

ONE NIGHT AT THE FIDELITY

A Short Play

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

OFFICER HILL (Age 50-70)

FRANK (Age 30-50)

LEONARD (Age 50-70)

ONE NIGHT AT THE FIDELITY

SCENE ONE

SCENE: A jail house in Cleveland, Ohio.

AT RISE: LEONARD lies crumpled under a blanket in a jail cell.

TIME: An August afternoon. 1971.

(FRANK and OFFICER HILL enter and move to LEONARD'S cell)

OFFICER HILL

Here he is.

FRANK

(Disgusted)

Ugh! That's him alright.

OFFICER HILL

This is your father?

FRANK

(Embarrassed)

Yep, that's my dear old Dad.

OFFICER HILL

Glad to hear it.

FRANK

Why's that?

OFFICER HILL

We'd almost given up hope.

FRANK

I'm sorry...

OFFICER HILL

For what?

FRANK

I mean... I'm sorry for whatever trouble he caused you.

OFFICER HILL

Naw, he was no real trouble...

FRANK

I'll be happy to pay his fines or whatever. What exactly are the charges against him?"

OFFICER HILL

We actually didn't bring up any charges. There are no fines to pay.

FRANK

Oh, okay. Even better.

OFFICER HILL

I'm just happy that we were able to find you.

FRANK

Yeah, me too...

OFFICER HILL

And I'm happy that you'll be taking him away.

FRANK

But can I ask you... I mean... if he's not been charged with anything...what' he doing here? What's he done?

OFFICER HILL

Oh, sorry. I thought you knew. I thought the others had told you...

FRANK

No...

OFFICER HILL

The other night, your father walked into the Fidelity Inn... you know... that bar over on 117th street...

FRANK

Yeah, yeah...I know it. And when was this?

OFFICER HILL

The night before last... Thursday night.

FRANK

Well, that's not a surprise. He usually stops by the Fidelity on Thursday nights...

OFFICER HILL

And why is that?

FRANK

That's his pay day and it's like his newly found funds are burning a hole in his pocket. He can't wait to drink that week's earnings.

OFFICER HILL

Ahh...

FRANK

So, what? Did he pick a fight or something? It wouldn't be the first time...

OFFICER HILL

No. And I doubt his performance Thursday night was anything like those of the past.

FRANK

What do you mean?

OFFICER HILL

Well, I can't imagine that any of his other Fidelity Inn visits were anything like what he pulled this week. I would have heard about it. The whole town would have heard about it.

FRANK

Oh God, what did he do this time?

OFFICER HILL

This time... he walked into the joint... wearing only a smile...

FRANK

What do you mean?

OFFICER HILL

I mean... he was naked as a jaybird... in the altogether... bare-assed naked.

FRANK

Oh, geez Louise!

OFFICER HILL

And he was talking like a crazy man.

FRANK

Oh no...

OFFICER HILL

No, let me rephrase that. He wasn't talking...he was screaming.

FRANK

He was screaming?

OFFICER HILL

Yeah, an earsplitting... shrieking squealing apparently ...like a lunatic.

FRANK

Oh geez...

OFFICER HILL

And he had a little black box under his arm...

FRANK

He had a little black box?

OFFICER HILL

Yeah, a radio, I guess.

FRANK

Probably so...

OFFICER HILL

Some new-fangled model, I reckon. I couldn't make head nor tail of it, so I just left it alone.

FRANK

And he was talking crazy? What was he saying?

OFFICER HILL

He said, "I'm a visitor from the Planet Fidelius"

FRANK

What!?!

OFFICER HILL

So, Jerry, the bartender decided to play along.

FRANK

How so?

OFFICER HILL

Jerry says to him, Planet Fidelius?!? I've never heard of it. Mars, Jupiter, Saturn...these I've heard of...but I don't know Fidelius from Uranus!"

(FRANK snickers)

OFFICER HILL

Then your dad says, "Take me to your President! Or maybe it was, "Take me to your leader!". Yeah, that's it! Like in those old '50's sci-fi movies. "Take me now!" he says.

Oh, Jesus! I can't believe this...

FRANK

So, by this point, Jerry...

OFFICER HILL

Jerry?

FRANK

Jerry, the bartender...

OFFICER HILL

Oh, right. Sorry. Go on...

FRANK

So, by this point, Jerry, the bartender, is sure your father is one fry short of a Happy Meal...and he starts getting worried about the other folks in the bar.

OFFICER HILL

Understandably.

FRANK

So, he pulls his gun out from under the bar and starts screaming at your dad until your dad goes running out of the joint ranting even more loudly than before.

OFFICER HILL

Oh my God! Damn! He's done crazy stuff before...but nothing like this...

FRANK

But that's not the end of it...

OFFICER HILL

What do you mean?

FRANK

After he left the Fidelity... still naked as a jaybird...he ran over to The Variety... you know, the theatre on Lorain Avenue...

