**The Jumpstart Collection:  
Ten 10-Minute plays in the public domain**

By David K. Farkas

From:

***Performing 10-Minute Plays with Friends: A guide to do-it-yourself theater***

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Appendix B: Ten Scripts You Can Use

To help promote do-it-yourself theater, I have placed ten of my 10-minute plays in the public domain. I call these ten plays the Jumpstart Collection because they enable any reader of this book and anyone else for that matter to immediately get started performing some contemporary 10-minute plays. These ten plays vary greatly in genre, setting, and theme. Most are easy to stage. For those groups who want to match the ages of the actors to the roles, these plays offer roles with a wide range of ages, including young people.

Furthermore, I waive the Dramatists Bill of Rights in regard to these plays. You are welcome to modify the scripts as you wish. Please credit me as the original author of your adaptation. Also, I’d very much like to hear about what you do. The Jumpstart Collection is downloadable as a DOCX file at [https://pwcenter.org](https://pwcenter.org/) and as a PDF file at [https://newplayexchange.org](https://newplayexchange.org/).. Search for “Farkas” or “David K. Farkas.”

I have written detailed stage directions for the benefit of do-t-yourself theater groups. Also, on the assumption that blackouts are not possible for scene transitions, I rely on clearing the stage, withdrawing to the periphery, and freezes. These are indicated in the scripts.

When I indicate the genders of characters, I refer only to how the role may be most plausibly performed, and not the actor’s own gender presentation. Some parts can be performed with any gender presentation.

The ten Jumpstart plays are listed below, each with a brief description. In the print version of this book, this list is also a table of contents. In the digital version of this book, the titles are hyperlinked to the individual plays. Also, there is a hyperlink from the end of each play back to this list.

#### [Bitter Cantaloupe Page 133](#_Bitter_Cantaloupe)

This is a cheerful drama about making important choices in one’s life. Long ago, working as a restaurant server, Jean Farkas warned customers against ordering the cantaloupe on days when they were bitter.

#### [Close Encounters of the Talkative Kind Page 141](#_Close_Encounters_of)

This is an off-beat comedy about a man who is temporarily abducted by two inquisitive aliens. This play is very easy to stage and provides opportunities for improvisation.

#### [Echoes of the Professor Page 149](#_Echoes_of_the)

This is a story about an English professor whose influence extends well beyond his lifetime. Long ago, Jean Farkas and I turned down an offer to be the keepers of his remains. But we have nonetheless felt the influence of The Professor all these many years.

#### [Good-bye from SILVE Page 158](#_Good-bye_from_SILVE)

A NASA engineer devoted his life to a space exploration satellite. Now that the satellite has been decommissioned, he sees no way forward for himself. Even so, the play, which features dance, is uplifting and spiritual.

#### [Horizons Page 165](#_Horizons)

This is an intense drama based on Richard Russell’s tragic theft and unauthorized flight of a commercial airliner in 2017. The cockpit recordings between Russell and SEA-TAC ground personnel show him to be a whimsically humorous and empathetic individual, as is the protagonist of this play.

#### [Luke Meets the Revenue Man Page 175](#_Luke_Meets_the)

This is my adaptation of a 1919 comedy by Arthur Hopkins. The play depicts an encounter between Luke, a North Carolina moonshiner, and an educated revenue officer from New York City. The play makes fun of Luke’s lack of education and backward ways, but it also shows Luke to be an affable and decent man who adheres staunchly to his own code of ethics. My revision trims down the original script, changes the ending, and eliminates the casual but ugly racism that was acceptable in Hopkins’ time.

#### [Nordstrom Shopping Zombies Page 185](#_Nordstrom_Shopping_Zombies)

This is a comedy about the dissolution of an unhappy marriage during a shopping trip. The belt is real. I deny everything else.

#### [The Expulsion from Eden Page 192](#_The_Expulsion_from)

This, my favorite of all the plays I’ve written, revisits Milton’s Paradise Lost, and re-imagines the lives of Cain and Abel. The play is about the primacy of forgiveness in human life.

#### [The Spaghetti Crisis Page 201](#_The_Spaghetti_Crisis)

This is a cheerful comedy about a rigid, tradition-bound French chef who cannot adapt to the American family (the Farkas family) that chooses to dine at his restaurant. The resourceful Maître d' resolves the conflict.

#### [The Robin Page 206](#_The_Robin)

This is a children’s play in which the two main roles should be performed by children.

# 

# Bitter Cantaloupe

A 10-minute play by David K. Farkas

Version 09-15-23

I place this play in the public domain. Anyone is welcome to distribute, perform, modify, or expand upon the script of this play. – David K. Farkas, 2020.

### Characters:

**Mr. Harold Damerst:** A business owner from Milwaukee, in his 60s.

**Mr. Johnson:** A business owner from Buffalo, in his 50s.

**Stevie:** A server (“waitress”), in her early 20s.

**Rose (or Ross):** A mechanical engineer, in her (or his) mid-20s.

### Setting:

A breakfast café in Buffalo, New York.

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[Scene 1]

Mr. HAROLD DAMERST is seated for breakfast. A menu is on the table, but he is looking at his smartphone. MR. JOHNSON enters and takes a seat at an empty table. STEVIE approaches JOHNSON with a carafe of coffee.

STEVIE: Do you know what you’d like for breakfast?

JOHNSON: I’m waiting for someone. Just black coffee for now.

STEVIE: (Pouring coffee.) OK.

STEVIE now walks to DAMERST’S table.

**STEVIE:** Are you ready to order now?

DAMERST looks closely at STEVIE and then at the name tag on her blouse.

DAMERST: “Stevie”? That’s not your real name. (Laughing.) Did your parents name you Steven?

STEVIE: No, I’m “Stephanie,” but I didn’t like it. I’ve been “Stevie” since 7th grade.

DAMERST: Did your folks like the change?

STEVIE: They got used to it.

DAMERST laughs.

DAMERST: I’ll have scrambled eggs with the sausage. I’ll start with the cantaloupe.

STEVIE: Maybe you don’t want the cantaloupe. Orange juice?

DAMERST: What’s wrong with the cantaloupe?

STEVIE: They’re looking pretty green. Might taste bitter.

DAMERST: OK, how about a banana?

STEVIE: They didn’t look ripe either. I’d go with the orange juice.

DAMERST: What does the kitchen think of you telling people not to order items on the menu?

STEVIE smiles.

DAMERST: They must have a lot of cantaloupe left over. Bananas too.

STEVIE: Maybe they do. If they look better tomorrow, I’ll sell them.

DAMERST: What if they never look better?

STEVIE: Then I won’t sell them. This place is no Hilton, and I’m no gourmet. But if I wouldn’t want to eat it, I’m not gonna sell it.

DAMERST: Are there a lot of days when you do this?

STEVIE: (Coyly.) Some.

ROSE enters the restaurant, spots MR. JOHNSON, and takes a place at his table. They talk in pantomime, not pleasantly.

DAMERST: What if a customer has been really rude to you. Then would you sell them a bitter cantaloupe?

STEVIE: Never thought about that. (Laughing.) It’s something to consider.

DAMERST: (In a serious tone of voice.) Are you gonna keep your job if you keep steering customers away from the food that doesn’t look good to you?

STEVIE: I’ll work till they fire me.

DAMERST: The cook keeps selling unripe food day after day? What’s that all about? Maybe the cook should re-think how things are done here.

STEVIE: Sir, I wanted to do right by you, but I don’t think I should be talking about Sam and the restaurant.

DAMERST: OK, fair enough.

STEVIE: I have another table I need to take care of. I’ll check back with you in a bit.

DAMERST: You do that, Stevie. It’s always important to take care of your customers.

Approaching JOHNSON’S table, STEVIE overhears the conversation between JOHNSON and ROSE.

ROSE: (Speaking defensively.) Everybody knows you’re a demanding boss, but you’ve been more than pleased with my work. My microsensors have significantly improved quality control, and I thought we agreed that the sensor-based inventory system is coming along well. I want to stay with inventory. I don’t want to switch projects.

JOHNSON: No. Employee surveillance is my top priority. I’ll find someone else to take over the inventory project.

STEVIE: Excuse me. Are we ready to think about breakfast?

JOHNSON: (Brusquely to STEVIE.) Come back later. We’re in the middle of something.

STEVIE: Sure. You can order whenever you’re ready.

STEVIE exits to the kitchen.

Freeze.

A stagehand steps in and places DAMERST’s finished breakfast (plate, fork, empty orange juice glass, etc.) on the table.

Freeze continues.

[Scene 2]

Action.

STEVIE enters.

STEVIE: How was breakfast? More coffee? Care for anything else?

DAMERST: No, nothing else. The eggs were OK. Sausage too. Stevie, let’s talk for a minute. I own a company. Great Lakes Casting. In Milwaukee. We make flow control valves. We ship them all over the world. I think my company could use a kid like you. You have anything special keeping you in Buffalo?

JOHNSON and ROSE are now talking intensely in pantomime. JOHNSON is impatient and aggressive. ROSE exhibits resistance.

STEVIE: Um . . . No. I grew up here, but . . . I could leave. (She casts her eyes around the restaurant, and in doing so takes note of JOHNSON’S table.) There isn’t much of a future for me here . . . But . . . isn’t this a little . . . sudden? And, shouldn’t I know your name?

DAMERST: Damerst. Harold Damerst. Here’s my business card.

STEVIE looks at the card and pockets it.

DAMERST: I built the company. I’m used to doing things my way—and moving quickly. By the way, there was no money in my family. I got through college with a scholarship and working 20 hours a week in the dining hall.

STEVIE: If you have any “personal” ideas here, that’s not going to work. You know what I’m saying.

DAMERST: That’s not at all what I was thinking. You’d be younger than my daughter—if I’d had a daughter, if I’d had children. I’m married. When I tell my wife that I hired my waitress—well, I’m trying to hire my waitress—she won’t be all that surprised. She knows me. About 5 years ago, I gave a talk at the Milwaukee School of Engineering. A kid asked good questions. I told him I’d like to hire him when he finished school. Tom is doing great in the company.

JOHNSON: (Raising his voice.) I have no patience with your idealistic bullshit. Is that part of engineering education these days?

STEVIE: OK. This whole idea is . . . overwhelming . . . I don’t mind working here. But I don’t like thinking that waitressing, or simple office work, is all I’ll ever do. I can take a chance on Milwaukee. If it doesn’t work out, I can get back here easily enough.

DAMERST: OK. You move quickly, just like I do. I liked your honest answer about the cantaloupe. You risked your job to do what’s right. That’s integrity. Then, you wouldn’t gossip about your boss. That’s discretion. The way I add things up, that’s two big points. I’m asking you to work for me. I don’t know what you’ll do, but they’ll be something. A real job. A career. You don’t have a college degree. Am I right?

STEVIE: No. I don’t.

DAMERST: I don’t care. That’s one of the good things about owning the company. HR has its rules, but I can make exceptions. So, if you’re willing to come to Milwaukee, I’ll put you in a job you can grow into. Probably everyone you’ll be working with will be a college grad. Lots of engineers. People with business degrees. They’ll figure out soon enough that you didn’t go to college. Can you handle that?

STEVIE: Yes.

DAMERST: You will eventually need more education. Are you willing to go back to school? To college or . . . community college? . . . What about that other table, Stevie? I can wait until you wait on them.

STEVIE: I keep glancing over there, and judging from the tone of the conversation, they don’t need me interrupting to ask about breakfast.

DAMERST: So, are you willing to go back to school?

STEVIE: Yes, definitely. More school is . . . in my plans. But there were medical bills after my mother died, and you save money slowly when you’re working as a waitress. Car breaks down and your plans get pushed back. Trouble with a landlord, and your plans get pushed back. It’s like that.

DAMERST: I know that side of life. But we’ll cover your tuition. Go as fast or slow as you want. I don’t want you buried in school assignments. You’ll be on a hell of a learning curve at work.

STEVIE: Sir. Mr. Damerst, this is more than I ever hoped for.

JOHNSON: Loyalty to me! To me personally! This is my own little project. Not the company’s. To me! You just don’t seem to get it, Rose.

DAMERST: OK. OK. You’d better bring my check. I have meetings starting at 9:30. We may be acquiring a competitor. (Pause.) Stevie, just one thing. I need you to quit your job today. Today or tomorrow. I’ll want you in Milwaukee in two weeks. But there are things I need you to do for me here in Buffalo on Thursday and Friday, so you’ll need to get free, in two days. That’s OK? It’s a condition for your new job.

STEVIE: (After deliberating.) I’ll tell Sam now, and I’ll give him today and tomorrow. I’m trusting you, Mr. Damerst.

DAMERST: (In a surprisingly sharp voice.) Tell me why you agreed to walk out on your boss? From everything else I’ve seen, that’s not you. We sort of agreed that you have integrity. Is this your integrity? I think this is a strike against you.

STEVIE: Mr. Damerst. I did not like the idea of quitting without proper notice. But I made my decision. Lots of girls just walk out on Sam. He’s used to it. The opportunity you’re offering, that’s huge. It could be my one shot. But, Mr. Damerst, I don’t appreciate what you’re making me do. I’m wondering what you could need me for so badly. Thirty minutes ago you didn’t know who I was, and now you can’t get through the week without me? To tell the truth, asking me to walk out on my job is a strike against you. But it’s just one strike, so I’m still ready to leave Buffalo.

DAMERST: (Smiling expansively.) OK, Stevie. That was an . . . experiment. No, a test. I wanted to learn a little more about my new employee—my “protégée” perhaps. You have integrity but you also have judgment. You weighed what you have at stake against what Sam has at stake. I don’t mind that you had doubts—and said so—when I told you that I needed you this week. You’re quick. You can give your two-weeks’ notice. It will take me some time to figure out what we’re going to do with you. But one way or another, my company can damn sure use what you’ll be bringing us.

STEVIE: Thank you, Mr. Damerst. Thank you for everything.

JOHNSON: I built my company by doing things my way. I don’t let petty rules stop me. You’re a damn good engineer, or I wouldn’t be wasting my time with this conversation. But I’ve had about enough of this.

DAMERST: Stevie, hand me back my business card. I’m gonna put my cell phone number on it.

She does so.

DAMERST: Well, I do need to go. (Pulls out a bill.) I’m sure this will cover breakfast. See you in Milwaukee, Stevie. I’m glad you steered me away from that cantaloupe.

DAMERST exits. STEVIE moves toward JOHNSON’S table but, hearing an argument, draws back.

JOHNSON: I’m ordering you, not asking you, to work with Argus Associates on surveillance.

