perpendicular to the rails, folds her hands on her stomach, and waits.)*

DONALD
Catherine, come off the tracks at once. Really.

CATHERINE
No, dear. You have to come and rescue me.

ANNETTE
Whatever is that woman doing?

BERNARD
Attempting suicide, I suppose.

ANNETTE
Really, Bernard, I don’t think that’s what she’s doing.

BERNARD
What else would she be doing?

ANNETTE
A pathetic attempt at romance, perhaps?
BERNARD
I doubt that. She doesn’t seem to know what romance is if she’s laying down upon rail tracks. It absolutely is suicide. It’s quite a mess when it happens, too. Saw that happen once when I was a boy. On the way to Belgium—

ANNETTE
Please stop bringing up Belgium, dear. We settled that matter already.

BERNARD
Well, it’s true. Legs flying one way, arms another, gallons of blood all over the train. Took seven porters nearly two hours to clean it up.

ANNETTE
Hush, dear.

DONALD
Catherine, that is quite enough. Please come up from there.

CATHERINE
No, Donald. You have to come down and rescue me.

DONALD
That’s preposterous.

CATHERINE
No it isn’t, dear. Come on down and carry me to safety. Be a man, dear.

DONALD
But I’m wearing my best suit!

ANNETTE
Go on, sir. Rescue your wife.

BERNARD
If you’d prefer sir, I’ll rescue your wife—

ANNETTE
Shut it, Bernard, dear. He needs to save his own wife.

(The SOUND of an approaching train is heard.)

CATHERINE
You’d better hurry, Donald. The train is coming! The striking engineers must have overcome their oppressors!
DONALD
The engineers were never oppressed, Catherine. Now really, you have got to get up from there. The train is coming!

CATHERINE
No, dear, you have to come and get me!

BERNARD
Sir, I really must implore you—

ANNETTE
Go pick up your wife, for God’s sake.

BERNARD
Yes, do. It will be such an unpleasant mess if you don’t—

DONALD
No. She’ll get up on her own soon enough.

CATHERINE
I will not. I am going to live the last few moments of my life romantically! Just like the French!

DONALD
Hush up about the French and get off the bloody tracks!

BERNARD
Oh, they’ll be bloody soon enough.

ANNETTE
Bernard, hush.

BERNARD
Someone needs to do something, or we’ll never get to Belgium.

ANNETTE
Shut it about Belgium!! Hurry, sir! You’re running out of time.

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

Continue to next page for
“DOES ANYONE KNOW WHAT’S REALLY GOING ON UPSTAIRS?”
Does Anyone Know What’s Really Going on Upstairs?
by Jill Elaine Hughes

Characters:

GOD; a wise and powerful woman of any age/type
BUDDHA; a plump, jolly man of any age/type
CONFUCIUS; a severe, uptight man, preferably Asian but can be of any age/type speaking in a strong Chinese accent
VIRGIN MARY; a young, beautiful woman
LUCIFER; a sultry, voluptuous woman

Setting: Heaven; a poker game in progress.

Production Note: All roles should be costumed such that it is immediately obvious to the audience who characters represent. Please note that this play works especially well with an all-female cast with male roles done in female “drag”.

(At rise: GOD is sitting at a card table in heaven with BUDDHA, CONFUCIUS, and the VIRGIN MARY. They are ALL playing poker; GOD is the dealer.)

GOD
All right, who’s in?

CONFUCIUS
Pot getting too big for me.

BUDDHA
The pot is too big for everyone. You know why? Because everyone is too attached to money. Lose attachment; you don’t care if you lose money! Like me.

VIRGIN MARY
Does that mean you don’t care if you win, either?

BUDDHA
No. I care if I win. I care if I lose. I care about everything, equally. That is compassion.

GOD
You are so full of shit, Buddha. Confucius, you in or out?

CONFUCIUS
I am out.

VIRGIN MARY
Well, are you going to play any more tonight or are you just gonna leave?
CONFUCIUS
I watch. Wise men always watch, never gamble.

VIRGIN MARY
Well, I’m in for at least a hundred grand a hand.

BUDDHA
Oh, wow. The Blessed Virgin is ready to play tonight. How did you get so much cash?

VIRGIN MARY
Last week was Assumption. My holy day. The Catholics send me millions every Assumption. It’s all the offering candles, you know. Each candle costs ‘em ten bucks, the suckers. Deal ‘er out, God, ‘cause I got money to burn tonight.

