

FAST MOVING CONSUMER GOODS

A 10-minute comedy

By Richard Fouts

CAST LIST

Charlie	Male, any age, any race
Anita	Female, any age, any race

TIME AND PLACE

Present day, Charlie's basement and Anita's desk.

SINGLE SET

One side of stage is Charlie, in an empty space.
Other side of stage is Anita, sitting at a table.

PROPS

Two phones (each character)
One stool (Charlie)
One noose (Charlie)

SYNOPSIS

When Charlie decides to hang himself in his basement, he spontaneously calls the Suicide Hotline, only to get a customer service representative who offers some very unconventional advice.

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(Scene opens with Charlie standing on a stool, a noose around his neck, clearly getting ready to hang himself. Suddenly, he reaches in his pocket for his phone.)

CHARLIE

(punches a number into the phone)

What the hell, might as well let them know how useless they are.

(The sound of a ringing phone is heard as a spot comes up on ANITA, sitting at a desk on the other side of the stage.)

ANITA

Suicide Hotline, please hold.

CHARLIE

What?

ANITA

I'll be right back.

(Spot on ANITA goes black.)

CHARLIE

Jesus Christ, are you kidding me?

(Spot on ANITA comes back up).

ANITA

Sir, are you there?

CHARLIE

Yes, I'm here.

ANITA

Do you have your purchase order number?

CHARLIE

My, what? Since when does one need to purchase suicide?

ANITA

Oh my God, I'm so sorry. I thought you were on hold for customer service.

CHARLIE

But, you answered Suicide Hot Line.

ANITA

My mistake. I should have answered, *Suicide Prevention Center*, but I forgot and used the old name, *Suicide Hot Line*, which I actually prefer. It has a bit more urgency don't you think?

CHARLIE

I suppose so. Yes, you're right. Suicide prevention seems more like "Let's talk" versus, "Oh my God, I'm about to HANG MYSELF."

ANITA

Sir, again I apologize. With whom do I have the pleasure of speaking?

CHARLIE

Charles, but I prefer Charlie.

ANITA

Charlie, you've reached our state-of-the-art, cross-functional, cross-discipline call center. We actually cover 22 different categories. I got my lines crossed. Which category were you calling again?

CHARLIE

SUICIDE?

ANITA

Yes, I remember now. And when exactly did you decide to order, I'm sorry, commit suicide?

CHARLIE

Are you even qualified to talk to someone like me?

ANITA

Not exactly.

CHARLIE

Then why did you answer the Suicide Hot, I'm sorry, the Suicide *Prevention* line?

ANITA

Because Fernando, the guy that manages this line, stepped out. He asked me to pick up if anyone called, but also said that no one would call because it's Monday night.

CHARLIE

Monday night?

ANITA

Our analytics show that people off themselves starting Wednesday, escalating through Thursday, Friday and Saturday, with the big numbers on Sunday. Only five people in five years have done it on a Monday.

CHARLIE

Well excuse me for messing up the standard deviation of your so-called analytics.

ANITA

Are you a data scientist? Because we have several openings.

CHARLIE

No, I'm not a data scientist! I'm a dog walker!

ANITA

That's such a coincidence, a lot of people here have dogs. Did you have a flyer you wanted me to post?

CHARLIE

What is wrong with you?

ANITA

Charlie, please bear with me. I'm not equipped to talk to a suicide customer, so I'm just, well, trying to buy some time. Look, if you order something you don't like, you can return it, but this? This is un-returnable.

CHARLIE

I'm fully aware of the irreversible nature of my intended actions. Put your supervisor on the line. This is outrageous.

ANITA

Please hold.

(Spot on ANITA goes off.)

CHARLIE

(talking to himself)

This is actually a good story. Too bad I won't be around to tell it.

(Spot on ANITA comes up.)

ANITA

(attempting to disguise her voice)

Hello, sir? This is Anita's supervisor. How can I help?

CHARLIE

I want to end my life.

ANITA

We don't recommend that.

CHARLIE

And why not?

ANITA

We ask that you consider alternatives. For example, instead of ending a life, why not start a new one? Maybe have hot sex with your girlfriend, or wife? Or a stranger, or just someone who wants to get pregnant?

CHARLIE

Wait, is this Anita? Are you trying to disguise your voice?

ANITA

(back to her normal voice)

I'm sorry, Charlie, but my supervisor can't help you. She specializes in Fast Moving Consumer Goods.

CHARLIE

Fast moving what?

ANITA

Gum, cigarettes, candy bars. Things that move fast, are consumed quickly, or are thrown away after a single use. Fast Moving Consumer Goods.

CHARLIE

Got it, I'm a throw-away.

ANITA

That's not what I meant.

CHARLIE

But, before I am tossed out, I should impregnate someone?

ANITA

How about I transfer you to one of several sperm banks? That way, you can impregnate someone without bothering with the sex.

CHARLIE

OH MY GOD.

ANITA

It was just a suggestion. Charlie, I'm really trying here.

CHARLIE

This is hilarious. I call Suicide Prevention at the 11th hour, on a Monday night, which is statistically inconvenient. I'm standing on a stool, noose around my neck, ready to jump, and I'm asked for a purchase order.

ANITA

I already apologized for that.

CHARLIE

Oh, but it gets better. Then, I'm asked for my sperm?

(Both laugh.)

ANITA

So, it's working, right?

CHARLIE

Working?

ANITA

I distracted you. You're even laughing. I'd say a suicide person that calls in, and goes from despair to having a good laugh, well, that's pretty good.

CHARLIE

Why don't you just ask me to stay on the line after we're done to give you a 5-star review?

ANITA

You would do that? Even from the grave?

CHARLIE

(laughing)

Oh my God, this would make a great YouTube video. *You too can prevent suicide. Just jerk off into a cup.*

(Both start laughing.)

ANITA

And after you submit your rating, I could send you over to Walmart where you could enter their sweepstakes and get fifty dollars of Fast Moving Consumer Goods every week for a year.

CHARLIE

Or I could start a new category: Fast Moving Sperm.

ANITA

Well, look at you, taking over the world. Charlie, you're a natural consumer marketer.

(During this, CHARLIE removes the noose from his neck and steps off the stool.)

CHARLIE

Oh my God, stop, you're KILLING me.

(Both start laughing hysterically).

ANITA

Charlie, where are you now?

CHARLIE

I took the noose off.

ANITA

Then can you please step off the stool? I'm not kidding around Charlie, I need you to step down. Oh my God, remove the noose first!

CHARLIE

Already did. I'm okay.

ANITA

Oh, thank God.

CHARLIE

I haven't laughed that hard in a decade. It felt really good.

ANITA

Then you've changed your mind?

CHARLIE

I've changed my mind.

ANITA

Okay, but before I let you go, promise that you'll call me every night for at least a month.

CHARLIE

What about Mondays?

ANITA

Especially Mondays. Charlie, I'm serious.

CHARLIE

Oh? How serious are you?

ANITA

(pauses)

Dead Serious.

Both laugh.

CHARLIE

Okay, okay, I promise.

ANITA

Any more questions?

CHARLIE

Just one. How much do sperm banks pay?

-- END OF PLAY --