ROSE: I won’t do it. It’s unethical, and long term it’s bad for the business. To be honest with you, sir. I don’t want to go through my career with this surveillance thing as part of my work history.

JOHNSON: I think our breakfast meeting is finished, and I’m done with you. You’re fired. I want your personal belongings out of the building by the end of the day. By the time you get to work, you’ll be locked out of the server.

ROSE: Dismissing me for refusing to violate a law is illegal.

JOHNSON: Listen, Rose. You don’t want to mess with me. If I were you, I’d be worrying about your HR file and my letter of reference. Now get outta here!

ROSE leaves angrily. STEVIE follows her to the entrance of the restaurant.

STEVIE: Hey, I heard some of that conversation. Give me your cell number.

ROSE: (Surprised.) What? Why?

STEVIE: Trust me. I respect what you said to that guy. I can’t promise, but I might be able to make something good happen.

ROSE: OK. I’m open to anything right now.

STEVIE: Here, add your name and number to my contacts.

STEVIE hands over her phone and ROSE enters her name and cell number. ROSE exits. STEVIE returns to MR. JOHNSON.

STEVIE: Are you ready to order now, sir?

JOHNSON: I saw you follow Rose out the door. What was that about? I need to know.

STEVIE: She had really cool shoes on. I just want to know what brand they are, and where she bought them.

JOHNSON: (Placated.) OK. I guess that’s waitressing these days. I’m ready for breakfast.

STEVIE: Let me suggest you start with the cantaloupe. They look really good today.

**STEVIE and JOHNSON freeze.** JOHNSON remains frozen throughout the rest of the play. STEVIE unfreezes andsteps away from JOHNSON (perhaps to the exterior of the restaurant). She pulls out her smartphone, dials, puts it to her ear, pantomimes the beginning of a phone call (to DAMERST).

Freeze.

[Scene 3]

Freeze continues. Then action.

STEVIE: Mr. Damerst, I don’t mean to overstep. But you said you had confidence in my judgment. (She nods as though mentally responding to something DAMERST has said.) Well, I think I have another new employee for you. A young woman, a mechanical engineer. She knows microsensors. She has real engineering talent, good judgment, and integrity. And you’ll like her. Her name is Rose Estavez.

STEVIE listens for a few moments, then smiles broadly.

The End

[🙞 Link back to Appendix B TOC 🙜](#_Bitter_Cantaloupe_Page)

# Close Encounters of the Talkative Kind

A 10-minute play by David K. Farkas

Version 09-15-23

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### Characters:

**Christopher:** Any age, any gender.

**Ferdinand:** Any age, any gender.

**David:** A married man with children.

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[Scene 1]

CHRISTOPHER and FERDINAND are seated together on plain metal chairs. They are dressed identically, perhaps oddly. Some distance away, DAVID is seated on a more comfortable chair. DAVID is drinking heartily from a mug of coffee. It’s his first cup of the day.

CHRISTOPHER: Is the coffee to your taste?

DAVID: Yes, it’s good. Thank you.

He continues to drink heartily, like someone trying to wake up in the morning.

FERDINAND: Did you sleep well, David?

DAVID: Yes. Under the circumstances, very well.

FERDINAND: We are pleased.

CHRISTOPHER: Shall we begin our conversation? We’ll take a break for your breakfast.

DAVID: (Drinking down more coffee.) I’m just a little groggy, not quite functioning.

CHRISTOPHER and FERDINAND show worried looks.

DAVID: Oh, don’t be concerned. That’s how it always is before I’ve downed my first cup of coffee. Anyway, it’s all coming back now. My God! It’s all coming back! You said there was no issue with Andrea, my children, or anyone else. From their point of view, I haven’t left, haven’t disappeared. They won’t worry about my absence.

CHRISTOPHER: No issue whatsoever. When your visit is done, we will return you to the exact moment in time at which you left. You will be sitting, as before, with Andrea, at your kitchen table. She will have noticed nothing.

DAVID: No matter how long I stay here?

CHRISTOPHER: That’s right. We would not cause distress to those who are close to you. This entire project will not cause harm to you or anyone on Earth. Morally, we are a highly evolved species. Ultimately, we will use our knowledge of your world to guide you to higher levels of consciousness and far better social and political organization. But we will only guide, only teach. We will not coerce, colonize, exploit, or brutalize. That stage of our civilization belongs to the distant past.

FERDINAND: Our moral evolution came slowly, but it came. As we say in our world, “The arc of history is long, but it is just.”

DAVID**:** The arc of history on Earth seems to wobble quite a bit, but I trust you’re right. (Pause.) Perhaps we covered this last night, but I don’t think so. Why was I chosen?

FERDINAND: David, would you like a refill on the coffee?

DAVID: Absolutely.

FERDINAND glances directly at the mug. DAVID looks down, and the mug is somehow full again. DAVID shows surprise, then picks up the mug. Because it is full to the brim, he takes a careful sip. He will take several of these sips before drinking more heartily.

DAVID: Good trick, that.

CHRISTOPHER: That “trick” was the very least of the things we are doing to make this project possible.

DAVID: I suppose so. Now why was I chosen?

FERDINAND: You met all the criteria.

DAVID: There are 8 billion people on Earth, and you chose me?

FERDINAND: You are not the only one we will talk with.

CHRISTOPHER**:** The process is, however, very selective. These week-long interviews require a great expenditure of resources. Just keeping you alive and healthy is very resource intensive, so we can only interview a small number of individuals.

DAVID**:** So why me? I’m highly educated. I read widely. But I’m hardly a Nobel Prize winner.

CHRISTOPHER: A key reason is that you are very talkative. From extensive observation, we determined that very few Earth citizens are so willing to talk non-stop all day long—to answer any and all questions, to elaborate on each answer, and then begin talking about other topics. We recognize that there is much we need to know that we don’t even have questions for. So, someone—such as you—who spontaneously branches off into new topics. And then into more new topics . . . Well, that person . . .

FERDINAND: . . . provided the individual is well informed and articulate . . .

CHRISTOPHER: . . . is more valuable to us than someone—even a Nobel Prize winner—who only answers our questions. Based on our observations, as long as we keep serving you coffee—plus, of course, periodic meals and necessary sleep—you will keep talking with undiminished enthusiasm.

CHRISTOPHER: Not many Nobel Prize winners and other experts can or will do this.

FERDINAND: May I ask if this has caused you difficulty in your social relations with other human beings?

CHRISTOPHER glances sharply at FERDINAND, who, chastised, looks away. DAVID chooses to ignore the question.

DAVID: I don’t know your names. Perhaps it’s time for you to introduce yourselves.

CHRISTOPHER: We don’t actually have names. We don’t actually have language—not any kind of language that you would understand. Why don’t you choose names for us? Names you’ll be comfortable with.

DAVID: OK. Since you’ve traveled a long way to explore an unfamiliar world, I’ll name you after explorers. You are “Christopher,” after Christopher Columbus. You are “Ferdinand,” after Ferdinand Magellan. I assume you know Columbus and Magellan.

CHRISTOPHER: Of course. We have detailed factual knowledge of your civilization and its history. But we need more context and more nuance. So we are getting that knowledge directly from Earth citizens—“face to face,” so to speak.

FERDINAND**:** We don’t exactly have “faces.” Not normally.

CHRISTOPHER: So, let’s begin at the beginning. Shall we? Why don’t you start with your family background, what you know about your parents’ lives before you were born. Then, we can proceed to your earliest memories, then your childhood—along with any topics that come to mind.

DAVID: Yes! I can do that.

FERDINAND: Would you like more coffee?

Freeze.

[Scene 2]

CHRISTOPHER, FERDINAND, and DAVID are still seated. Again, DAVID has his mug full of coffee.

Action.

CHRISTOPHER: How are you this morning, David? It’s all going well. Is it not?

DAVID sips his coffee and will continue to do.

DAVID: I’m somewhat unhappy by your unwillingness to satisfy my curiosity about your world. Other than that, I’ve greatly enjoyed these last five—has it been five?—days.

CHRISTOPHER: Yes, it has been five days. I’m sorry about that restriction.

DAVID: My time with you is the apex of my life. As you know, my entire career has been teaching. One way or another, I am always explaining. And what greater explaining could anyone ever do than this? My voice has held up well, hasn’t it.

CHRISTOPHER and FERDINAND nod in assent.

DAVID: Now, you are certain that no one is missing me, worrying about me, back on Earth? That’s what you said.

FERDINAND: Yes. For us, manipulating your time-stream is one of the easier parts of this project.

DAVID: Christopher, Ferdinand. I am very pleased with our daily conversations. I truly believe I am doing something important—contributing to Intergalactic cultural understanding.

CHRISTOPHER: We believe likewise.

DAVID: For this reason, I’m not eager to finish these interviews. There is so much more I could tell you. So very much more. Might we add another week? Maybe a month? More than a month? I cannot fully express how much I enjoy talking with the two of you. I will never be able to replicate this experience once I return to Earth.

FERDINAND: Why can’t you engage in satisfying conversations when you return?

DAVID: Nothing in my future can be anything like this. Friends listen, but not for very long. Andrea hasn’t listened to me on any serious topic for years.

CHRISTOPHER: We are sorry, David, that you do not enjoy fully satisfactory social relationships with those around you. However, there is no way to extend the duration of your visit. As we explained, each of these week-long interviews requires an enormous expenditure of resources.

DAVID: I understand. I’m truly grateful for this week. I believe I have been transformed.

CHRISTOPHER: Yes, we well understand this. David, I am now going to raise a topic that was scheduled for your final day with us. But, we seem to have gotten close to it now. It’s about the “disengagement process,” what happens when you leave us.

DAVID:OK. I’m ready.

CHRISTOPHER: The key issue is what you will or will not remember when you return to your previous life. First, I must inform you that as a sentient being with a high level of self-awareness, you have definite rights. We can make recommendations, but we cannot choose for you. So, let me explain your options.

DAVID: OK.

CHRISTOPHER: Option A is that we erase all your memories of this past week. You will never know you visited with us. Option B is that you retain all your memories. Option C is the middle ground. We can leave you with a few faint memories and recollections in dreams. That would be all.

DAVID: I want Option B. Why would I want my memories erased or even weakened?

FERDINAND: We understand how you are looking at this, but we counsel very strongly against Option B. Our experience with Earth citizens is limited. But we have extensive experience with other civilizations, and Option B almost always works out badly—even tragically.

CHRISTOPHER: Remember, David. You will have absolutely no evidence that any of this ever happened. Anything you say will be disbelieved. But the experience will be so vivid in your mind, such an important part of your total life experience, that almost certainly you will be unable to let it go and resume anything like a normal life. You will be unable to refrain from making claims you cannot support. You will be laughed at, derided. Furthermore, the rest of your life will seem trivial and meaningless.

FERDINAND: With very good evidence, we anticipate extreme social alienation, mental illness, substance abuse, even suicide.

DAVID: I will take my chances with Option B.

CHRISTOPHER: David, we understand very well how reluctant you are to relinquish these memories, but we urge you to waive your right to Option B.

DAVID: I will not.

CHRISTOPHER: Then, let us look closely at Option C.

DAVID: Just a few faint memories and dreams? No!

CHRISTOPHER: We can do a little better for you with Option C.

DAVID: What do you mean?

[While CHRISTOPHER should deliver this speech seriously, the actor playing DAVID can, at moments, break out of character and join the audience in appreciating the joke—the playwright is claiming to have been abducted by aliens.]

CHRISTOPHER: Before you leave us, you will be allowed to record your experiences in a play, with a maximum duration of (CHRISTOPHER ponders briefly.)10-minutes. We promise that every word you write down here will be imprinted word-for-word in your brain. When you return to your normal life on Earth, you will recreate your play. It will be much better if you share your experience as a work of fiction rather than have your claims regarded as delusional. This is truly your best option.

DAVID: I don’t know that I can give up my memories of this experience for nothing more than a 10-minute play.

CHRISTOPHER: Trust us, David. For your own sake, Choose the play!

DAVID turns to the audience for help in deciding. Any kind of clowning and improvisation is appropriate.

DAVID: Should I keep my memories of this visit, even at the cost of social alienation, mental illness, substance abuse, and suicide?

Through gestures to the audience, CHRISTOPHER and FERDINAND urge a “no” answer. But DAVID can’t make up his mind and looks for guidance from the audience. Finally, regardless of how the audience members have actually responded, DAVID heeds or seems to heed a “no” answer. He turns to CHRISTOPHER and FERDINAND.

DAVID: I will give up my memories and choose the play. (Pause.) Providing that any time my play is performed—anywhere, even in the smallest theater— you will give the audience a visual sign that everything in the play is true.

CHRISTOPHER and FERDINAND: This is not feasible.

DAVID:I believe it isfeasible. Your civilization monitors all electro-magnetic transmissions from planet Earth—do you not? Then you will be able to determine when the play is scheduled to be performed. So, you can indeed do this.

CHRISTOPHER and FERDINAND tacitly acknowledge the truth of what DAVID has said.

CHRISTOPHER: We have never before agreed to an arrangement of this kind. But, David, we will consider it. What sign do you require? Do not be unreasonable!

DAVID: Anywhere and any time, at the end of a performance of this play, you will cause the house lights to flash on and off to verify that every word that has been spoken is the truth.

CHRISTOPHER and FERDINAND turn toward each other. The house lights flash on and off repeatedly.

The End

[🙞 Link back to Appendix B TOC 🙜](#_Bitter_Cantaloupe_Page)

# Echoes of the Professor

A 10-minute play by David K. Farkas

Version 09-15-23

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### Characters:

**Sandra:** A woman in her 30s. She is the daughter of Julia, who has recently died. Julia was predeceased by her husband, Nick.

**Sam:** Sandra’s husband, also in his 30s.

**Julia:** Mentioned in Scene 1. In Scenes 2 and 3, which are set in 1968, she appears as a college senior, about to graduate and marry Nick.

**Nick:** Mentioned in Scene 1. In Scenes 2 and 3, he is a college senior about to graduate and marry Julia.

**Attorney:** An older man. He is settling Julia’s estate.

**John:** In 1968, a crematorium employee, an older man.

**Horace:** In 1968, a long-deceased professor, an elderly man.

### Suggested minimum casting:

Attorney/John/Horace

Sandra/Julia

Sam

Nick

### Production note:

If necessary for clarity, one of the characters can briefly serve as a narrator, offstage or onstage, to announce that Scene 2 takes place in 1968. In addition, proper names and other details can be changed to fit the locale where the play is being staged. Factually, Mt. Hope Cemetery adjoins the University of Rochester in New York State.