GOD
Mary, if I had known from the get-go that you were gonna end up getting all the cash I never would have impregnated you. I don’t get my own holy day.

BUDDHA
You are God. Every day is holy to you.

GOD
Yeah, a lot of good that does. There’s just too much of me to go around, that’s my problem. Haven’t you ever studied economics? Supply and demand. Too much supply, demand goes down, then you’re so abundant nobody’s willing to pay jack shit for you. I’m worthless.

BUDDHA
God, you’re having that problem with too much attachment to the material world again. This is why you are suffering.

GOD
I am suffering because I am broke. The only money I get is what I win at poker from you people. Nobody ever buys candles for me. They buy them for my son, they buy them for the broad I knocked up, they buy them for a bunch of lunatic mortal saints, they even buy them for that druggie loser, the Holy Spirit. But do they buy any for me? No. And all the cash offerings that don’t go to all the other guys just end up going to the frigging Pope. The Jews don’t even send me money anymore, and they’re my goddamn chosen people!

CONFUCIUS
You know why you have no money, God? You are woman. Women not keeper of money in household. Man keeper of money. Woman keeper of children and home. This is good fortune. This is way to wise happiness.

VIRGIN MARY
Bullshit, Confucius. I’m a woman, and I’m rolling in it. How do you explain that?
BUDDHA
Just deal the cards. You all need to forget about money. Concentrate more on nirvana.

GOD
All right, Buddha, but you better have real money to bet with tonight. None of that bowls of rice and incense crap you tried to pull last week.

BUDDHA
Not to worry. Just had Amida Butsu Bodhisattva holiday in Japan last weekend. They sent me billions. Toyota even sent me a car.

CONFUCIUS
Nobody ever send me a car.

GOD
That’s because China doesn’t make cars, dumbass. Maybe you need to get yourself a new country. Okay, deuces and one-eyed jacks are wild, minimum bet is a hundred grand, minimum ante raise is a thousand.

(GOD deals the cards. ALL take poker hands and ante up except CONFUCIUS, who sulks.)

VIRGIN MARY
You sure you in for that much, God?

GOD
Saint Peter floated me a loan. It’s cool.

BUDDHA
A loan, eh? Then I raise you one million.

VIRGIN MARY
I see your raise, and I raise you three million, for a grand total of four million. Match it up, God.

GOD
Four million! What the hell? I haven’t got that kind of cash!

CONFUCIUS
Women should not have that much money. Very bad fortune!

VIRGIN MARY AND GOD
Shut up, Confucius.

BUDDHA
So four million’s too rich for you, Almighty God? You are having problems with attachment again.
VIRGIN MARY
Do you fold?

GOD
No, I don’t fold. I’m in. I’m good for it.

VIRGIN MARY
Yeah, that’s what you said last time. You still owe me for that, too. You better pay up by
next week, otherwise I’ll have my son come and break your legs.

GOD
He’s my son too, you know. He’s not gonna come and break my legs.

VIRGIN MARY
I don’t know—he’s still pretty pissed off about that whole crucifixion thing.

GOD
Okay, fine, I’ll pay up. And count me in on this hand. Just give me a sec, okay? I’m gonna
have to make some other payment arrangements.

(GOD takes out a cell phone and dials.)

CONFUCIUS
Why everybody get to have cell phone but me?

BUDDHA
Maybe because China doesn’t make cell phones. You should really come to Japan more
often. Talk to Sony. I can introduce you.

(GOD flips her phone shut in frustration.)

GOD
Why the hell does Lucifer never answer the phone? I always get her voicemail.

(Enter LUCIFER.)

LUCIFER
You rang?

GOD
Yeah. Um, I was kind of wondering—

LUCIFER
You need a loan.

GOD
Yeah.
LUCIFER

But of course. How much?

GOD

Five million, give or take. And I’ll need flexible repayment terms.

LUCIFER

Can do. But for that much money I’ll need some collateral.

GOD

What kind of collateral?

LUCIFER

The next five million souls born on Earth ought to do it. Only a dollar a soul. I think that’s a bargain.

GOD

Can I buy the souls back if I pay off the loan early?

LUCIFER

Only if you pay it back in full within the next three days, plus all accrued interest. Otherwise, those souls are all mine.

VIRGIN MARY

I might be able to help buy them back if you can’t, God. They love me down there, after all. I’m appearing on five different overpasses next week.

