

Checkout

A full-length play

By Christopher G. Smith

Current draft

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1st runner-up Shiras Institute/Mildred and Albert Panowski
Playwriting Award. Northern Michigan University

Finalist B Street Theatre New Comedy Festival. Sacramento, CA

Finalist Theatre Victoria Playwriting Contest. Victoria, TX

Finalist Maxim Mazumdar New Play Competition Alleyway Theatre.
Buffalo, New York

Finalist Mountain Playhouse International Comedy Playwriting
Contest. Jennerstown, Pennsylvania

Semi-finalist Trustus Theatre Playwrights' Festival. Columbia,
South Carolina

Semi-finalist Marvin Taylor Playwriting Contest Sierra Repertory
Theatre. Sonora, California.

Recommended by Rachael Carnes: New Play Exchange 21 Jan. 2018

" I had the opportunity to read/hear this play through Playwright
Center's Member Open Play. It reads aloud so easily – Warm and
inviting – With big action that snowballs hysterically. At the
center are Marge and Mavis – two delightful lead roles for women
of an older generation. So refreshing! Writer Smith makes dialogue
look easy in this lilting comedy stocked with compelling,
sympathetic characters. Fun, too, to see a nostalgic small-town
period piece set in recent era – The 1980's. This would be a fun
show for a regional or community theater. "

Cast of Characters
(In order of appearance)

MAVIS MONTROSE Store owner, late 50's early 60's
MARGE Friend a busybody neighbor of Mavis
BILL A teenage store helper for Mavis
PEGGY A sweet checkout girl
ROCKIN' ROBIN SCOTT A local DJ and a legend in his own mind
MAN The mystery man(may be played by Robin)

TIME: LATE 1980'S.

SETTING: THE MONTROSE MARKET. A SMALL GROCERY IN WINSTED,
GEORGIA, POPULATION 400.

ACT I

Scene 1 TIME: Morning
Scene 2 TIME: 8:00 A.M. One week later
Scene 3 TIME: The next day. Early morning.

ACT II

Scene 1 TIME: A few moments later.

ACT I

SCENE I

TIME: Late 1980's.

SETTING: The Montrose Market.

A small grocery in Winsted, Georgia, population 400. The inside of the store is a throwback to the days of the corner grocery. It is a small store with one of everything. Mavis Montrose knows her customers, and her shelves reflect the tastes and needs of each. She may not carry 15 brands of peanut butter, but she carries the kind her customers like.

Down stage is the register and checkout counter. The counter has no conveyor belt or scanner. It has a simple wood top.

Off to the side is a small lunch counter with a few stools. You can get a quick burger or sandwich here with a cold drink.

The aisles lead upstage. In the rear of the store, out of view, is the meat counter and freezer area.

As the play opens Mavis is stocking the shelf downstage. Mavis is in her late 50's to early 60's. She is a hard worker with the real world view of a small business owner. On the radio we hear:

ROCKIN' ROBIN

I just got a call from Dave Stephens who said the sunrise this morning out on Carter's Lake was just about perfect. It's going to be the kind of summer day that makes glad you live right here. So Good morning to those of you just starting out. I'm Rockin' Robin Scott and I'll be with you as we get the morning going. I'm sending this one out just for you.

Music comes up. The front door opens and MARGE a woman in her early 50's, enters.

MARGE

Good morning Mavis, time for coffee..! My word girl, what are you doing?

MAVIS

What?

MARGE

I said what are you doing?

MAVIS

Just a minute. Let me turn this down.

MAVIS turns down the radio.

MAVIS

That Mr. Robin is nice company in the morning. Now what did you say?

MARGE

I was just wondering what in the world you were doing.

MAVIS

What's it look like?

MARGE

Well, unless I walked in on a moment of prayer, it looks like you're doing that boy's work again. I thought you hired him to help out.

MAVIS

He helps.

MARGE

Helps himself to this.

MARGE grabs candy from the counter

MAVIS

He does the lifting. Billy unloaded the whole truck yesterday.

MARGE

How long did that take?

MAVIS

The job got done. He's just not real speedy.

MARGE

He's just not real bright.

MAVIS

Billy's OK.

MARGE

He still puts bread on the bottom of the bag!

MAVIS

Marge, who asked you to come in here and rate my help this morning?