🙜

[Scene 1]

SAM and SANDRA, a married couple, professional in manner, have visited the law offices of the ATTORNEY, who is the executor of the estate of JULIA, Sandra’s mother. On the table is a large, buff-colored ceramic urn.

SANDRA: (Pointing to the urn.) So there it is. I’d sort of forgotten about the urn.

ATTORNEY: When Julia made the move to assisted living, she entrusted it to me. I could have kept the urn securely stored here in the office. That’s the usual thing we do. But . . . I took it home and put it on a shelf in my living room. It certainly didn’t fit the décor, but I don’t entertain much anyway. Actually, “The Professor” (Gestures toward urn.) and I have become friends, so to speak.

SAM: Can you review the codicil for us before we settle this issue. It’s definitely puzzling.

ATTORNEY: Yes, of course. From a legal standpoint, it’s entirely straightforward—and binding. And there was no question about Julia’s mental competence. But Julia was disinclined to explain her reasons. (Pause.) Quite simply, the two of you, as a single legal entity, must choose to receive either the urn or the Chagall lithograph. If you choose the urn, I am directed to arrange for the sale of the Chagall, with the proceeds going to the United Fund. If you choose the Chagall, the urn (Looks down at notes.) “must be immediately disposed of as trash.” This is disturbing but entirely legal in New York State. Julia was pleasant, as she always was, but very definite. I wish I could tell you more. I’ll be much happier if you choose The Professor. But, of course, giving up the Chagall would not be an entirely rational course of action. Sandra, you say that Julia . . . that Nick . . . neither one ever explained anything about the urn, even how they came by it?

SANDRA: It was just there—“The Professor”—on a shelf in our living room. It seemed important, but, no, they never explained it. Perhaps it’s the ashes of a distant relative, someone they didn’t know by name. Maybe they knew he’d been a professor of something somewhere. Just once, I really pressed Mom about this. All she said was “Some things in life you need to learn on your own” . . . But how can we learn something like this?

SAM: You can see how unfortunate this situation is. We are reluctant to give up the Chagall, but it’s . . . well . . . creepy to . . . you know . . . (Gestures a tossing motion.) with the urn. Of course, I’ll follow Sandra’s lead on this.

SANDRA: I think we need to choose the urn. It seems disrespectful to put any human remains “in the trash.” And, there was clearly some kind of relationship between “The Professor” and my parents.

SAM: Yes, I guess we’ll keep the urn—on a shelf in our living room, just as Julia and Nick did. But, obviously, it would be a lot nicer to display the Chagall lithograph.

SANDRA: I know, Sam. But, somehow, The Professor just seems to belong to us. Maybe he is a distant relative, maybe not. But I know he’s ours.

SAM: Maybe Marc Chagall is a distant relative. That would be a reason to pass on The Professor and keep the Chagall in our living room . . . Just joking, Sandy.

ATTORNEY: Speaking as a friend rather than as your attorney, I can’t help but think that there’s some kind of wisdom behind your mother’s final directive. Julia was always an insightful woman.

SAM: And she and Nick raised an “insightful” daughter. So, I’m good with this.

ATTORNEY: OK, we’ve reached a decision. So, first I’ll ask Sandra to sign and initial the codicil.

He hands SANDRA the codicil and points successively to places on the sheet of paper. She signs and initials.

ATTORNEY: And now you, Sam.

He hands SAM the codicil and points successively to places on the sheet of paper. He too signs and initials.

ATTORNEY: Fortunately, even without the Chagall, the estate is substantial. I think that the codicil was Julia’s way to make clear that there is something special about that urn. Perhaps giving up the Chagall was a kind of test—which you’ve passed. (Turning to the urn.) I guess I need my own little good-bye moment with The Professor . . . You know, sitting alone with (Gazes at the urn for a few moments.) him in my condo, we used to chat once in a while.

Hands SANDRA the urn.

ATTORNEY: Well, The Professor is yours now.

SANDRA takes the urn from the ATTORNEY with an air of gravity.

SANDRA: Thank you for everything. Especially, how you handled my mother’s affairs after Dad died. You’ve been a good friend to this family for a long time.

ATTORNEY: Thank you, Sandra. You’ve been a loving daughter to Julia. (Turning to include SAM.) And you too, Sam. You both gave Julia a great deal of happiness.

They all stand. SANDRA and SAM exit. The ATTORNEY leaves the stage out of character.

[Scene 2]

JULIA and NICK, holding hands, stroll on stage. They are dressed for spring weather. Their clothing suggests college students of an earlier time.

NICK: I had no idea we’d come out on Mt. Hope Avenue.

JULIA: Me either.

NICK: It’s a big cemetery.

JULIA: Nick. So old and beautiful! And historical. It’s sort of amazing that we’re finishing up four years of college, with the cemetery right next to campus, and we never walked through it.

NICK: Everyone knows it’s here. But it’s not like “Hey, you gotta go to the cemetery!” Everyone has lots to do and think about.

As they turn a corner, NICK points to a building.

NICK: Hey, Julia. What’s that?

JULIA: Sort of a little gingerbread house. Like, out of Hansel and Gretel. Think it’s part of the cemetery?

NICK: I don’t know. I guess so. That chimney is pretty damn tall for a little gingerbread house.

JULIA: Nick, I could just leave it be and head back to campus. It’s been a long walk.

NICK: Oh, come on!

He leads her forward.

NICK: The door is open. Well, half-open.

JULIA: That does not qualify as an invitation, and this does not look like a place that expects visitors.

NICK: Oh, let’s do it! You only live once.

He leads her forward and pushes through the (imagined) door. From inside the main room of the building, they hear the voice of JOHN, the elderly crematorium employee.

JOHN: Well, you came through the door. You might as well come all the way in.

JOHN is seated on a chair with a small table next to it. He sets down a thick book with a serious-looking cover. He steps forward.

JOHN: Do you know what kind of building you’re in?

NICK: I think the smokestack gives it away. This must be a crematorium.

JOHN: That’s right. It belongs to Mt. Hope Cemetery. I’ve been here for 35 years. (Pointing.) See that? What do you suppose it is?

NICK: The oven? Far out!

JOHN: That’s right. I did a burn this morning. You might have smelled a little smoke as you walked down the path.

NICK: Wow. “A burn.” Too bad we missed that.

JOHN: No. If a burn had been in progress, I would have sent you away. I keep the door open for a little cool air, but out of respect for the deceased, I would not have allowed strangers to just wander in. You understand?

JULIA: Yes. Of course we do. (Pause.) This is a very . . . picturesque building. Beautiful tiles embedded in the brickwork. Sort of European, Swiss, or something like that.

JOHN: This crematorium is over 100 years old. It was built during the Civil War. A lot of young men were incinerated right here. The bodies were brought here from Gettysburg, Shiloh, Chancellorsville. All those places. Lot of grief when a young man dies. (Pause.) We have one of the very last coal-fired ovens. Now they’re all gas fired. Much cheaper and cleaner. We’ll be shutting down in about nine months. There will be a new modern crematorium opening offsite. Much bigger than this place. So, if you wanted to see this place, you’re lucky you didn’t wait too much longer.

JULIA points to an urn on a high shelf.

JULIA: That’s an urn. Is that where you put the ashes of the person you burned this morning?

JOHN: Oh, no. That’s “The Professor.” No one even makes urns like that one anymore. Long ago, The Professor was a faculty member at the University. His will specified cremation, but no family member ever claimed the body. So he’s been here—waiting, you might say. He was here when I was hired. We don’t even know his name. All I know about The Professor was what my predecessor at this job told me—and that wasn’t much. The County keeps records of every death, but this particular urn got separated from the death certificate and the Cemetery’s records. So, he’s “The Professor.” He’s kept watch from that shelf for at least 50 years, and I’m his only friend. After all these years, I am probably the only living soul who knows he ever lived.

JOHN looks long at NICK and, especially, at JULIA.

JOHN: You seem like a nice young couple. From the University? And that’s an engagement ring—am I right? . . . Would you like to have The Professor?

NICK: What?

JOHN: That’s what I said. The Professor would be yours . . . “To have and to hold.” If you’re students at the University, then you have professors. Maybe you’d like to have this one.

NICK: You mean, you’d just give us the urn? The Professor, I mean.

JOHN: Under the circumstances, I believe I would. I will retire when we close down, and I could take The Professor with me. But I don’t have many years left myself, and so I’d still be facing the problem of seeing to his “future,” so to speak. After all these years, I’d hate to see someone just throw him into the trash. Someone who was cleaning out this building when it closes, or someone who was cleaning out my apartment after I’m gone. Someone who just sees a clay jar and has no interest in what it might be. I don’t think The Professor should go into the trash. You’re young. You’re from the University. Take The Professor.

NICK: Yes! Absolutely. An urn full of human ashes. What could be cooler than that?

JOHN looks displeased.

JOHN: He’s a person. Not a conversation piece! Do you understand what I’m talking about? If you take The Professor, it’s a commitment. You keep him. Wherever you go, he goes with you. You can’t just decide to get rid of him—unless, of course, you find someone else who will show him proper respect.

JULIA: I understand you. This is a very significant decision.

NICK: Julia, maybe this isn’t such a good idea. We’re going to be moving around a lot in these next few years. Traveling too. Maybe this thing is too much of a burden.

JOHN: In a sense, he will be a “burden.” But you’d be showing respect for a man’s life. Not a person you knew, but a person nonetheless. You are truly all he has. At least, that’s how it will be after I’m gone.

JULIA: Nick. Burden or not. I think we need to take The Professor. I want The Professor. Sir, I will take good care of the urn.

JOHN: The name’s “John.” I’m very pleased.

JOHN hands the urn to NICK.

JOHN: Young man. I have spent most of my life with The Professor looking down at me from that shelf. Trust me. Give The Professor a chance, and he will be more than a burden.

JULIA: John—Nick and I will look after The Professor, just as you have done.

Actors clear the stage.

[Scene 3]

JULIA and NICK, in a dreamy mood, are strolling through the cemetery back to campus. NICK holds the urn. At some distance, an elderly man wearing a black sport coat, a tie, and a hat watches them approach.

HORACE: Hello, Julia. Hello, Nick.

JULIA: Hello. (With a knowing smile.) Good morning. It’s very good to meet you.

NICK: Hello . . . Sir . . . You addressed us by name. Do we know you?

HORACE: Well, yes. In a manner of speaking. Also, you are holding my ashes. My name is Horace Smith. I was a professor in the English Department for many years. That was a long time ago. I taught Shakespeare to thousands of young men and women. Also John Milton. I was respected too. Students heeded my words carefully. (Pause.) Back in my day, we didn’t just do “literary analysis.” We used great literature to help students think and feel with greater depth, expand their humanity. Julia, you showed depth of understanding in the crematorium. Nick, you are a little behind Julia in that regard. You will need to learn from her—and from me. I will bring something to your marriage, to your lives. Perhaps to your children. I can still enlarge the human spirit.

JULIA: Thank you, Professor.

HORACE: Julia. Nick. I’m very pleased that my ashes have been entrusted to you. I’ve been on that crematorium shelf for 59 years. I did everything I could for John—kept him from getting too lonely, lifted his spirits, gave him a broader outlook on life. He didn’t have much of an upbringing, and he didn’t have a reflective mind until he began taking long, slow gazes at me. I started him reading and thinking, which is the job of a professor. Living with a young couple like you, there will be new shelves for me to watch from and more that I can do. There will be moments when there is something I’ll want you to know, to understand. Will you heed me?

JULIA AND NICK: Yes.

HORACE: Very good. Today feels like the first day of a new semester.

The End

[🙞 Link back to Appendix B TOC 🙜](#_Bitter_Cantaloupe_Page)

# Good-bye from SILVE

A 10-minute play by David K. Farkas

Version 09-15-23

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### Setting:

A large room at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, that is used for special events.

### Characters:

Skip Wilson: A NASA engineer.

**George:** A NASA engineer.

Martha: George’s wife, a homemaker.

Colonel Ingram:A high-level NASA official. (Any gender or sexual orientation.)

Skip Wilson: As dancer.

SILVE: As dancer.

### Suggested minimum casting:

Colonel Ingram/George

Skip Wilson as actor

SILVE as dancer

Skip Wilson as dancer

Martha

🙜

[Scene 1]

COLONEL INGRAM stands at a podium, enjoying the limelight. He speaks in a folksy Southern or Texas accent. SKIP is seated in the front row of the theater audience.

COLONEL INGRAM: This is surely the day to recognize Henry “Skip” Wilson (Gestures to SKIP.) Skip joined NASA in 1975, directly out of graduate school, and he was assigned to the Surface-Intensive Luminosity VLBI Exploration, known to us all as Project SILVE.

Young SKIP, as dancer, enters. The SILVE spacecraft, as dancer, enters. To some kind of ethereal soundscape, they perform an interpretive pas de deux based on COLONEL INGRAM’S monologue. SILVE orbits around SKIP, but SKIP can join her at special moments, including the mention of the software patch that saves her. They pause whenever the audience’s attention should be entirely on COLONEL INGRAM. SILVE’S dance style changes as she leaves the solar system for interstellar space. Gradually, SILVE appears more infirm, and SKIP shows concern and then grief. Later, SILVE appears to glide lifelessly into the void.

COLONEL INGRAM: Skip was part of the SILVE launch team in 1977, and he worked on telemetry for the Jupiter and Saturn fly-bys. In 1984, as Operations Manager, Skip managed the extension of SILVE’s initial mission and conducted the Uranus and Neptune fly-bys, using the velocity assist from Saturn’s gravitational field. (Pause.) We all thought SILVE was done for in 1987 when her Articulation Control System failed. But Skip engineered one of the most complex software patches in the history of space exploration, and he brought SILVE back online. (Pause.) In 2013, SILVE’s flight path took her through the heliosphere and into interstellar space, where she continued to send back data on electron density and solar wind. As new engineers replaced those who rolled off the project or retired, Skip stood out as the only original member of the project team. (Pause.) Two years ago, SILVE’s data stream became unreliable, and no further experiments could be conducted. But Skip continued to monitor SILVE’s voyage and transmit routine system commands. (Pause.) We had our last measurable signals from SILVE on May 13. We can still transmit, but we don’t know if she is listening, and we’re not likely to find out. So, the decision was made to formally close down the project, and Skip decided to coordinate the end of the project with his own retirement from NASA. (Pause.) SILVE has been in space for 43 years, longer than any other artifact from Earth. Skip and SILVE have been true partners all this time. (Chuckling.) I think Skip hears SILVE murmuring to him in his sleep.

SILVE, as dancer, and SKIP, as dancer, exit.