CONFUCIUS

All you women, you need go back to kitchen. Stop messing around with money and soul affair. Kitchen and cooking bring woman wisdom.

LUCIFER

What the hell is Confucius doing up here? You know you’re not supposed to leave your quarters without my permission. Get back downstairs.

CONFUCIUS

Yes, oh Great and Powerful Master.

(CONFUCIUS exits.)

GOD

Now Mary, if I were to let you buy those souls back for me, then I’d have to give you more privileges both up here and on Earth than you already have. And frankly, I’m not comfortable with that. I’d rather take my chances on winning back my money.

LUCIFER

A bit of a gambling problem there, Yahweh? I could help you out with that, too. For a price.
GOD
No thanks, Lucifer. I’ll call you when I can pay you back.

LUCIFER
All right. And remember, my door is always open.

(LUCIFER exits.)

BUDDHA
Okay, enough dilly-dallying. I call. Everybody show your cards.

VIRGIN MARY
Full house. Aces high.

BUDDHA
Oh yeah? Straight flush. All the Japanese sent me their luck, too.

GOD
Royal flush. That beats everything. Fork it over, folks.

VIRGIN MARY
What? How the hell did you get a royal flush? I thought I—

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

Continue to next page for
“This IS YOUR LIFETIME”
This is Your Lifetime
by Jill Elaine Hughes

Characters:

MARISSA; a single woman in her mid-30’s
LIFETIME TELEVISION ANNOUNCER
LIFETIME WOMAN #1; a rich-voiced inhabitant of TV Femme Heaven. She is athletic and of any age/ethnicity (Can double as LIFETIME TELEVISION ANNOUNCER)
LIFETIME WOMAN #2; another inhabitant of TV Femme Heaven. She, too, is athletic and of any age/ethnicity
LIFETIME MOTHER GODDES; a mature, regal woman who rules over TV Femme Heaven

Setting: Marissa’s apartment.

(AT RISE: MARISSA is at home alone in her apartment late one Saturday evening, recuperating from a recent auto accident. Her upper leg is in a large femur cast up to the waist. Her leg is propped up on a pillow. MARISSA is eating Ben & Jerry’s Chunky Monkey ice cream while absently flipping channels looking for something more interesting to watch.)

MARISSA
(Fliping channels) This is bad. Oh, this is very bad. Nine days cooped up in this apartment with nothing but the TV to keep me company and I’ve gotta watch this crap. How many clones of Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire do we need? Jesus. And I’ve still got at least forty more days to go before they take this lovely contraption off. Funny, I’m almost growing attached to it. And I don’t mean attached like you get attached to a kitten or something—I mean literally, attached. It’s becoming like, a part of my skin. I guess that’s what happens when you can’t take a bath. Oh well. They’ll just have to cut my leg off at the groin to get it off.

(MARISSA flips more channels. A mixture of STATIC and SOUND BLIPS are heard from the television.)

MARISSA
Infomercial. . . Infomercial. . .Jay Leno rerun. . .Infomercial. . .Televangelist. . .Rerun of the Jeffersons. . .Lifetime network movie. God, there is nothing on. But, I can’t sleep, and my good friends Ben and Jerry need devouring. Ben and Jerry, I really have to tell you guys—at four bucks a pint, it would be a real shame to waste you just because nothing’s on but the Lifetime Network movie, which probably has the same old crappy plotline as all the other Lifetime Network movies I’ve been watching for the past nine days. That’s it. I’m never breaking my leg again. Well, maybe when I have someone to take care of me I will. Nope—not even then.

(MARISSA settles on a channel, tosses the remote aside, and settles back to watch.)
LIFETIME TELEVISION ANNOUNCER, Off
Lifetime: Television for Women. You are watching Love and Sexy Men Conquer All, Even When She’s In A Coma, the Lifetime Late-Late Saturday Movie.

MARISSA
Somebody’s always in a coma on this network.

(CHEESY ROMANCE MUSIC floats from the television. MARISSA is transfixed for a moment, then rolls her eyes.)

MARISSA
Oh come on. Nobody looks that good in a coma. Yeah, and I can see your roots, lady. Time to go get a touch-up. Miss Bottle Blonde—but you can’t, ‘cause you’re in a coma. Ha! (Beat) Oh, that’s compelling. Yeah, just bring in some impossibly blue-eyed guy with eighteen-inch biceps to fawn over the coma lady and weep at her bedside. Like that’s really gonna happen in real life. Hey buddy, so ya think stripping down’s gonna wake her up? Yeah right. (Beat; MARISSA’s jaw drops.) Holy shit! With those abs, you could wake up anybody. Yowza. Baby, you can bring me out of a coma anytime.