MARGE

I'm just offering an opinion, that's all. I think that boy takes advantage of your good nature.

MAVIS

Opinion noted. Is there anything else I can do for you?

MARGE

Well, there sure is. You can leave that box sit and join me in a morning cup of coffee.

MAVIS

Is it eight already?

MARGE crosses to the counter

MARGE

And then some. I'm running a little late today. What time did you come in girl?

MAVIS

About five.

MARGE Picks out her own mug from the rack

MARGE

That's crazy.

MAVIS pours the coffee

MAVIS

That's the joy of owning your own business. Somebody's got to do the work.

MARGE

Then let that boy do it.

MAVIS

Why are you so concerned about Billy?

MARGE

I'm sorry, he's not very business-like. That's all.

MAVIS

Of course he's not business-like. He's a boy! Boys aren't supposed to be business-like.

Can you imagine living in a world where boys thought about business, instead of pretty girls and cars that go real fast? That would be a terrible thing.

MARGE

I just don't see him taking this job very seriously.

MAVIS

Well how serious should he be? He's a part-time clerk at a little store on the edge of nowhere. It's not exactly a resume builder.

MARGE

That's not the point. It's your business...

MAVIS

That's right, it's my business. So I come in early. And I don't mind. End of story. How's the coffee?

MARGE

It's real good. Kinda' sweet. Did you put something in it again?

MAVIS

Yeah. I like to experiment a little. You like this one?

MARGE

I like it fine. I like this whole idea of morning coffee. It's nice way to start out. Sorta' ease yourself into a day.

MAVIS

Yeah, Bud had a good one there. Free morning coffee. We used to have them lined up, Remember?

MARGE

Everybody had their own cup. Name right on it. A special mug for the five year club

MARGE holds up her cup

MAVIS

Yeah, that was all Bud. We practically lived here those first few years. Girls would be playing right here while we worked. I remember Bud used to sneak out back and take naps on the crates when he got tired, God rest that scoundrel's soul.

(Pause)

Warm you up?

MARGE

Sure.

MAVIS crosses over to the coffee pot.

MARGE

Now, Bud was a business man. He wouldn't have let that boy get away with what you do.

MAVIS

Bud was no business man! I've sure discovered that over the last ten years. He let people have charge accounts. Half the town owed him money, he just never had the heart to collect it if they were hurting.

MARGE

Now that's an idea! Put that boy on collecting it. Give him a list and a phone. Make him earn his keep.

MAVIS

Am I missing something here? Did you go down to the council meeting last night and get your self appointed den mother or something? Why are you so concerned about that boy?

MARGE

(Very sincerely)

I'm concerned about you, Mavis. I know how tough it is for you to compete since the Food King opened in Chatsworth.

MAVIS

Then stop shopping there!

MARGE

You are just nasty this morning. I've half a mind to leave.

MAVIS gives her that "Well?" look MARGE ignores the look and picks up a tabloid magazine. She flips through it for a moment in silence

MARGE

I was trying to be polite and bring something to your attention that should be of great concern to you, but now... well I'm just too hurt to talk.

MARGE acts hurt.

MAVIS

Oh for Goodness sakes, Marge, what is it? I know Billy doesn't have much ambition...

MARGE

He has plenty of ambition, it just doesn't have anything to do with store business.

MAVIS
Well, what does it have to do with?

MARGE
Monkey business.

MAVIS
Excuse me?

MARGE
Do you know he's been entertaining a certain young lady on company time?

MAVIS
Oh, Billy likes to visit I know that...

MARGE
(Puts down tabloid)
I'm not talking about visiting. I'm talking about... you know... you know what!

MAVIS
What?

MARGE
Well, you know....

MAVIS
No I don't know. What is it Marge?

MARGE
Do I have to spell it out?

MAVIS
Apparently so.

MARGE
S-E- Boys at that age are nothing but raging hormones. They are interested in one thing and one thing only.

MAVIS
I don't think you need to be so concerned. He's a good kid.

MARGE
Mavis, you can no longer afford to remain blind to the truth.

MAVIS
Are you accusing that boy of stealing?

MARGE
No! It's worse! It's him and that little girlie that comes around here.

MAVIS

You mean Peggy Johnson? She's a nice girl. She wouldn't steal.

MARGE

(Very frustrated)

Not stealing! She's the reason it took so long to unload that truck yesterday.