COLONEL INGRAM: SILVE is expected to reach the Oort Cloud in about 300 years. If there is any intelligent life out there, and if they recover SILVE, they will find a special golden data disk that includes greetings in 86 languages, the works of William Shakespeare, and the music of Chuck Berry.

SILVE dances across the stage to Chuck Berry-like rock and roll chords.

COLONEL INGRAM: We’d be happy to assign Skip to a current project, but he said no. He’s been with SILVE his entire career. I guess this old dog (Gestures again to SKIP.) is just not in the mood to learn new tricks. I asked Skip if he’d care to come up to the podium to make a few remarks, but he declined. Skip’s a quiet guy, not into speechifying, like yours truly. Now that he’s retired, Skip plans to spend his well-earned leisure time fishing on the Gulf Coast. (Pause.) So, this luncheon marks the official termination of the Surface-Intensive Luminosity VLBI Project—and Skip Wilson’s retirement. (*Raises a drinking glass containing cider.)* You all know we can’t serve alcohol on the JPL campus. But, join with me in toasting Skip Wilson and SILVE—“To a job well done!”

COLONEL INGRAM solicits applause from the luncheon [theater] audience. Then he backs upstage left or right, still clapping and facing the audience. INGRAM can become GEORGE by changing his costume in full view of the audience. Carrying a sport jacket and his briefcase, SKIP joins GEORGE, who will now speak with a more neutral accent. They walk slowly across the stage.

GEORGE: It was a great event. You must admit the Colonel did a good job up at the podium.

SKIP: Yes, he did.

GEORGE: I didn’t know you had ideas about fishing. I don’t remember you mentioning that. I don’t remember you ever going fishing.

SKIP: No, Ingram said he needed to put something into his speech about my retirement plans, so I said fishing. No one is going to notice or care if I go fishing or not.

GEORGE: Well, you’re going to have to figure out something.

SKIP: I guess so.

GEORGE: OK, tomorrow at 6:30. We’ll have happy hour and then dinner. It won’t be too hot, so we’ll do dinner on the patio. Martha is eager to see you.

SKIP: Yes, tomorrow. 6:30. See you then, George.

GEORGE: Yessiree.

SKIP: George, thanks for being my really good friend all these years. Thanks for your support with SILVE. You know, especially in these last few years. Just thanks, in general.

GEORGE: Sure, Skip.

They exit.

[Scene 2]

The set is split. On one side GEORGE is seated at his patio dining set. On the other side, SKIP is stretched out on a shabby old chaise lounge with a big bottle of beer and an open bottle of large white pills. GEORGE is idly scrolling on a tablet. MARTHA enters and places something on the table. SKIP tips back the pill bottle and swallows a large handful of pills. He washes them down with his beer.

MARTHA: It’s 7:00.

GEORGE: So.

MARTHA: Well, it’s not like Skip to be late. He lives by his watch.

GEORGE: Well, maybe not anymore, now that he’s retired.

MARTHA: You can text him.

GEORGE: OK.

MARTHA exits. GEORGE pulls out his smartphone and types out a text. Again, SKIP tips back the pill bottle, swallows a large handful of pills, and washes them down with his beer. His smartphone signals a text. He looks at it, types a return text, and stares off into the distance. MARTHA returns to put something else on the table.

GEORGE: He says he’s running late. He’ll be here in 20 minutes.

MARTHA: OK.

MARTHA exits. GEORGE and SKIP freeze. After 5 seconds (which represents 30 minutes), GEORGE and SKIP unfreeze and MARTHA returns.

MARTHA: It’s after 7:30. Give Skip a call. Let’s find out what’s keeping him.

GEORGE makes the call. SKIP’S smartphone signals an incoming call.

SKIP: Hello, George.

GEORGE: Skip, you OK?

SKIP: Yes, I am.

GEORGE: What are you doing?

SILVE, as dancer, and SKIP, as dancer, enter together and observe SKIP, who is unaware of them. As SKIP delivers this next speech, we begin to see the effects of the sedatives. His voice is still loud enough, but his speech has become slurred.

SKIP: I’m taking a look at the solar system. Well, the part I can see from my backyard, which, right at the moment, is just the sun.

SILVE, as dancer, and SKIP, as dancer, again to ethereal music, resume their interpretive dance, mostly on SKIP’S portion of the stage or on the periphery of the entire stage. This might include locking arms tightly and spinning together as a single entity sailing through space. The dialogue can be paused to allow adequate time for the dance episode.

SKIP: But, in my mind, I’m looking at the whole damn cosmos. I’m out there riding with SILVE. Keepin’ her company, so to speak.

GEORGE: Skip. What are you saying? Would you repeat some of that?

SKIP: You’re not copying too well? Well, I guess my transmissions are starting to fail. I’m drifting pretty far away from things. I’ve been on an outbound orbit for a good while now, and this evening I’ve intersected SILVE’S flight path. She’s just a thousand meters ahead of me. We’re off to see the wizard.

MARTHA: What’s with Skip?

The dancing may be paused here because the audience is attending to actual events rather than SKIP’S imaginings of outer space.

GEORGE: You’re drunk. You could have done that over here with Martha and me.

SKIP: No, I’m not drunk. What I’ve consumed—“ingested” as they say—I couldn’t have done at your house.

MARTHA: Drunk?

GEORGE: Fuck! You can’t do that, Skip! I’m coming over. No, I’m calling the EMTs.

SKIP: (With his speech slurred.) Don’t do that, George. Please. You’re my friend. You understand. I know you do.

MARTHA: For God’s sake, George. What is happening?

GEORGE: Martha’s gonna make the call. Then, I’m sticking with you on the phone.

SKIP: Sorry, Houston Control. EMTs—not an option. George, I have a Glock right here. I don’t want to do it that way. That’s a terrible way to leave things. I need you to promise me—no EMTs. Unless I can trust you, I’m gonna have to use the Glock. Let’s just finish our little chat—OK, George?

GEORGE: You have no right to put this on me, Skip.

MARTHA grows continuously more agitated.

SKIP: Maybe I do. This one thing—so many years, George. Promise me. Make up some story if you need to.

GEORGE: (Choking up.) I . . . promise. But . . . Did you really need to do this?

SILVE, as dancer, and SKIP, as dancer, resume their interpretive dance. They gradually become intimate, ecstatic, and triumphant.

**SKIP:** George, can you imagine me with a fishing rod and a tackle box? . . . You know, SILVE’s still hummin’ away, still talking to me. She’s a sturdy old girl. Most of her solar panels are OK. Electronics good, just reduced voltage. She’s too far away from all of you. But I’m right with her, George.

GEORGE is now aware of SILVE and SKIP, as dancers. MARTHA is not.

GEORGE: I know you are.

MARTHA: We should have guessed.

GEORGE stands, full of grief, and gives MARTHA a fervent hug. MARTHA understands. GEORGE and MARTHA now gaze together at the ecstatic dance. SKIP becomes unconscious, perhaps dead.

The dancing continues for about 15 seconds to allow the audience to register SKIP’S unconscious state.

GEORGE: Martha, maybe it was the right thing. At least he went out the way he wanted to.

SKIP comes to life, stands, and joyfully watches the dancers, who are aware of him. Everyone on stage is fully aware of one another. The mood is exuberant.

MARTHA: Yes, I hope it’s a long, sweet ride with SILVE.

SILVE and SKIP, as dancers, dance themselves offstage as though seeking something new and exciting. SKIP follows the dancers. MARTHA and GEORGE watch all of them and then embrace again.

The End

[🙞 Link back to Appendix B TOC 🙜](#_Bitter_Cantaloupe_Page)

# Horizons

A 10-minute play by David K. Farkas

I place this play in the public domain. Anyone is welcome to distribute, perform, modify, or expand upon the script of this play. – David K. Farkas, 2020.

Version 09-15-23

Dedicated to Richard Russell, RIP.

The staging was developed by director David Dorrian for the February 23, 2023, Goat Hill performance at the Brightwater Center, Woodinville, WA.

### Characters:

Jeff Ruston: A Horizon Airlines ground-crew employee who has stolen an airliner.

Sander Arneson: FAA Operations Chief for Sea**–**Tac Airport (just south of Seattle, Washington).

Shirley Esposito: Sea**–**Tac Airport Duty Officer.

Valerie: Jeff’s former wife.

Red Dog 1 Pilot: Any gender presentation.

Red Dog 2 Pilot: Any gender presentation.

Apparitional Child: Any gender presentation.

People in Space Needle restaurant

### Suggested minimal casting:

Jeff Ruston

Sander Arneson

Shirley Esposito

Valerie/Server in Space Needle restaurant /Apparitional Child

Red Dog 1/Diner in Space Needle restaurant

Red Dog 2/Diner in Space Needle restaurant

**NOTE:** Unless an adult performs the role of the child, the child’s grown-up(s) must be comfortable with the play’s adult situation and occasional bad language.

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Jeff Ruston, downstage center, sits on a chair facing the audience. (See the blocking diagram, Chapter 12, Figure 7, and the photograph, Chapter 4, Figure 4.) He is piloting the airliner. At center stage is a table behind which sits Shirley Esposito. She is waiting impatiently. She wears a headphone that covers one ear and also has a small microphone. As the play progresses, she will periodically receive information through the headphone and speak softly (or in pantomime) into the mic. After Arneson joins her, Esposito and Arneson will point at times to an (imagined) wall-sized monitor, never seen by the audience. There are three chairs, upstage center, facing away from the audience. In the middle seat sits the actor who becomes Valerie. On the stage-right chair sits the actor who will become the pilot Red Dog 1. Red Dog 1 flies a fighter plane from an audience-facing chair stage right. Similarly, Red Dog 2, now seated on the upstage stage-left chair, will fly from an audience-facing chair stage left.

ARNESON enters hurriedly.

ARNESON: What happened?

ESPOSITO: A guy stole an airliner. He’s up there right now. It’s a Horizon Embraer 175. He’s all alone in the plane. No crew. No passengers.

ESPOSITO stands and points to the monitor. JEFF is flying the plane in a carefree manner and looking out of his windshield on both sides.

ARNESON: What!? Fuck! Who? How did he do it? Why did he do it? Is he some kind of terrorist? Does he want money? Just a lunatic?

ESPOSITO: His name is Jeffrey Ruston. He’s a fueler for Horizon. Somehow he learned enough to fly the plane and waited for his moment.

ARNESON: A fueler? How could something like this happen?

ESPOSITO: He was occasionally assigned to the turn-around team, so he had access to the cockpit.

ESPOSITO attends to what she hears in her headphones and says a few words, probably in pantomime. Then she turns back to ARNESON.

ESPOSITO: Colonel Prescott scrambled two F-15s from McChord.

On the cue word “scrambled,” the Red Dog pilots move downstage to take seats on the chairs that face the audience.

ESPOSITO: Won’t take them long to get up here. We’re trying to establish radio contact with Ruston.

ARNESON: We need to know why he’s up there and what he wants. (Directs ESPOSITO’S attention to the monitor.) He’s just doing a wide circle around Puget Sound.

ESPOSITO: Maybe he knows how to land an aircraft. Maybe he’s planning to land it.

ARNESON: It’s for sure he’s never landed one of these before. We need to find someone who’s talked civilians down. Or has some training. At least we can direct him so he crashes on a runway not over a bunch of houses.

ESPOSITO: If he listens to us. I’ll ask the Tower to get to work on that. There’s probably someone in the Tower with that kind of training right now. But we also need someone who knows the Embraer 175 cockpit.

ARNESON: Be good if we could find out how much fuel is in that plane.

ESPOSITO focuses for a while on what she hears through her headphones and perhaps says a phrase or two into the mic.

ESPOSITO: We’re getting our radio link to Ruston. We also have a radio link with the pilots.

RED DOG 1: This is Red Dog 1, out of McChord. Come in Sea**–**Tac Control. You have operational authority, so tell us what you want. We’re National Guard. We’re not rookies. We know what we’re doing.

ESPOSITO: OK, Red Dog 1. Do you have a visual?

RED DOG: 1: Affirmative.

RED DOG 2: This is Red Dog 2. Also affirmative.

ESPOSITO: You are armed?

RED DOG 1: We have sidewinder missiles. We can bring him down quickly if we need to.

ESPOSITO: Roger that. Can you see Jeff Ruston, the guy inside? Try to get a good look at him. Don’t spook him, but maneuver for a good look.

RED DOG 2: I can see him. He’s just flying that plane. He’s certainly conscious and alert. If there’s anyone else in the cockpit, I can’t see them.

ESPOSITO: (To ARNESON.) We have a radio link to Ruston. Want to talk to him?

ARNESON: Yes, and patch in Ruston to the McChord pilots. But they only get to listen. (Touches the switch on the table mic and begins to speak.) Hello, Jeff. This is Sea**–**Tac Control. How you doin’ up there?

JEFF: Please do not address me as “Jeff.” Or, Jeffrey Ruston. I am “Sky Commander Ruston.”

ARNESON and ESPOSITO look at each other and do a double-take.

JEFF: And this is Horizon Air Flight 0000. The four zeros are sort of the numerical equivalent of infinity. Got it? I work for Horizon Airlines, so . . . (Chuckling.) this is a Horizon flight—although I admit it’s not on any schedule.

ARNESON: OK. OK, Commander Ruston.

JEFF: You left something out.

ARNESON: OK, Sky Commander Ruston.

JEFF: That’s right. Thank you.

ARNESON mutes the table mic and turns to ESPOSITO.

ARNESON: Tell the F-15s to stay close but out of the way. Tell them to report anything that they can see happening in that cockpit.

ARNESON: (Now addressing JEFF.) Sky Commander Ruston, may I ask why you stole . . . I mean . . . took command of . . . the plane?

JEFF: Beautiful day today. Great morning to be in the air. Usually I’m looking out the window—I always get a window seat—and just hope the pilot brings the plane around so that I can see Rainier or Mount Saint Helens. Today, it’s all up to me. I’m looking right out the front, and I can turn the plane any way I want. Hey, Sea**–**Tac Control, what’s your name?

ARNESON: I’m Sander Arneson. I’m FAA Operations Chief for Sea**–**Tac. I also have Shirley Esposito with me. She’s Duty Officer. We have operational jurisdiction from the NORAD Western Defense Sector in Portland. Colonel Adam Prescott is Commander of the 142nd Air National Guard Fighter Wing at McChord. He and his staff are monitoring everything we say.

JEFF: Are you pilots?

ARNESON: Yes, I was military. Transports. Shirley does stunt flying in her spare time—at airshows and stuff.

JEFF: Very cool.