LIFETIME TELEVISION ANNOUNCER/LIFETIME WOMAN #1, Off
You are watching Lifetime. We’ll be right back after these messages.

MARISSA
No—wait. Wait! Go back to the sexy ab guy.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1, Off
Do you ever have days where you just don’t feel fresh? I do, too!

MARISSA
Oh, no. No no no. If you just cut away from the sexy abs guy to do a fucking douche commercial I swear I am never watching the Lifetime network again. (Indicating ice cream carton) Right guys? See, Ben and Jerry agree with me. Bring back the abs.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1, Off
To restore that feminine freshness, use Springtime Vinegar and Water Disposable Douche—

MARISSA
I want some abs, baby! I don’t want no stinkin’ douche!

(MARISSA clicks off the television.)

MARISSA
That’s it, Lifetime Network. You’re fired. I should probably get some sleep anyway.
(MARISSA stretches out to sleep. Lights shift to indicate a dream state. Enter LIFETIME WOMAN #1. Music accompanies her entrance. SHE is wearing long flowing robes decorated with leaves and flowers, carries a magic wand, and SHE should “sparkle.” LIFETIME WOMAN #1 dances up to MARISSA and taps her with her magic wand.)

MARISSA
(Asleep) Oh yeah, baby. Bring that washboard stomach over here…

(LIFETIME WOMAN #1 shows irritation at this, and taps MARISSA harder with her magic wand. MARISSA jerks awake.)

MARISSA
I’m awake now, baby—wait. Who the hell are you? Where’s Sexy Abs Guy?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
My child, you don’t need a man to achieve true satisfaction.

MARISSA
Um, yes I do. And until you showed up I was very close to achieving true satisfaction with Sexy Abs Guy. Godammit—

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
There are other ways to love your body, Marissa, and have it love you back. Without a man.

MARISSA
How do you know my name?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
I know every woman’s name. Every woman that watches Lifetime, anyway, and in this country, that’s pretty much every woman.

MARISSA
(Embarrassed) Uhhhh—I don’t watch Lifetime. I mean—I used to watch Lifetime, but I really don’t anymore—

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
Oh yes you do, Marissa. We know you do. You were just watching Love and Sexy Men Conquer All, Even When She’s In A Coma and stuffing your face full of Chunky Monkey.

MARISSA
I—

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
It’s okay. Lots of women watch Lifetime. It’s nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, we know that you watch Lifetime on a regular basis. In fact, you’ve been watching it for the past nine days straight, with brief breaks for The Bachelor and Who Wants To Marry My Dad?
MARISSA
How do you know that? Do you work for the Nielsen ratings people? Or the government?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
You know, the Lifetime Women’s Auxiliary of TV Femme Heaven used to work for the Nielsens, but we’ve gone freelance. The Nielsens were a little too white-male-corporate for us. We’re now an independent contractor of Lifetime.

MARISSA
Uh huh. So, uhh, Miss Independent Contractor Lady, why are you in that weird getup?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
We prefer to be called Sisters of TV Femme Heaven. And my getup is not weird. My getup is beautiful. What makes you think it’s weird?

MARISSA
Well, if you work for Lifetime, shouldn’t you dress like Melissa Gilbert does in all those Harlequin Romance movies or something? Frilly blouses, spike heels—

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
As a Sister of Lifetime’s TV Femme Heaven, my purpose is to represent Life. Women’s Life. Why do you think I’m covered in flowers? Flowers are plants’ women. They are the way plants reproduce. And flowers are fresh. Lifetime was just trying to give you, Miss Marissa Chunky-Monkey Eater, important information on how you can feel fresh each and every day before you so rudely turned off your television set. That’s why I’m here, personally, to tell you all about Springtime Fresh Vinegar and Water—

MARISSA
Hold it. Hold it. What are you, some kind of subliminal commercial? I already said, I want Sexy Abs Guy! I don’t want no stinkin’ douches! I don’t need to—to—you know—use that stuff. I’m…clean!

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
Every woman has days where she doesn’t feel—fresh. And I think today is one of those days, Marissa.

MARISSA
I am perfectly fresh. Okay?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
Oh, I don’t know about that. How long has it been since you had a bath?