MAVIS

So they talk a little bit. It don't do any harm.

MARGE

If they were just talking, I wouldn't have brought it up! There is some funny business going on in your back room! When I came in here yesterday, they were in the back. Alone.

MAVIS

Maybe he was giving her a tour, trying to show her how important he is. You remember what it was like?

MARGE

You're missing the whole point! A boy and a girl that age together, alone, it means one thing. Trouble. Boy girl trouble! Her mother was the same way.

MAVIS

Now Marge, you stop it.

MARGE

If you want to ignore it, well I guess that's your business. Just remember ignorance is no excuse under the law.

MAVIS

You know something don't you?

MARGE

Maybe...

MAVIS

Were you spying on them?

MARGE

No! Well... I wouldn't call it spying exactly. That sounds so underhanded. Observing maybe.

MAVIS

Marge!

MARGE

Well what was I supposed to do? I just saw all those boxes sitting in the sun with nobody around... and so, well, I was a bit curious I guess, to see what the hold up was.

MAVIS

You were spying on them. Marge, you should be ashamed.

MARGE

Well it's a good thing I was. Some neighbor boys on bicycles were circling that abandoned box of Hershey chocolate. Just lusting to break into them. You could have lost that whole shipment if I hadn't spooked Billy up.

MAVIS

Don't be so dramatic. I doubt that you had to spook him up.

MARGE

Well what would you call it? When I came in and called out there was no response. I was nearly to the back room before he heard me. And then, Oh boy! He came a scrambling out.

MAVIS

You mean you walked in on them?

MARGE

Good as. He was nothing but a whirl of movement, buckling and tucking and flipping back hair as he flew out of that back room.

MAVIS

Oh my!

(Then with a small laugh)

I bet that put the fear of God into him.

MARGE

I hope so. Can you image...

MAVIS

Well...

(Laughing)

Yes.

MARGE

Mavis, you're just terrible.

MAVIS

You probably did him more good than a whole month of Sundays.

(Laughing)

He'll never do that again.

MARGE

I should hope not. The worst part is that little Peggy tramp comes out a few moments later, all neat and tidy like she just came home from church...

MAVIS

I'll talk to Billy.

MARGE

What if I'd have been a customer? Nobody wants to see that when their shopping for produce! I mean you look up from the peaches and...

MARGE Picks up a copy of a tabloid

MAVIS

Alright, Alright, I'll talk to him!

MARGE

How could you talk to him about that!

MAVIS

Sounds like somebody better.

MARGE

Don't talk to him. Just fire him.

MAVIS

For what?

MARGE

Fired for fooling around? Tell him that open zipper cost him a job.

MAVIS giggles

MAVIS

You can't do that.

MARGE

Why not? I mean if you keep that randy boy on, I've half a mind to do my shopping at the Food King.

MAVIS

You shop there anyway.

MARGE

Just for the big items you don't carry.

MAVIS

This is the most excitement we've had around here in a long time. It's better than anything in those scandal sheets. Say, maybe we should call them up. Put a big banner headline, "Boy in the Back Room Caught With Pants Down." Can't you see it!

MARGE

Very funny, but you know they'd probably run it. Look at this "Housewife Attacked by Twelve Foot Ant!"

MARGE holds up a tabloid

MAVIS

Oh please.

MARGE

Well look, here it is. That's her beating it back with a kitchen broom. Disgusting! She should have got some Terro!

MAVIS

They don't make bottles that big! They're on a bug kick now. Last week's cover was a man who was bitten by a six-foot butterfly! I can't wait to see what's next.

MARGE Intently reading article

MARGE

Mavis, why do you sell such trash?

MAVIS

Because people like you read it.

MARGE

Oh I was just... Say look at this one, Elvis Presley was sighted at a donut shop in Detroit.

MAVIS

Why can't they leave that poor man be.

MARGE

Maybe it's true.

MAVIS

Please.

MARGE

You never know. He's been spotted all over.

MAVIS

If it was true, you'd think he'd turn up somewhere besides a donut shop.

MARGE

I don't see why not. He sure liked to eat them.

MAVIS

Yeah, that's what killed him! At the end there he was just huge, remember?

MARGE

This version says he slimmed down.

MAVIS

Not if he's still eating donuts!