ARNESON: Sky Commander Ruston, can you tell me why you did this? There are easier ways to get a good look at Rainier.

JEFF: To tell you the truth, I can’t really tell you. I do a lot of things where I can’t say why. I’m a bit of a screw-up. A lot of a screw up. That’s why I’m 32 years old and working on the ground crew.

ARNESON: Nothing wrong with working as a fueler.

JEFF: I’d hoped for better. I went to college. I expected to do better than working my butt off for minimum wage, half the time in the rain. There were other things I expected and didn’t get. Well, I guess my ground crew days are over. I certainly achieved that much today.

ARNESON: We’d like to talk you down. I bet you’re a good enough pilot to land that airliner. We’re getting someone right now who knows all the controls on that Embraer. You know, thus far, nobody has been hurt. No one needs to get hurt. I won’t say you’re not in trouble, but you’re not in big trouble. Let’s keep it that way—OK?

JEFF: That’s not exactly my plan.

**ESPOSITO:** (Mutes the table mic and talks to ARNESON.) We have his ex-wife patched in from Maple Valley. She says she can help talk him into landing the plane.

ARNESON: OK, let’s try it.

ARNESON presses some keys on the keyboard.

ARNESON: (To JEFF.) We have . . . Valerie, your ex, on the line. She wants to talk to you.

JEFF: (With comically exaggerated enthusiam.) She does? Well, OK!

VAL, wearing a loose bathrobe, stands and turns to face the audience. She delivers her lines in a taunting tone. So as not to block the audience’s view, ESPOSITO and ARNESON duck down in their chairs while VALERIE is speaking.

VALERIE: Hey Jeff, why don’t you drop that plane into the ocean? Or burn yourself up in the mouth of a volcano?

ESPOSITO and ARNESON are slow to grasp what is happening, and, when they do, they look at each other with dismay.

JEFF: You always were a dumb one. There’s no volcano like that for thousands of miles.

VALERIE: OK. Maybe just crash into the Space Needle. If you can find it. Probably that will be one more of your failures.

ARNESON: Cut her! Cut her off, for God’s sake!

ESPOSITO hurriedly presses keys on the keyboard.

JEFF: OK, Babe, maybe I’ll do just that. This will be in honor of you, Val. In honor of our five years together.

ARNESON: What the fuck?

ESPOSITO: (Pointing to the monitor.) He’s turning.

ARNESON: Jeff, Sky Commander Ruston, what are you doing?

JEFF: Oh, I don’t know . . . I just might topple the Space Needle. For the record, this was Val’s idea. Quite a woman!

ARNESON: We can’t permit that. We’ll shoot you out of the sky.

JEFF: Oh, yeah? Twenty-five tons of wreckage and jet fuel falling over Seattle? You need to think twice about that.

ESPOSITO: Sander, I don’t think he really means it. He was pretty friendly until he heard from that woman.

ARNESON: (Muting the table mic.) Ruston has issued a terrorist threat. This is an order I need to give. (Now flicking a switch on the table mic so as to address the pilots.) McChord pilots, this is Sander Arneson, FAA Operations Chief for Sea**–**Tac with direct authorization from NORAD Western Defense Sector and Colonel Prescott. Your orders are to shoot down the Embraer 175 if you can get him over water or any kind of clear area.

RED DOG 1: We copy. We understand. If we get our chance, we’ll do it.

RED DOG 2: But it doesn’t seem likely that he’ll pass over any open area. (Shouts in excitement.) He’s headed straight for the Space Needle.

The RED DOG PILOTS move quickly to their upstage chairs. Backs to the audience, they become diners in the Space Needle restaurant.

JEFF: Those folks in the restaurant are gonna see something really special today. Way more exciting than the Blue Angels.

ARNESON and ESPOSITO watch the monitor in helpless fear as they track the flight of the plane toward the Space Needle. The actor playing VALERIE is now the SERVER. The SERVER stands, faces the diners, and in half-heard fragmentary phrases welcomes them to the Space Needle and begins to take their orders. The diners respond in half-heard fragmentary phrases. Then the three are fixed in horror as, through their table’s large window, they see the airliner approach. Then they all scream all in terror. As the airline suddenly gains altitude and passes over them, they gradually regain some degree of composure, and resume the seated positions. When convenient, the SERVER will shed the apron.

JEFF: (Laughing.) Ha! Ha! Why would I want to kill a bunch of innocent people? Just to make Val happy? Ridiculous. No way. I’m heading off into the horizon. This is a Horizon airplane, so I’m taking it to the horizon. To my destiny. My fucked-up destiny. Hey, Sampson, whatever your name is. Tell your pilots not to feel guilty if they have to shoot me down. They follow orders, I understand that. I shoulda been better at following orders.

ARNESON: No need for things to get that dire, Jeff. Just keep cool.

JEFF: (Chuckling.) Sampson, if I get shot down, I won’t even blame you.

ARNESON: (To ESPOSITO.) He’s still a clear and present danger to hundreds of people. (To PILOTS.) When you get him over open water, take your shot.

ESPOSITO: He’s heading due north. If he holds steady, you can get him off Mukilteo.

RED DOG 1: Roger that. We’ll follow him north.

RED DOG 2: Damn, I never expected to do anything like this.

(Pause.)

JEFF: Hey, Sampson. I have a great view of Mt. Baker.

ARNESON: I bet you have.

JEFF: It’s a great morning, I think I’m gonna take a little stroll out on the wing.

ESPOSITO: (To ARNESON with surprise and incredulity.) A stroll out on the wing?

ARNESON: Sky Commander Ruston, with all due respect, that’s impossible.

JEFF: You have no idea what’s possible in the last half hour of your life.

JEFF steps out of the chair that represents the cockpit and walks gingerly downstage stage left, peering downward from the forward and trailing edges of the imaginary wing. The CHILD begins walking from far upstage, reaches the wing, and slowly approaches JEFF.

JEFF: Just amazing. I feel so free. I’m gonna do a little jig right on the wing.

JEFF dances but is careful about the edges.

ESPOSITO: McChord interceptors, do you have a visual? What do you see?

RED DOG 2: Nothing. The plane is still heading north on a steady course.

ESPOSITO: Roger that, Red Dog 2. (To ARNESON.) Well, he’s definitely nuts. But he’s not acting hostile.

ARNESON: He issued a terrorist threat and nearly carried it out.

JEFF notices the CHILD.

JEFF: Who are you?

CHILD: I’m the child you might still have. From the happy marriage you might still have. I want you to be my father. I want you to land the plane.

JEFF: What kind of marriage am I gonna have? How are you planning to be born? If I land the plane—that is, if they let me land the plane—there’s two F-15s tracking me—I’m going to jail, probably forever.

CHILD: No. It might not be a long sentence. At the trial, you get an expert witness to say you were taking the wrong meds. After you’ve served some time, a psychiatrist certifies that your mental health issues are resolved. Agree to wear an ankle bracelet and stay 10 miles away from any airport.

JEFF: You’re a child. How can you be talking like this?

CHILD: I’m not a real child. I’m coming out of your brain. So I don’t have to talk like a real child.

JEFF: I suppose not.

RED DOG 1: He’s northeast of Paine Field, about to reach open water. We’ll have our shot in about 90 seconds. We await further orders.

CHILD: Part of you really wants to live. Part of you knows you’re not really standing on the wing of an airliner flying 400 miles per hour. Part of you—maybe a big part—thinks there’s hope, even after a jail sentence. That part of you created me, is creating me right now. That’s the reason you’re gonna try to land this plane. You know you can land this plane.

JEFF: Yes, I can land the plane. But you don’t know what you’re asking. You don’t know how badly I’m messed up. You can’t know how empty the future can look.

CHILD: It’s not too late. I know your heart—there’s still hope there. (Pause.)Dad, it’s not just about you. You’re myonly chance.

JEFF: It’s too crazy, kiddo. It could never happen . . . Could it?

CHILD: Take my hand. Take me back into the cockpit. After that, I’m gonna disappear. But if you do the right things, I promise to come back to you as your real child. Will you kick a soccer ball with me? Will you love me? Will you love my mother? Maybe I’ll have a brother and a sister. Will you do your best to make me happen?

JEFF: I promise. I prom-ise. I know what I want now. Let’s go back to the cockpit.

JEFF walks the CHILD very affectionately back into the cockpit (JEFF’s chair). He resumes flying the plane. The CHILD quickly slips back into the CHILD’s upstage chair.

JEFF: Sea**–**Tac control. Talk me down. This was all a mistake. There’s more than one kind of horizon, and I just saw a horizon I can believe in. I think I can settle myself. It won’t be easy, but I’m ready for self-discipline.

ESPOSITO: Do we understand you want to land the plane and that you’ll let us talk you down?

JEFF: That’s right. That’s what I want.

ARNESON: (To ESPOSITO.) We can’t take a chance with this guy. He’s still a psycho flying twenty-five tons of metal and fuel. He made a terrorist threat and nearly carried it out. At any moment he could change his mind and kill a lot of people. It’s too bad. Seems like an OK guy. But he’s going down. Not much left to that 90 seconds.

ESPOSITO: McChord pilots. Hold off! Hold off for now.

ARNESON: What are you doing? I give the orders here. You know that . . . I can’t take a chance with this guy . . .

RED DOG 1: This is Red Dog 1. We’re awaiting further orders.

ESPOSITO: Sander! We can land him at Whidbey Naval Air Station. Bring him around from the northwest. He’ll come in with nothing but water below him. We’ll have the F-15s right over him. Almost no risk.

RED DOG 1: This is Red Dog 1. Repeat. We’re awaiting further orders.

ARNESON: If this goes bad, my career is over . . . But . . . OK, I’ll do it.

ESPOSITO: Jeff, we’re gonna guide you in. But it won’t be Sea**–**Tac. You’re gonna land at Whidbey Island Naval Air Station. Because you buzzed the Space Needle, we can’t fully trust you. Any crazy idea, any divergence from our instructions, and you’re an instant gonner.

JEFF: I’m good with that. Thank you.

ESPOSITO: McChord pilots, you copy this?

RED DOG 1: Yes, we copy. It works on our end.

ESPOSITO: OK, Jeff, are you ready to come home?

The End

[🙞 Link back to Appendix B TOC 🙜](#_Bitter_Cantaloupe_Page)

# Luke Meets the Revenue Man

An adaption by David K. Farkas of Arthur Hopkins’ “Moonshine,” written in 1919.

Version 09-15-23

“Moonshine” is in the public domain. I place my modifications of “Moonshine” in the public domain. Anyone is welcome to distribute, perform, modify, or expand upon the script of this play. – David K. Farkas, 2020.

“Moonshine” is available in B. Roland Lewis, Contemporary One-Act Plays. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1922.

(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/37970>)

An audio recording is available in Librivox.org, One Act Plays, volume 007. 14:05 minutes.

<https://librivox.org/one-act-play-collection-007-by-various>

### Characters:

**Luke Hazy:** A moonshiner.

**Revenue Officer:** A city man.

🙜

Deep in the mountains of North Carolina, moonshiner Luke Hazy sits at a crude table in his one-room cabin. There is a second chair. There is a cupboard with a jug of moonshine whiskey and two cups. On a wall is a faded newspaper photograph of a well-dressed man. LUKE holds an old-style revolver.

A commotion is heard outside the cabin.

LUKE: (Looking offstage.) It's all right, boys . . . Jist leave him to me. Git in here, Mister Revenue Man.

The REVENUE MAN is shoved roughly through the doorway. He wears city attire but has no hat. His clothes are dusty. He speaks like a well-educated Northerner. LUKE, a lanky, ill-dressed Southerner, motions with the barrel of his pistol for the stranger to take a seat. Then LUKE closes the door.

LUKE: You must excuse the boys for gettin’ a little rough. You see they don't come across you revenue fellers very often, and they kinda got excited.

RM: I understand.

More commotion and a gunshot.

LUKE: (Barely reacting.) That was quite a handsome firearm they took from you. Boys are probably tryin’ to determine who’s gonna keep it.

RM: I would hate to be the cause of any dissension . . . uh . . . trouble . . . among the boys.

Another gunshot.

LUKE: (Again barely reacting.) Well, that just can’t be helped. Won't yer sit down?

RM: (Sitting.) Thank you.

LUKE: (Going over to cupboard and taking out jug.) We wus hopin' you might be Jim Dunn. Have a drink?

RM: (Starts slightly at mention of JIM DUNN.) No, thank you. Your mountain liquor is too rough for me.

LUKE: (Draining cup.) Rough? T’ain’t rough. Ye just don't like the flavor of liquor that hain't been stamped.

RM: Maybe so.

LUKE: It’s bad manners to drink alone when you got company. Please have some.

RM: Very well, my friend. I suffer willingly.

Drinks a little and chokes.

RM: It's not so bad.

LUKE: The last revenue man that sat in that chair got good and drunk on my hooch.

RM: That wouldn't be difficult.

LUKE: No, but it wuz awkward.

RM: Why?

LUKE: I had to wait till he sobered up before I give him his bullet. Don’t like the idea of sending a man to meet his maker while he’s drunk.

RM: Thoughtful executioner.

LUKE: I'm mighty sorry you ain't Jim Dunn. But I reckon you ain't. You don't answer to his likeness.

RM: (Again starts slightly at the mention of JIM DUNN.) Who's Jim Dunn?

LUKE: You ought to know who Jim Dunn is. He's just the most notorious revenue man that ever hit these parts. (Points to newspaper photograph on back wall.) He’s a smart one. Put a lot of moonshiners in jail. And when the occasion calls fer it, he’s good with a gun too. We figure he’s due here sooner or later, and we got a little reception all ready for him.

RM: (Looking at photograph.) That’s Jim Dunn?

LUKE: Yep.

RM: (Rising, examining picture.) Doesn't look much like anyone.

LUKE: That’s cause the picture’s been up on that wall a long time . . . I'm mighty sorry you hain't Jim Dunn.

RM: I'm sorry to disappoint you.

LUKE: Oh, it's all right. I reckon one revenue man's about as good as another.

RM: What makes you sure I'm a revenue officer?

LUKE: Well, since we ketched ye climin' trees an' snoopin' round the stills, I reckon we won't take no chances that you hain't.

RM: You do have pretty good evidence. I’ll say that myself.

LUKE: So, what’s your name, Mr. Revenue Man?

RM: I’m “Diego Oscuro.” Pleased to get better acquainted with you.

LUKE: Dee-egg -oh? O-scrur-o.

RM: Sorry about those unfamiliar sounds. I’m from New York City. My father was Spanish. “Diego” is like “James.” I won’t trouble you about “Oscuro.” My father had a business importing wine. But in New York City everyone pays the tax.