MARISSA
Well, um—I’ve been taking sponge baths. See, I can’t get my cast wet—

(LIFETIME WOMAN #1 leans toward MARISSA and sniffs—then winces.)
LIFETIME WOMAN #1
Uh, I think you’re getting pretty ripe down here. You’ll definitely be needing some Springtime Fresh.

MARISSA
Hey. Hey! Stop sniffing—that. Get out of here, Flower Freakshow Woman, or whatever the hell you are. I’m going back to my Sexy Abs Guy dream.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
(Calling offstage) BACKUP!! I need backup!!

(No response.)

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
Backup!!! WHERE ARE YOU, BACKUP??? I’m WAITING! BACKUP!!

(Enter LIFETIME WOMAN #2, in a stumbling hurry. SHE is dressed to resemble the Tampax “Pearl” brand of tampons and is carrying a wineglass and a rhinestone-studded evening purse.)

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
I’m here! I’m here!

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
Where have you been?

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
(Gulping her wine) I’m sorry. I was at the premiere.

MARISSA
Premiere?

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
You know, the premiere? The commercial premiere? Tampax Pearl? It was a gala.

MARISSA
They have gala premieres for tampon commercials?

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
All feminine products commercials have gala premieres. It’s what separates them from the ordinary male-dominant commercials.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
That’s right. All feminine products commercials are celebrated in the advertising world for their beauty and gentility with glorious gala premieres. And you turned one off in the middle like it was just another Budweiser commercial.
LIFETIME WOMAN #2

_(Shocked)_ It wasn’t one of mine, was it? Anybody who turns off Tampax Pearl’s gotta answer to me.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Nope. It was mine. Springtime Fresh Vinegar & Water.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

No! Girl—

MARISSA

My name’s Marissa.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

I knew that. Marissa, girl, you are in big trouble.

MARISSA

But—that—I’m not! This is a free country! I can turn my TV off whenever the hell I want!

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

Whatever you gotta tell yourself.

MARISSA

What is going on? This is not right. Am I dreaming this?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Do you think you’re dreaming this?

MARISSA

I don’t know.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

You _definitely_ are in big trouble.

MARISSA

Will the both of you—hygiene ladies just go away? I want Sexy Abs Guy back.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Oh, you can have Sexy Abs Guy Back. You can have him back all night long and into next week if you want.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

Mmm—hmmm. And I’ll take him when you’re done with him. Mmm—mmm—mmm.
LIFETIME WOMAN #1
But there are some things you have to do first. Then you can have him back.

MARISSA
What do I have to do to get Sexy Abs Guy back?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
You gotta get in touch with yourself. You gotta get in touch with the parts of you that you wanna show to Sexy Abs Guy. Make ‘em clean and fresh and rosy.

MARISSA
But I’m already in touch with—wi—th that. I don’t need you to—you know.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
Oh, I could tell right when I walked in the room that’s not true. You definitely have got some major freshness problems down there.

MARISSA
No I don’t!

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
Oh, you got some problems all right. Phew-ee! Stinky stinky stinky!

MARISSA
Look. I’m a little bit limited in the amount of bathing I can do right now, but I assure you, my—area is perfectly hygienic.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
Hygienic? Ha! If that’s hygienic, then they must have started making perfume outa tuna fish.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
I know that’s right!

MARISSA
I do not smell like tuna fish. Okay? Maybe I don’t exactly smell like daffodils right now – I’ll give you that – but you do not have to play the tuna fish card, okay?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
Hey. Sometimes the truth hurts, babe. I think we’re gonna have to bring out the big guns on this one.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
Most definitely. Here, Marissa. Why don’t you try a Tampax Deodorant Pearl Tampon? Delicate, comfortable, and nicely scented to control odor.

MARISSA
No thanks. I’m allergic to perfumed tampons.
LIFETIME WOMAN #1
If I had known before I came out here tonight that you have some more elevated freshness problems, I would never have targeted you for our Springtime Fresh Vinegar and Water product.

MARISSA
Well, that’s good, because you see, I really don’t—

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
You need Springtime Fresh’s Super-Acidic Lysol-Based Feminine Wash. Designed for female prison guards, Springtime Fresh’s Super-Acidic Lysol-Based Feminine Wash is GUARANTEED to knock out even the worst feminine odor problems. Be Tuna-Fishy No More with Springtime Fresh! (Aside) May cause irritation, lesions, and cancer.

