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Product Code A0880-SP

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.

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

(Sniffing) 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

Well. Okay. So. Christine. You just ahhhh—you just made quite a statement.

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 ummmm—he sort of, ummmm—

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 uh—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?

ANNETTE

The other line goes to Belgium. We’re not going to Belgium, dear. We’re going to The Hague.

BERNARD

Can’t we go to Belgium instead?

ANNETTE

No, dear.

CATHERINE

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

DONALD

What do you mean?

CATHERINE

The engineers. They’ve all been on strike.

DONALD

They can’t be on strike now.

CATHERINE

Why not?

DONALD

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

CATHERINE

This train doesn’t seem to be running.

DONALD

But some of them are.

CATHERINE

This one isn’t.

DONALD

But *some* of them are.

CATHERINE

But this one isn’t.

BERNARD

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.

BERNARD

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

(Flipping 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. Goddammit—

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 Niensens, but we’ve gone freelance. The Niensens 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—what—no 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—with 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

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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)

PUBLISHED in *Best American Short Plays 2007-2008* (Applause Books, 2010)

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