LUKE: How ‘bout that! (Laughing.) Not here. In these parts, payin’ the tax isn’t just an expense, it’s an embarrassment. Yeh, know, I’m just gonna trip over “Dee-egg-oh,” so I’m gonna just say “Mister Revenue” . . . for the duration of our acquaintance. Luke Hazy is my name. Please do call me “Luke.” I want you to feel like you had a friend with you at the end.

RM: (Starting as though interested.) Not the Luke Hazy that cleaned out the Crosby family?

LUKE: (Startled and draws revolver.) How'd you hear about that?

RM: Hear about it? Why, your name's been in every newspaper in the United States. Every time you kill another Crosby the whole feud is told all over again. I've seen your picture in the papers twenty times.

LUKE: Hain't never had one took.

RM: Don't you ever read the newspapers?

LUKE: Me read? I hain't read nothin' fer thirty years. Reckon I couldn't read two lines in an hour.

RM: You've missed a lot of information about yourself.

LUKE: How many Crosbys they say I killed?

RM: I think the last report said you had just removed the twelfth.

LUKE: It's a lie! I only killed six . . . that's all they wuz growed up. I'm a-waitin' fer one now that's only thirteen.

RM: When'll he be ripe?

LUKE: Jes as soon as he comes a-lookin' fer me.

RM: Will he come?

LUKE: He'll come if he's a Crosby.

RM: A brave family?

LUKE: They don't make 'em any braver—they'd be first-rate folks if they wuzn't Crosbys.

RM: If you feel that way, why did you start fighting them?

LUKE: I never started no fight. My granddad had some misunderstandin' with their granddad. I don't know jes what it wuz about, but I reckon my granddad wuz right, and I'll see it through.

RM: You must think a lot of your grandfather.

LUKE: Never seen 'im, but I ain't goin' agin my own kin . . . Won't ye have another drink?

RM: No—no—thank you.

LUKE: Well, Mr. Revenue Man, I reckon we might as well have this over.

RM: What?

LUKE: Well, you know. The killin’ part. I mean I gotta kill you.

RM: That’s OK. That’s why I’m here.

LUKE: What do yu mean?

RM: I mean that I've been trying to commit suicide for the last two months, but I haven't had the nerve.

LUKE: (Startled.) Suicide?

RM: Yes. Now that you're willing to kill me, the problem is solved.

LUKE: Why, what d'ye want to commit suicide fer?

RM: I just want to stop living, that's all.

LUKE: Well, yu must have a reason.

RM: No special reason—I find life dull, and I'd like to get out of it.

LUKE: Dull?

RM: Yes—I hate to go to bed, and I hate to get up. My work is a farce. I chase around these hills lookin’ for moonshiners, but nothin’ really comes of it. There’s always going to be more to take their place. I see by the fate of my friends that love brings only disappointment and sadness. Injustice is everywhere. The crafty schemer gets the money and the glory, while the fair-minded dealer is humiliated in the bankruptcy court. In the name of the law every crime is committed; in the name of religion every vice is indulged; in the name of education the greatest ignorance is rampant.

LUKE: I don't git all of that, but I reckon you're some put out.

RM: I am. The world's a failure, and I'm just aching to get out of it . . . And you, my friend, are my opportunity.

LUKE: Yes, I reckon you'll get your wish now.

RM: Good . . . if you only knew how I've tried to get myself killed.

LUKE: Well, why didn't you kill yerself?

RM: I was afraid.

LUKE: Afreed o' what? (Chuckling.) Hurtin' yourself?

RM: No, afraid of the consequences.

LUKE: Whad d'ye mean?

RM: Do you believe in another life after this one?

LUKE: I kan't say ez I ever give it much thought.

RM: Well, don't—because if you do you'll never kill another Crosby, or even a revenue officer.

LUKE: 'Tain't that bad, is it?

RM: Worse. Twenty times I've had a revolver to my head—crazy to die—and then as my finger rested on the trigger, I'd get a terrible dread—a dread that I was plunging into worse terrors than this world ever knew. If killing were the end, it would be easy, but what if it's only the beginning of something worse?

LUKE: Well, you gotta take some chances.

RM: I'll not take that one. You know, Luke, life was given to us by someone who probably never intended that we should take it, and that someone probably has something ready for people who destroy his property. That's what frightens me.

LUKE: You do too much worryin' to be a regular suicide.

RM: Yes, I do. That's why I changed my plan. I'm going to make someone else responsible for my dying. I’ve been exposing myself to every danger I could think of.

LUKE: What ye mean by that?

RM: Well, did you ever see an automobile?

LUKE: No.

RM: They go faster than steam engines, and they don't stay on tracks. Did you ever hear of Fifth Avenue, New York?

LUKE: No.

RM: Fifth Avenue is jammed with automobiles, eight deep all day long. People being killed every day. I crossed Fifth Avenue every day for weeks, never once trying to get out of the way, and always praying I'd be hit.

LUKE: And couldn't yu git hit?

RM: (In disgust.) No. Automobiles only hit people who try to get out of the way. (Pause.) When that failed, I frequented the lowest dives on the Bowery, flashing a roll of money and wearing diamonds, hoping they'd kill me for them. They stole the money and diamonds, but never touched me.

LUKE: Couldn't you pick a fight?

RM: I’m coming to that. You know Two Gun Jake, who keeps the saloon down in Henderson?

LUKE: I do . . . Jake's killed enough fellers to git attention.

RM: He's a bad man, ain't he?

LUKE: He's no trifler.

RM: I wound up in Jake's place two nights ago. I elbowed my way up to the bar and announced to everyone in the place that Jake’s wife has been with every man in town. And she does it because Jake can’t do nothin’ in bed.

LUKE: That shudda got Jake mad enough to kill yu.

RM: Well, he might still get around to it, but he went off and killed his wife instead. He’s in jail now.

LUKE: That’s just plain bad luck.

RM: I decided that you moonshiners were my best chance. So I scrambled around in the mountains until I found your still and waited until your boys showed up.

LUKE: (Pause.) Ah, so ye want us to do yer killin' fer ye, do ye?

RM: You're my last hope. If I fail this time, I may as well give it up.

LUKE: (Takes out revolver, turns sideways and secretly removes cartridges from the chamber.) What wuz that noise?

Lays revolver on table and steps outside the cabin. The REVENUE MAN looks at revolver, apparently without interest. LUKE quickly re-enters and expresses surprise at seeing that the REVENUE MAN made no attempt to grab the revolver. Feigning agitation, he goes to the table and quickly picks up the gun.

LUKE: I reckon I'm gettin' careless, leavin' a gun layin' around here that-a-way. Didn't you see it?

RM: Yes.

LUKE: Well, why didn't ye grab it?

RM: What for?

LUKE: To git the drop on me.

RM: Don’t you understand what I've been telling you, Luke? I don't want the drop on you.

LUKE: Well, doggone if I don't believe yer tellin' me the truth. Thought I'd just see what ye'd do. Ye see, I emptied it first.

Opens up revolver.

RM: That wasn't necessary.

LUKE: Well, I reckon ye better git along out o' here, Mister Revenue.

RM: You don't mean you're weakening?

LUKE: I ain't got no call to do your killin' fer you if ye hain't sport enough to do it yerself.

RM: But one murder more or less means nothing to you. You don't care anything about the hereafter.

LUKE: Mebbe I don't, but there ain't no use my takin' any more chances than I have to. And what's more, mister, from what you been tellin' me, I reckon there's a charm on you, and I ain't goin' to take no chances goin' agin charms.

RM: So, you're going to go back on me?

LUKE: Yes, siree.

RM: Well, maybe some of the other boys will be willing. I'll wait till they come.

LUKE: The other boys ain't even gonna see you. You're a-leavin' this here place right now. Ye ain't got no right to expect us to bear yer burdens.

RM: Damn it all! I've spoiled it again.

LUKE: Come on, I'll let you ride my horse to town. It's the only one we got, so yu can leave it at Two Gun Jake's, and one o' the boys'll go git it.

RM: I suppose it's no use arguing with you.

LUKE: Not a bit. Come on.

RM: Well, I'd like to leave my address so if you ever come to New York you can look me up.

LUKE: 'Tain't likely I'll ever come to New York.

RM: Well, I'll leave it, anyhow. Have you a piece of paper?

LUKE: Paper what you write on? Never had no paper.

REVENUE MAN takes Jim Dunn’s picture from the wall.

RM: If you don't mind, I'll put it on the back of Jim Dunn's picture. (Places picture on table.) I'll print it for you, so it'll be easy to read.

REVENUE MAN prints on the back of the picture.

LUKE: All right—come on now.

Both go to the doorway. LUKE opens the door and extends his hand. The REVENUE MAN takes it.

LUKE: Good-bye, mister—cheer up. There's the horse.

RM: Good-bye. (Shakes LUKE'S hand.)

LUKE watches for a while as the REVENUE MAN rides down the mountain. Then he hears loud laughter.

RM: (Laughing still louder and calling.) Farewell, my friend. Perhaps we’ll meet another day.

LUKE: (To himself.) Now what does he mean by that?

RM: (Shouting louder.) Lu-uke, loook aht the pict-tuure!

LUKE pauses for a moment, then returns to the table, takes a drink, picks up the picture, and turns it around several times before noticing the writing on the back. Then he begins to study. Attempting to make out the name, he slowly traces in the air with his index finger a capital "J"—then mutters "J-J-J"; then traces the letter "I"—mutters "Ih-Ih-Ih"; then a letter "M"—muttering "M-M-M, J-I-M—J-I-M—JIM." In the same way he traces and mutters D-U-N-N.”

LUKE: Jim Dunn! By God! Ha! Ha! Whatta feller. Well, the joke’s on me today. But mebbe we’ll meet again. I’ll have no trouble recognizin’ him next time.

The End

[🙞 Link back to Appendix B TOC 🙜](#_Bitter_Cantaloupe_Page)

# Nordstrom Shopping Zombies

A 10-minute play by David K. Farkas

Version 09-15-23

I place this play in the public domain. Anyone is welcome to distribute, perform, modify, or expand upon the script of this play. – David K. Farkas, 2020.

### Characters:

Henry Peck:Shopping, under protest, with his wife. He is at least 45 years old.

Priscilla Peck:Henry’s wife, frustrated and impatient with Henry.

Gerri:A sales trainer working in the Men’s Clothing department of a Nordstrom department store.

Darlene:A sales associate.

Suzie:A sales associate.

🙜

GERRI is standing and addressing a group of sales associates working in the Men’s Department of a Nordstrom department store. DARLENE and SUZIE are seated and attentive. Two or more audience members may be recruited to sit with them and react to the action. All sales associates have identical loose-leaf binders and a pen. Also on stage are PRISCILLA and, standing directly behind her, HENRY. They are frozen and oblivious. He is slouched and dispirited, rather like a zombie that doesn’t know what to do next.

GERRI: I hope you all enjoyed your lunch break. This afternoon, we will continue our examination of Men’s Department shopper profiles. Just a reminder: Our research shows that sales associates who understand the eight shopper profiles enjoy 35% higher sales than those who have not taken this training. So, listen up, everyone! (Pause.) We will begin the afternoon with a discussion of the Male Shopping Zombie—or MSZ. Keep in mind that MSZs have a higher disposable income than most of the other categories of shoppers, and, as I will explain, they are often big spenders. Male Shopping Zombies may be annoying to deal with, but it’s worth it—especially if you can form an alliance with their wife. MSZs, by definition, always shop with their wife. (Pause.) Let me introduce our “real life” MSZ and his wife: Henry Peck and Priscilla Peck. Let’s give them a warm welcome. (Gestures for applause, and the couple unfreezes slightly.) This morning we examined the Bargain Hunter, the Dandy, and the Hipster. The MSZ is very different from these or any of the other categories that make up our Men’s Department shopper profiles. In fact, MSZs are very easily recognizable.

The PECKS come fully to life. He follows her zombie-like across stage.

GERRI: Notice the slouch, the glazed eyes, the unkempt hair. The MSZ has been married to the same woman for decades and no longer pays even the slightest attention to his appearance. Often you will hear the MSZ whining. Like this:

HENRY: I have a stomach-ache. We need to go home.

GERRI: Or . . .

HENRY: I think I’m having a heart attack. You’d better call 911.

GERRI: Ignore this stuff. That “heart attack” is almost always fake, and, anyway, we’re here to sell. You will notice that the wife always ignores his whining. You will also hear this:

HENRY: Why can’t you just order some pants on Amazon?

PRISCILLA: You’re between sizes. Also, your butt is too large [Or too small.]. We need the tailor to make alterations.

HENRY: (In despair.) The tailor?!

GERRI: The MSZ has no thoughts or opinions about the clothing his wife is picking out for him. His only thought is getting home as soon as possible, where he will recover with a long nap or, in some cases, a stiff drink.

HENRY: Or, in some cases, a stiff drink anda long nap.

GERRI: (Brightly.) Thank you, Henry . . . Now, how do we approach the MSZ? Suzie, want to give it a try?

SUZIE approaches the couple and focuses on HENRY.

SUZIE: Hello, Sir. I’m Suzie. Great day today! Can I help you?

HENRY: (In misery.) You can’t.

SUZIE: Well, what brings you to the Men’s Department today?

HENRY just points to his wife and pays no further attention to SUZIE, who returns to her seat.

GERRI: Can you all see Suzie’s mistake? Darlene, what would you do?

DARLENE stands and approaches PRISCILLA.

DARLENE: Do you know his size? We can take care of this very quickly. (To HENRY.) We have some very comfortable chairs, right over there. (Pointing.) I’m Darlene. If I can do anything to make you more comfortable, just let me know.

HENRY: (With obvious gratitude.) Thank you. I think I’ll be OK in that chair.

DARLENE returns to her seat. HENRY sits comfortably in the chair and returns to his zombie state. During GERRI’S next speech, HENRY steps softly to the periphery of the stage.

GERRI: MSZs have a habit of slipping away. You’re talking to him, trying to explain what a “pleat” is, and he just disappears. It’s remarkable how they can do that. Even their wives can’t find them. Now, let’s imagine that there are no chairs or that all of the chairs are occupied by other MSZs. Your MSZ has somehow disappeared mid-sentence. Where might he be hiding?

SUZIE: In the bathroom?

GERRI: No, men don’t do that. So, where might you find your MSZ?

DARLENE: You can often find them near a speaker, trying to listen to the music . . .

We see HENRY, at the periphery of the stage, with his ear cocked toward an imaginary speaker somewhere high on a wall.

GERRI: Yes. Yes. Very good, Darlene.