MARISSA
Look. It’s just me here. I’m single. I live alone. My goddamn leg is in a hundred-pound plaster cast. I can’t take a shower, or a bath, or—anything. And who the hell cares? I’m just trying to watch my movies and let my leg heal in peace! What does it matter that I might smell a little—earthy for a while? Single men sit around stinking in their own filth all the time, you don’t see douche and tampon freaks showing up in their dreams!

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
I can see you’re going to be a tough sell. Sister, a conference please.

(LIFETIME WOMAN #1 and LIFETIME WOMAN #2 huddle and whisper, while MARISSA looks on, mystified.)

MARISSA
Can both of you just go away? Hey! Hello?

(LIFETIME WOMEN ignore her.)

MARISSA, Continued
Okay, so I seem to be stuck in some parallel douche and tampon universe. Um, is there somebody else in charge here? Hello? Anybody?

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
Uhhh—I’d be quiet if I were you.

MARISSA
Will whoever is in charge of this crazy fucking douche and tampon world please show up and get rid of these Feminine Wash Flower Freaks for me?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
(Worried) Please stop talking.
MARISSA
I really need to get back to my Sexy Abs Guy dream! Please? Anybody?

(SFX: A FANFARE of music and a puff of smoke.)

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
Oh shit.

(LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS appears, in regal robes and carrying a scepter.)

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
Did someone call for me?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
(To LIFETIME WOMAN #2) We’re in trouble.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
You said she was dead. You said she wouldn’t interfere with our commercial work anymore!

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
I—that is, I—

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
(Laughing) You told somebody I was dead?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
Well, I really thought you were when you disappeared after the Danielle Steele Weekend Marathon last year—

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
HAHAHAHAHAHA!!! You disappoint me, my Lifetime Daughter. Surely you know that the Lifetime Mother Goddess – that’s me – is immortal.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
I heard the network executives canned you and then you committed suicide!

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
Oh, how they mislead you, my Scented Tampon Daughter. Network executives might “can” me all they want—that doesn’t mean they can make me go away. You see, I am a divine being. I don’t need advertising revenue to survive.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
What? No advertising revenue? Then how do you survive?

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
Yeah, how do you stay on the air with no advertising? What do you live on?
LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
I live on air. Or more specifically, a compound that’s distributed in the air. Good-old-fashioned secreted estrogen. *Pure* estrogen, mind you—not any of that chemical-perfume-altering stuff you two are peddling. I’m here to put a stop to this. You both are a disgrace to TV Femme Heaven, peddling these men’s-fantasy vaginal perfumes in the middle of people’s dreams like this. I should fire the both of you.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
Um, Oh Great Lifetime Mother, please forgive me, Oh Great One, um, but you can’t fire us. We really don’t work for you anymore.

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
HAHAHAHAHA! And who is it you think you work for, my Scented Tampon Daughter?

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
Uhh, the Lifetime Network?

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
Well, maybe the Network signs your paychecks, but you aren’t really working for *them*.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
Then who are we working for?

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
You work for me. You *all* work for me. Even the Lifetime Network Executives work for me.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
Oh, the Great Goddess has gone completely off her rocker.

MARISSA
Hey, you should respect your Mother Goddess.

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
Ah. Here is a beautiful woman who understands. And I can see why you understand. You are emitting pure estrogen. Pure, beautiful, and *very* pungent estrogen. Why else was I drawn here so quickly when you called for me?

MARISSA
*(Embarrassed)* Oh, well, you know—

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
Don’t be ashamed, my daughter. I see you are healing yourself.

MARISSA
I’m just wearing a cast. That’s why I’m stuck here—you know, not bathing.
LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
But you are healing yourself. You are keeping yourself at rest, in a natural state, while allowing your body to do what it will to heal itself. This is a lovely thing. So you’re not shampooing twice a day—big deal! You are a powerful woman. You are emitting a life force.

MARISSA
Life force?

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
A man has been here recently, yes?

MARISSA
Well, sort of. I think I was just having an erotic dream.

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
(Testing the air) Hmm. I’m sensing—I’m sensing that this was a very handsome, very masculine, very muscular man. Ah, of course! The leading man of tonight’s Late-Late Saturday Movie.

MARISSA
Sexy Abs Guy.

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
Yes, he does have very nice abdominal muscles. I’m also sensing from the air that you had a liaison with this individual? A very stimulating liaison? His name is Abner, by the way.