OFFICER HILL

Yeah, yeah... at 118th street. I know it well.

FRANK

And once he arrived at The Variety...he ran bare-assed naked in front of old Mildred... you know, the one who sits outside... in the ticket booth.

FRANK

Yes, I know Mildred. She's been there for like a hundred years...

OFFICER HILL

Yeah...well when old Mildred got a look at your naked old man...she nearly passed out.

FRANK

Understandably...

OFFICER HILL

Then your Pops entered the theatre...running through that huge marble outer lobby...

FRANK

Yes, I know that lobby...with the giant crystal chandelier...

OFFICER HILL

Yes and his screams echoed so much in that hallowed hall, you could hear him out on the street.

FRANK

I can imagine.

OFFICER HILL

Then he reaches Fat Benny, the doorman/ticket taker at the other end of the lobby. Fat Benny tried to stop him... but you can imagine how futile that was...

FRANK

Oh yeah, Fat Benny is huge. He can barely raise his arm to take your ticket...

OFFICER HILL

Next, he ran past Roberta at the concession stand...past Henry, the usher standing at the back near the water fountain...and straight down the center aisle of the theatre and onto to the stage.

FRANK

But wasn't there a movie going on...

OFFICER HILL

Yeah, The French Connection...

FRANK

Right! I saw it there...but that was weeks ago...

OFFICER HILL

Yeah, it's been held over for weeks.

FRANK

Sorry...go on..

OFFICER HILL

And as he's standing center-stage...screaming his lungs out... "I'm from the planet Fidelius!!"... "Take me to you leader!"... finally, Sargent Jenkins and the boys from out front, come onto the stage, handcuff him and bring him in.

FRANK

What a nightmare! But where did the clothes come from.

OFFICER HILL

Just some old stuff we had in one of the lockers. I knew right away that he was not in his right mind because I had to show him how to put on the clothes.

FRANK

And he finally settled down?

OFFICER HILL

Truth be told, we had to give him a sedative. He threw such a huge fit when I tried to take the little black box...the radio... away from him...

FRANK

And he's been out ever since?

OFFICER HILL

No, no... he woke up...but he's been groggy since...

FRANK

And the box... the radio... where is that now?

OFFICER HILL

It's out front. So, is this the first time your dad has gone off his nut like this?

FRANK

Sadly, no.

OFFICER HILL

Is it always outer space?

FRANK

No, two months ago he thought he was Charles de Gaulle.

OFFICER HILL

De Gaulle!?!

FRANK

Yeah, he tried to buy a bus ticket from Cleveland to Paris. I finally found him in Toledo. It's amazing how far he got, but then the experts say that a mentally unbalanced person can do surprising things, sometimes.

OFFICER HILL

Unbalanced is putting it mildly. Sorry to say it, but I'm afraid your is a total whack-head.

(LEONARD starts to wake)

He seems to be coming to...

LEONARD

What's going on?

OFFICER HILL

Your son has come to take you home.

LEONARD

My what?

FRANK

Hey Dad. It's all going to be all right.

LEONARD

What is?

FRANK

Let's go now. I'll take you home. We'll get you a nice hot shower and a good meal.

LEONARD

But...

OFFICER HILL

You can pick up the black box at the front desk.

FRANK

Thank you, Officer. For everything.

(BLACKOUT)

(End of Scene One)

ONE NIGHT AT THE FIDELITY**SCENE TWO**

SCENE: A dark empty room with two chairs.

AT RISE: FRANK and LEONARD sit on the chairs facing each other.

TIME: Fifteen minutes later.

FRANK

What the hell were you thinking?

LEONARD

Give me the box!

FRANK

I'll give you the box when you tell me...

LEONARD

Tell you what!?!

FRANK

What the hell would make you think pulling a stunt like that would be all right!

LEONARD

What's the big deal?

FRANK

It's a very big deal!

LEONARD

Yeah, well... I guess the alcohol really hit me this time...

FRANK

The alcohol always hits you! That's why we agreed you would stop drinking it.

LEONARD

Yeah, yeah.

FRANK

Now... again...what exactly did you tell them?

LEONARD

I told you!

FRANK

Okay...forget it. You'll tell me later.

LEONARD

Now give me the box! Give me the box!!!

FRANK

Okay, I will. But first you've got to change.

LEONARD

Obviously. Obviously, I have to change...but then again...we both do.

FRANK

Yes, of course. We both do. And then, we've got to get back to the ship.

LEONARD

No kidding...

FRANK

We were supposed to return three days ago!

LEONARD

Okay, fine. But you do realize...I need the box to change. You know that right? We both need the box to change.

FRANK

Oh, yeah right. Sorry.

(FRANK hands the box to LEONARD)

FRANK

Here you go.

(LEONARD punches a code into the box's keyboard)

(BLACKOUT)

(A loud whirring sound of an alien spaceship taking off is heard)

(END OF PLAY)