DARLENE: Or . . . (DARLENE strikes the appropriate pose*.)* Checking out the butt on a mannequin.

HENRY shows embarrassment and returns to PRISCILLA. GERRI now addresses all the sales associates.

GERRI: Sad, but true. Now, sales associates, here’s a little quiz.

HENRY tries to slip away.

HENRY: We need to go home. I have a cold.

PRISCILLA reins him in harshly.

PRISCILLA: No you don’t.

HENRY:I’m having a heart attack. We need to go home.

PRISCILLA: No! (Addressing GERRI.) Sorry for the interruption.

GERRI: That’s OK . . . Let’s get back to our quiz. When the wife picks out a pair of slacks, shows it to the MSZ, and says, “I think we’ll take the beige one,” what is the MSZ likely to say? Anyone?

DARLENE: He says . . .

HENRY: *(Steps in to finish DARLENE’S speech but in a petulant voice.)* I want one in every color.

PRISCILLA: You don’t need five pairs of slacks.

HENRY:Yes, I do.

HENRY and PRISCILLA freeze.

GERRI: Now, why is Henry saying this? You really need to understand your MSZ—and the other Men’s department shopper profiles. That’s what this training seminar is all about. Remember, 35% higher sales. So, why did Henry say, “I want one in every color”?

SUZIE: Because he thinks this will make his wife cut short the shopping trip?

GERRI: (Tactfully.) That’s poss-ib-ble.

DARLENE: Because Henry is thinking the more pairs of slacks Priscilla buys, the longer it will be before she takes him out shopping again.

GERRI: That’s right! Money is no object to MSZs. They are way too miserable and too desperate to care about money. That’s why they are often bigger spenders than much better dressed men. Do you see the opportunity here?

DARLENE: I do indeed see opportunity. Shouldn’t we talk about “fetish objects”?

GERRI: Yes, I was getting to that . . . Many male customers, in all of the groups, have a deep attachment to some fetish object, some favorite article of clothing—a Levi’s jean jacket, a hat, a pair of sneakers, very often a belt. You can usually spot the fetish object. Let’s look at Henry . . . Henry has been wearing that belt (Points.) every single day of his life for 27 years—except for two weddings and three funerals. It was made by Joe, of Joe’s Shoe Repair, in Ely, Minnesota, from elk hide brought in by a hunter. That is one sturdy belt. It could easily last 100 years. Priscilla hates it. So, how do we deal with a situation like this? Suzie?

SUZIE: I’d form an alliance with the wife.

HENRY and PRISCILLA unfreeze.

PRISCILLA: Henry, you can’t keep wearing that belt. It’s falling apart.

HENRY: It isn’t! It’s rock solid, like the day I bought it.

SUZIE:Let me show you folks some of our leather belts. These are very fashionable . . .

HENRY: (Baring his teeth and growling fiercely.) Grrrr!!!!

SUZIE jumps back and, still facing HENRY, slowly returns to her seat.

GERRI: Do not call Security in these situations. Unless cornered, the MSZ is not actually dangerous.

HENRY: (Again baring his teeth but growling more softly.) Grrrr!!!!

GERRI: This is a tricky situation. Darlene, how would you handle it?

DARLENE stands, approaches HENRY, and speaks in a very soothing voice.

DARLENE: That’s a nic*e* belt. Lots of character. It would go great with some flannel shirts we have. Looks like you’re a . . . Large. We can walk right over there and just grab a few of those shirts.

Contentedly, HENRY follows DARLENE offstage, totally ignoring PRISCILLA.

GERRI: Market researchers have studied the male shopper’s attachment to fetish objects. However, the reasons for this attachment are not fully understood. Marketing departments at several business schools have performed experiments that suggest different explanations. One hypothesis is that . . .

HENRY and DARLENE re-enter. HENRY displays focus and energy we have not seen before.

HENRY: Darlene, do you like working here?

DARLENE: Not really.

PRISCILLA, GERRI, and SUZIE take notice.

HENRY: You do know that us Male Shopping Zombies generally have high disposable incomes?

DARLENE: Yes, I learned that in training.

HENRY: Well, I have a very high income.

PRISCILLA, GERRI, and SUZIE are amazed.

HENRY: Darlene, do you understand what John Prine meant when he sang “To believe in this living is a hard way to go”?

DARLENE: Yes, I do. I love John Prine.

HENRY: Do you understand what Bruce Springsteen meant when he sang, “I can’t tell my courage from my desperation”?

DARLENE: Yes, I’ve felt that way sometimes.

HENRY: Darlene, would you leave this place with me?

DARLENE: Yes!

She follows a purposeful HENRY Offstage. His trailing arm is holding her hand.

SUZIE: (Recovering herself.) Far out!

PRISCILLA: (To GERRI.) I’m suing Nordstrom!

GERRI: It’s your own damn fault.

HENRY and DARLENE suddenly appear at the periphery of the stage, showing affection and joy.

HENRY: That’s right, Gerri. Definitely nothing to blame on Nordstrom!

They exit.

The End

[🙞 Link back to Appendix B TOC 🙜](#_Bitter_Cantaloupe_Page)

# The Expulsion from Eden

A 10-minute play by David K. Farkas

Version 09-15-23

I place this play in the public domain. Anyone is welcome to distribute, perform, modify, or expand upon the script of this play. – David K. Farkas, 2020.

Dedicated to Professor Katherine Koller Diez*.*

### Characters:

**Adam**

**Eve**

**The Angel Raphael**

**Cain**

**Meraltic:** Cain’s trusted messenger

**Enoch:** The son of Cain

**Narrator**

### Suggested minimal casting:

Adam

Eve

The Angel Raphael/Meraltic/Enoch

Cain/Narrator

### Setting:

Eden; The harsh world beyond Eden; Nod, the nation ruled by Cain. No sets necessary.

🙜

[Scene 1]

ADAM and EVE enter from opposite sides of the stage and confront each other. They each wear a loose, hastily constructed garment, something like a toga or perhaps just a light blanket. RAPHAEL, resplendent in appearance, watches from upstage, but gradually steps forward and into their view.

**ADAM:** Why are you covered?

**EVE:** I did not want you to see me naked. And you?

**ADAM:** Yes, the same.

**EVE:** Everything is changing.

**ADAM:** Yes

They approach RAPHAEL with shame and trepidation, their heads bowed. Then EVA tries to resume her former relationship with RAPHAEL.

EVA: Oh, Raphael. Tell us about these things that are happening . . .

**RAPHAEL:** Stop! We no longer speak familiarly.

Startled and appalled, ADAM and EVA step backward.

**RAPHAEL:** If you have a question, you may ask it.

ADAM hesitates.

**RAPHAEL:** I said, if you have a question, you may ask it.

**ADAM:** Raphael, what do we call these coverings we now wear?

**RAPHAEL:** You will call them “garments.” Adam, Eve, in a few moments, you will have no such questions as these. Your minds are now filling with new thoughts and words.

**EVE:** Like death?

**RAPHAEL:** Like death. You now know sin, shame, suspicion, discord, and more. You will see death in many forms—including murder. You will know toil, pain, and illness. And you will need to find your own answers, for when you leave Eden, you will see me no more.

**ADAM:** Alas! This will happen soon?

**RAPHAEL:** Yes, very soon. You have just minutes to absorb the consequences of your transgression and to ready your minds for a world that is complex and threatening—nothing like what you’ve known. Adam, the beasts are no longer your friends, especially at night. You must cut a stout branch and sharpen one end so that you can ward off predators.

**ADAM:** Woman, you have caused all this woe!

**EVE:** I did nothing.

**ADAM:** You ate of the apple. Is that nothing?

**EVE:** The serpent was subtle. He lied.

**ADAM:** Why did that matter? There was just one commandment, just one. Don’t eat from the Tree of Good and Evil. That’s all you needed to know.

**EVE:** The serpent tempted me. He spoke of knowledge like it was something I should want. The apple had a bright glow like no other fruit I’d ever seen. That glow made me hunger for its taste. Then, after I ate, I could not stand to be alone in my fear and dread. So, I offered the apple to you in order to join our fates. I thought . . .

**ADAM:** Stop! . . . We needed only to obey that one law and Paradise was ours forever. Now we must suffer and die, and our children must suffer and die. They will curse us—especially they will curse you.

**EVE:** Yes, they will curse me. I have caused great harm, never to be equaled. Adam, do you still love me? Am I not still lovely to look upon?

**ADAM:** You are less so. You are now mortal, and this can be seen. But that is not the point. Oh, Eve! Mother of sin and sorrow. I hate and despise you for what you have done.

**EVE:** Adam, I would gladly take the full weight of God’s punishment upon myself alone. So that you might remain in Paradise.

**RAPHAEL:** This is not possible. Adam ate. He could have refused, but he did not.

**EVE:** (To RAPHAEL.) But I brought the temptation to him. I told him how the taste opened my mind, expanded my vision.

**RAPHAEL:** If Adam had refused, there would have been no Fall, no punishment—just a warning and further instruction. To Fall, you needed to fall together, and you did.

**EVE:** Adam, you did eat, but I tempted you. And not just with my words. My breasts, my lustrous hair waving softly in the breeze have often led you to comply with my desires. No different this time. Adam, I would take upon myself the full weight of God’s punishment.

**ADAM:** (Softening.) You would. I know that.

**EVE:** I would . . . die. I would see *you* still in Paradise with another woman—a second Eve, a better Eve. I would have you take her to bed. You would say, “Once I had a woman named Eve, but she was evil.”

**ADAM:** These thoughts are too terrible to speak of.

**RAPHAEL:** Is Eve entirely to blame? Think, Adam!

ADAM pauses and is stricken.

**ADAM:** Eve, I was commanded to watch over you. For our mutual safety, we were not to be long apart. I let you stray far enough from me that I could not hear the serpent speak to you. I am also at fault for what has happened.

**RAPHAEL:** Yes, Adam. Yes. Think further*,* Adam.

**ADAM:** (Looking tenderly at EVE.) I am sorry that I blamed you for our woe. You are Eve still, and I love you. Whatever may befall us, I will cherish you.

**RAPHAEL:** Yes, Adam. (To both ADAM and EVE.) Time is very short, and I must help you prepare for life outside Eden. Adam, you have learned the most important lesson: Forgiveness. Eve has learned it too. In Eden, before you fell, love was easy. You loved each other, you loved the animals who greeted you each morning. They loved you. But forgiveness is much harder than love. Forgiveness comes after you’ve been hurt, and you will hurt each other in word and in deed. So will the future generations. Therefore, you must practice forgiveness and teach forgiveness to your children.

**ADAM:** Forgiveness quells anger. I understand this. And I understand more. If I see a young deer caught and sinking in deep mud, and I pull it out, that is kindness. If an animal tries to steal our food, and I set down my spear, that is mercy. But forgiveness is hardest, for it comes when I have been injured.

**RAPHAEL:** Yes, forgiveness is hardest. But it heals.

**EVE:** Adam, I know some things you do not. I tell you that forgiveness comes more easily to women than to men. Someday I will joyfully forgive my new babes for the pain of childbirth. And my daughters will forgive their babes, even as they lie bleeding to death in childbirth. The woman, in her last moments, will ask to hold her babe. In her last moments she will ask her husband to forgive the child for the loss of his wife. In their last moments together, the woman will instruct her husband to love the babe and teach it well. And men shall heed.

**ADAM:** Raphael, what more can you tell us in the short time we have left?

**RAPHAEL:** Evil has been set loose upon the world. There is evil within you, and evil is now part of Nature. Your descendants will know pestilence, wildfire, and floods. They will know envy and cruelty, crime, and plunder. The future generations will be born into a battle they can never win—but which they can easily lose—if they succumb to cruelty or despair. But you can push evil backwards and enlarge the precious space in which good flourishes. Adam, Eve, history now begins. The world lies all before you.

ADAM and EVE turn toward RAPHAEL, then toward each other.

**RAPHAEL:** (Gesturing.) You must go now. This way.

ADAM and EVE take each other’s hands. They exit.

[Scene 2]

ADAM, as a middle-aged man, holds a farming implement. EVE, as a middle-aged woman, carries a basket. They are dressed simply, as farmers, in clothing that was hidden under the flowing garment each wore in Scene 1. CAIN holds a weapon.

**ADAM:** Cain! To kill your brother, our son. The Angel Raphael warned your mother and I that terrible things awaited us outside of Eden. But this is beyond what we could conceive. I don’t know how we will keep on living, but I know we must.

**CAIN:** Father, why was Abel’s sacrifice preferred before mine? Why?

**ADAM:** I do not know.

**EVE:** Was this cause for murder? The murder of your brother?

**CAIN:** Oh, I am the most wretched among men. I despise myself. The first murderer—and such a murder it was! My own brother, who loved me.

**EVE:** Cain. Understand this: We forgive you this deed. We must if we are to go on in our lives.

**CAIN:** I deserve no forgiveness. I deserve curses. I deserve your curses each day of my life.

**EVE:** Despite all, you are our son. You have our love.

**ADAM:** It is not enough that we forgive you. You must learn to forgive yourself. You can earn this forgiveness through kindness and generosity. You must work to heal the world. Then, teach others what you have learned. Teaching, teaching our children, this is our greatest hope. It’s our best way to grow the army that fights evil on the battleground of daily living. Do you understand me, Cain?

**CAIN:** Understanding does me no good, Father. Even now I have a strong impulse slay you and take your place. In my imaginings I am the husband of your widow, who is my mother. I am deeply evil, so deeply evil! To keep my desires in check, I must run off to the wilderness and live alone.

**ADAM:** Then do so. Subduing the evil within you is virtue. But it is not enough. It is only the first step toward building a virtuous life.

**CAIN:** How can such a thing be possible for me?

**EVE:** It is possible. Some day you can return from the wilderness.

**CAIN:** I am too sinful. Too weak.

**ADAM:** You must try. How else can you live?

**EVE:** Yes. You must try. Remember, you have our forgiveness and our love. Let this be the foundation for a better life.

Actors clear the stage.

[Scene 3]

The NARRATOR, reading from a Bible, enters upstage.

**NARRATOR:** And Cain spoke: “Lord, I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth. Anyone who findeth me shall slay me.” But the Lord answered, “No” and set a mark upon Cain as a warning to all not to kill him. And Cain went out into the wilderness, and he settled east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. And Cain built a city in the desert.

The NARRATOR exits. EVE, now much older, enters. Moments later, MERALTIC enters.

**MERALTIC:** I bear a message from Cain, your son.

**EVE:** (Astonished and joyful.) Adam! Oh, Adam! Come here. Something wondrous. A messenger from Cain. (To MERALTIC.) Is he well? Where does he dwell? It has been many years.