MARISSA
Well, we did sort of have a liaison, but—

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
You were interrupted? You were left unsatisfied? Isn’t that so?

MARISSA
Yes. How did you know?

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
My child, I am the Lifetime Mother Goddess.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
Well, you used to be, until they canned you—

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
Silence!

(The LIFETIME WOMEN cower.)
LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
I can also tell from your estrogen scent. You are emitting the aroma of a natural, earthy woman left unsatisfied. It’s very distinct. And very unfortunate.

MARISSA
(Indicating the LIFETIME WOMEN) Well, it’s their fault.

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
And why is that, my child? Although I can well imagine.

MARISSA
I was just dreaming along, have a very nice time with Sexy Abs Guy – I mean, Abner – and then this Springtime Fresh Douche Lady showed up and shut down my dream, telling me that I needed to wash with vinegar and water—

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
Just like the commercial that interrupted your movie watching.

MARISSA
Right.

(LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS walks over to the cowering LIFETIME WOMEN.)

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
Daughters, arise.

(LIFETIME WOMEN get up, shakily.)

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
Moonlighting, are we? Taking a little cash on the side, are we?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
We didn’t do anything wrong—

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
We get really good money for subconscious advertising now.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
And that woman needs it. She stinks.

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
She does not stink. And I don’t care how much money those Lifetime suits bought you off with. What you did here was wrong. Sacrilegious.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
But—
LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
SILENCE!! I never approved much of selling out our network to those suits just so they can sell advertising that brainwashes women into thinking their vaginas stink, but I know the network was short of cash and in danger of going under, so I allowed it just to keep women’s programming on the air. But now, my daughters, you have gone too far. Not only that, you and those network suits are stupid. Short-sighted. If those suits are telling you to hawk products that wipes out estrogen in the middle of women’s estrogen-producing dreams – and you’re dumb enough to do it just for a little money – well, by the end of it all you’re putting yourselves out of business permanently. If there’s no estrogen, my daughters, there is no Lifetime. Women won’t watch your network anymore because they’d have become too much like men. And then where would you be? You’d be in the Big Land of Canceled Programming in the Sky, that’s where.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
But Great Mother—

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
Don’t you “but” me. Have you forgotten that I’m omniscient? I see and know all. As Lifetime members of the TV Femme Heaven, you know that invading erotic dreams for profit is tantamount to blasphemy. (Statement of fact) And you know what the punishment for blasphemy is, daughters.

(LIFETIME WOMEN exchange looks and shrug.)

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
Actually, we don’t know what the punishment is, exactly.

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
Oh. Well. I’ll tell you then. The punishment for blasphemy against the Lifetime Mother Goddess is that you must live the rest of your lives as men.

(MARISSA laughs.)

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
What? Oh no—

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
Oh please, Great Mother Goddess, spare us, show us mercy—

LIFETIME WOMAN #1
We were wrong. We were SO wrong—

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
PLEASE don’t turn us into men! Please? ANYTHING but that!

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
Well, daughters, there is one alternative.
LIFETIME WOMAN #1
What is it?

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
Death.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2
Death?

MARISSA
It’s either that or become a man, right Great Mother?

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS
That’s right. Death, or become a man. Which punishment do you choose, my daughters?

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

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EARLY PRODUCTION HISTORY OF PLAYS
The Perfect Relationship
World Premiere October 2004 at Boxer Rebellion Ensemble’s Second Annual Martin de Maat Festival (Chicago, IL)
Produced in May 2006 at Mae West Fest IX (Seattle, WA)

Circle Line
Staged reading by Wood Street Theatre, Palatine, IL, April 2005
World Premiere by Speaking Ring Theatre, Chicago, IL June 2005
Produced by NewGate Theatre, Providence, RI June-July 2005
Produced by Gorilla Tango Theatre, Chicago, IL Oct 19-22, 2006
Produced by Mind The Gap Theatre, NYC, 2007

Does Anyone Know What’s Really Going On Upstairs?
First produced at “Around the Coyote Festival, Chicago, IL, 2007.

This Is Your Lifetime
Published in Best American Short Plays 2009-2010 (Applause Books, 2011)
Women’s Funny Shorts Festival, University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth
Women’s Resource Center, (West Dartmouth, MA) February 2005
18th Annual Bailiwick Director’s Festival, Bailiwick Repertory, (Chicago, IL), in the
“Chicago Writes” segment, February 2005