ADAM, walking with a cane, joins EVE.

**MERALTIC:** Yes, Lady. Your son is well. He dwells in Nod, a city that he founded and governs. He is married to Trafelsa. His son is Enoch. I am Meraltic, Cain’s trusted advisor and friend. He would have no ordinary messenger speak to you.

**ADAM:** Founded a city? How could this be?

**MERALTIC:** After many years of wandering, both through the desert and in his mind, he made peace with himself. Soon after, he found his goodness and his strength. He then gathered many followers. Nod is a populous city that has established many trade routes. It is guarded by walls, high and strong. Cain is much honored. But he has many responsibilities, so he could not take time for the long journey from Nod to where you dwell.

EVE: He waited all these years to send us news?

**MERALTIC:** He waited until he could show you the life he lives now, his family, and everything he’s achieved.

**EVE:** He was foolish. We would have rejoiced to receive any news—any news other than of his death.

**MERALTIC:** I understand. He told our people about his terrible sin. But it is very hard to face the parents of the son you have murdered. He thanks you deeply for your forgiveness and unshakeable love. He has taught forgiveness to Enoch, and to many others. He governs with wisdom and always with mercy. Can you visit him in Nod?

**ADAM:** Alas, we are too old to travel.

**MERALTIC:** Perhaps a day will come when he can be absent long enough to visit you.

**EVE:** If we never see him, this is still a joyful day for us.

**MERALTIC:** I am very weary. Let me and my attendants withdraw to our tents. I will return in the morning. I will tell you much, and you will tell me much that I can relate to Cain.

**ADAM:** Yes. Please. Of course. Until tomorrow.

MERALTIC exits. ADAM and EVE freeze.

[Scene 4]

Freeze continues. Then, Action.

**EVE:** Adam, what will be our last thoughts as we die? What should they be?

**ADAM:** That we have lived well . . . and would have been happy except for the memory of our original sin and of Abel’s death. What the world will say of us, we cannot know.

**EVE:** We will be blamed. I especially.

**ADAM:** Sometimes I have strange thoughts. Sometimes I think, dare to think, that it was good we left Eden and struck out on our own. A baby sucking at his mother’s breast is in Paradise. But is this living? Were we truly living? Perhaps our sin was a kind of birth, a birth into the adventure of life. Perhaps God was in league with the serpent. Perhaps God and the serpent are one and the same. Raphael was our teacher while we lived in Paradise, but the serpent truly opened our eyes. Perhaps this is how life should be lived.

**EVE:** These are indeed strange thoughts.

Actors clear the stage.

[Scene 5]

CAIN is seated on a chair that suggests authority and respect. ENOCH is standing.

**ENOCH:** Father, there is unrest. Some say that your mercy toward the Cimmerians is weakness, the softness of a woman, not acceptable in one who governs a city and leads an army.

**CAIN:** They must learn otherwise, Enoch. We must show mercy. We must forgive the Cimmerians their foolish attempt to conquer Nod. We must teach them to live in peace with us, to join our trading caravans.

**ENOCH:** Of those who govern cities and nations, few think as you do. Is this because of Abel? Is this your atonement?

**CAIN:** This is what the angel Raphael taught my parents, it is what my parents taught me—and Abel also. As Abel died from the blow I struck, he forgave me. So, how can I not extend mercy and forgiveness to others? How can I not teach these things?

**ENOCH:** I understand, Father.

The End

[🙞 Link back to Appendix B TOC 🙜](#_Bitter_Cantaloupe_Page)

# The Spaghetti Crisis

A 10-minute play by David K. Farkas

Version 09-15-23

I place this play in the public domain. Anyone is welcome to distribute, perform, modify, or expand upon the script of this play. – David K. Farkas, 2020.

### Characters:

Chef Henri

Maître d' Simone

### Setting:

In a small gourmet restaurant in Paris, CHEF HENRI, facing upstage, is sautéing with a skillet and a cooking utensil. Seated in the restaurant is an American family, who will not be seen or heard. Later Simone will speak with Hisham, the sous-chef, who will also remain unseen and unheard.

🙜

[Scene 1]

SIMONE enters the kitchen.

**SIMONE:** Chef Henri . . . A problem. I seated a couple. They did not have a reservation, but we had an empty table that I wanted to fill. They have a child.

**HENRI:** This is not good . . . Is the child causing trouble? How old is this child?

**SIMONE:** She is a little girl. Very pretty. Maybe seven years old. She is quiet.

**HENRI:** And the parents? They must be Americans. They are OK?

**SIMONE:** They seem OK. Yes . . . Americans.

**HENRI:** It would be Americans who would do this thing—bring a child to a restaurant like ours. They want a fine dinner?—good. But they should have arranged with their hotel for someone to look after the child. Still, we will get through this. *(With sardonic laughter.)* Do they think we have a children’s menu here?

**SIMONE:** They did not ask for a children’s menu.

**HENRI:** Have they ordered?

**SIMONE:** Yes, Chef, that is the problem.

**HENRI:** What is the problem?

**SIMONE:** The little girl. She wants a plate of plain spaghetti. Nothing else.

**HENRI:** Why, we can do that. A little butter sauce. The girl will like it. This is a custom order, but we will charge the price of an hors d’oeuvre. We will be very fair to them.

**SIMONE:** Not quite so easy. The little girl was very specific—and very definite. She said “plain . . . spaghetti.”

**HENRI:** OK. Just a little olive oil. We can get through this.

**SIMONE:** I whispered this to the mother. She said olive oil will not work. The girl—Madelynn—she can tell when there is oil or butter. It must be absolutely plain, totally plain, from the boiling water to the plate. The mother says the girl will refuse the spaghetti if it is anything but absolutely plain.

**HENRI:** This I cannot do. The parents, what did they order?

**SIMONE:** They ordered adequately. The man wants the chicken cordon bleu. The woman wants the duck à l'orange. They chose the wrong wine. Didn’t ask, just chose badly, but we’re used to that.

**HENRI:** The little girl. She is sitting quietly? . . . I will *do* this. (Gazes upward.) I hope my Father is not looking down on me tonight from Heaven.

SIMONE exits. The actor playing Henri leaves the stage.

[Scene 2]

HENRI is beating the contents of a bowl with a whisk. SIMONE enters.

**SIMONE:** Chef Henri. I am so sorry. They are back!

**HENRI:** What do you mean? Who is back?

**SIMONE:** The Americans, with the little girl, who were here last evening. They are back! And the girl is with them.

**HENRI:** How could this be? All the fine restaurants in this city. So many memorable dining experiences! And they are back here a second time?

**SIMONE:** They said last night’s meal was delicious, so they wanted to come back.

**HENRI:** And the girl? She wants plain spaghetti?

**SIMONE:** Yes, she wants plain spaghetti. That is what she wants—nothing else. I told the Americans I would ask if you will do this. The man said, “You did it las*t* night. What’s the problem?”

**HENRI:** Mon Dieu! He thinks he is back at home. At a Denny’s! I do not serve plain spaghetti—not twice—not for anyone! They should have known better. You tell them that. If they want to eat here, I will put some oil, some butter, some tomato sauce—something!—on the girl’s spaghetti. Or they must leave. And another thing: we do not allow children to nibble from their parents’ plates.

**SIMONE:** I don’t think this is a nibbling child. She ate her whole plate of spaghetti last night.

**HENRI:** They must leave. That is all.

**SIMONE:** No. You own the back of the house. I own the front of the house. If I tell them to leave, there may be a ruckus. If not the little girl, then the father. Maybe the mother too.

**HENRI:** I own the back of the house. I also own the entire restaurant. Remember that, Simone. They leave!

CHEF HENRI turns abruptly and exits. SIMONE takes a few steps and looks offstage to address Hisham.

**SIMONE:** Hisham, I need a favor. Get ready to serve up a plate of plain spaghetti. Plain. No butter. No oil. Nothing at all. I’ll come back and tell you when I will need it. Hide what you’re doing. If Chef Henri comes by, he cannot see the spaghetti . . . Merci, Hisham.

SIMONE turns away from Hisham and exits to the front of the house.

[Scene 3]

CHEF HENRI stands alone at his chef’s station, holding a slip of paper. SIMONE enters in a leisurely manner and walks as she intends to cross the stage.

**HENRI:** *(Waives the slip of paper with an accusatory air.)* Simone! Something is very suspicious. Yesterday, the Americans—with the girl—they ordered a grated carrot salad and a green salad with Dijon vinaigrette dressing. Tonight the exact same salad orders. Also, one of the entrees, the duck a à l'orange, is the same as last night. There is no little girl in my restaurant—you promise? I can go out and see for myself!

**SIMONE:** No, no, Chef. No little girl, no Americans. They are gone. Just as you instructed. This couple is from New Zealand. It is just a coincidence.

**HENRI:** A couple from New Zealand. OK.

**SIMONE:** Chef Henri, when will you plate their entrees?

**HENRI:** Seventeen minutes. We run just a little slow tonight. That is OK?

**SIMONE:** That is OK.

CHEF HENRI turns and exits. SIMONE approaches where Hisham is working offstage.

**SIMONE:** Hisham, I’ll need the spaghetti in 17 minutes. Put it on a plate. Nothing else. That’s right. Nothing else, just spaghetti on a plate. And remember: Do not let Chef Henri see any of this. I’ll just swoop by and grab the plate . . . Thank you, Hisham. Je t'aime, mon ami!

SIMONE steps away from Hisham and walks toward where the American family is seated offstage. We hear SIMONE addressing the American couple.

**SIMONE:** (Smiling graciously.) Yes, your order is in. Chef Henri is happy to prepare “plain spaghetti” for the little girl.

SIMONE abandons her normal professional demeanor.

**SIMONE:** You do not know, but we had quite a “spaghetti crisis” in the kitchen tonight. If you are in Paree tomorrow night, please . . . please . . . do not come back a third time to this restaurant!

The End

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# The Robin

A 10-minute play by David K. Farkas

Version 09-15-23

I place this play in the public domain. Anyone is welcome to distribute, perform, modify, or expand upon the script of this play. – David K. Farkas,

This script is only a template. It should be rewritten and fully customized by any family or family-like group that is performing the play. New character names should be used. The designations “Mom” and “Dad” can be replaced by the names of other adults who take care of the two children. The backyard setting and any other circumstances can be customized as well. A simple table will suffice for the kitchen counter.

In this script, the (very simple) stage directions are meant to be spoken. Children, I have learned, enjoy speaking stage directions.

### Characters:

“Jonah”: Played by a child who is older than “Hazel.”  
“Hazel”: Jonah’s sibling or other family member.  
Mr. Robin: Played by anyone. Never actually seen.  
Narrator: Played by anyone. The Narrator reads the stage directions.  
Alexa: Played by anyone.

🙜

NARRATOR: Scene 1. Jonah and Hazel are in their backyard. Hazel sees a robin on the ground.

HAZEL: Jonah! Look, a robin.

NARRATOR: Jonah walks over and looks closely.

JONAH: The robin must be hurt in some way.

HAZEL: What should we do?

JONAH: Go inside and find Mom or Dad. Say that we found a bird that doesn’t seem to be able to fly. There’s an old bird cage in the garage. Maybe that can be a house for the bird until he gets better.

HAZEL: How do you know it’s a boy bird? Maybe it’s a girl bird.

JONAH: Good point. How about if we decide that this robin is a boy bird, and tomorrow we can write our own play, and that play can be about a girl bird. OK?

HAZEL: OK. I’ll tell Mom or Dad about Mr. Robin and tell them our plan. I’ll be right back.

NARRATOR: Hazel exits. Jonah looks closely at Mr. Robin.

ROBIN: Tweet. Tweet.

JONAH: Don’t worry, Mr. Robin. We’ll take care of you.

ROBIN: Tweet. Tweet.

NARRATOR: Hazel enters carrying the bird cage. She sets it on the ground.

HAZEL: Dad says we can keep the robin in the bird cage until the robin can fly.

ROBIN: Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet.

HAZEL: I think he likes us. I think he knows we want to help him.

JONAH: Great! I’ll find a stick. He can stand on the stick, and we’ll lift him to the cage.

HAZEL: OK

NARRATOR: Jonah steps away and returns holding a stick.

HAZEL: You’re going to live with us for a little while. Until you’re feeling better. We’ll get worms for you. If you want, you can even have some quesadilla.

ROBIN: Tweet. Tweet.

NARRATOR: Hazel and Jonah help the robin step on the stick, and they help him get into the bird cage.

ROBIN: Tweet. Tweet.

NARRATOR: Jonah and Hazel carry the bird cage into their house and set it down on the kitchen counter.

ROBIN: Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet.

JONAH: Alexa, what did Mr. Robin just say?

ALEXA: Do you want to know how long it will take to drive to South America? I can help with that.

JONAH: Alexa, Stop!

ROBIN: Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet.

JONAH: Alexa! What . . . did . . . the . . . robin . . . say?

ALEXA: The robin said, “Thank you for taking me inside. I crash-landed into a big branch, and I’m not ready to fly. I was afraid a raccoon was going to eat me, but now I feel safe.”

HAZEL: We will take good care of you, Mr. Robin, until you are ready to fly. Also, I will draw pictures of you, which you can keep.

ALEXA: Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet.

ROBIN: (Responding to Alexa.) Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Hazel. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Hazel.

ALEXA: Hazel. Mr. Robin says thank you, and he would very much like to see the pictures you draw of him.

HAZEL: Alexa, does the robin want to eat fresh worms, a quesadilla, or maybe some peanuts?

ALEXA: Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet

ROBIN: Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet.

ALEXA: Mr. Robin definitely does not want a quesadilla. He likes worms. He’s never had a peanut. He’d like to try one.

HAZEL: OK.

NARRATOR: End of Scene 1. A few days have passed. Scene 2 begins. Hazel and Jonah are both looking through the cage at Mr. Robin.

HAZEL: Mr. Robin is looking a lot better this morning.

JONAH: Yes, he’s hopping around in his cage. I think he’s ready to be set free.

ROBIN: Tweet. Tweet. Hazel. Jonah. Tweet. Tweet. Jonah Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Jonah. Tweet. Tweet. Hazel. Tweet. Tweet. Hazel Tweet. Tweet. Jonah. Hazel. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet. Tweet.

ALEXA: Mr. Robin says, “I feel very good this morning. Hazel, Jonah—thank you so much for taking care of me.” He says he can’t be your pet robin and live in the cage, because he’s a wild bird. But he is going to make his home in your backyard so that you can see him and say hello. He says he will always be your friend.

The End

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