

THEATRICKS

A Ten-Minute Play

by

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CHARACTERS

(In Order of Appearance)

WAITER: Age 25: A Bobby's Broadway Brasserie waiter.

MATT: Age 55: A famous, prolific, but not terribly successful Broadway composer.

HANK: AGE 55: A famous, prolific, but not terribly successful Broadway playwright & lyricist.

MATRON: AGE 65: A society woman and Bobby's Broadway Brasserie patron.

ALBERT: Age 60: A famous, prolific, but not terribly successful Broadway producer.

SETTING: BOBBY'S BROADWAY BRASSERIE. A Joe Allen-type restaurant in NYC's theater district.

AT RISE: *MATT & HANK sit at the table downstage-right with piles of newspapers, wine bottles and two glasses. MATT & HANK have been drinking... heavily... for several hours.*

TIME: The wee hours of the morning following opening night.

THEATRICKS
SCENE ONE

(MATT and HANK sit staring into space and thinking to themselves. THE WAITER approaches their table)

WAITER

Can I get you gentlemen anything else?

MATT

Yes. Another round.

WAITER

(Incredulously)
Really!?!?

HANK

Yes! Really! How dare you! What impudence!

WAITER

Oh, I am sorry Mr. Henderson...I certainly didn't mean...

HANK

Stop talking! Just fetch the damned drinks! And from here on in waiter-boy...when you see our glasses are empty... you are to swiftly and silently bring the next round. You are to do this without hesitation. And you are to do this until one of us... no, until both of us... have passed out and are completely horizontal. You may then, and only then, call the authorities to have our limp, lifeless carcasses removed from the premises. Is *that* clear?

(THE WAITER nods)

Okay good! So why are you still standing here?

(THE WAITER EXITS)

MATT

Was that really necessary?

HANK

(Waving it off)
Oh Pfft! Read me the Times review again.

MATT

Why? You know what it says. Why are you torturing us?

HANK

Just read it! I want to make sure I understand the subtleties... his nuances...his subtext!

(MATT pulls The Times from the pile and reads aloud)

MATT

"Despite its brilliant score..."

HANK

That's right! It *IS* brilliant...you pompous, pretentious clown! Damn! Critics can be so damned...

MATT

Critical???

HANK

Yes. Keep reading.

MATT

"Despite its brilliant musical score, pithy lyrics and well-constructed book, the new work by Henderson and Coleman fails miserably on the Broadway stage. Once again the audience isn't buying what Henderson and Coleman are selling."

HANK

What does that even mean? How is that even possible???

MATT

Forget about it. It's a rag sheet. It means nothing!

HANK

It's the New York Times!

MATT

Nobody reads the Times!

HANK

Yeah, you're right. The guy's an idiot. A total moron. *(PAUSE)* But even so...how does "pithy" "brilliant" and "well-constructed add up to a miserable bomb?

(An older well-dressed woman approaches the table)

MATRON

Good evening, gentlemen. I am so sorry to bother you...

HANK

Then why are you bothering us?

MATT

Hank!

HANK

Leave us be!

MATRON

But you are Matt Coleman & Hank Henderson, right?

HANK

No, we are not! Now, please go away!

MATT

Yes, Madam, we are. I'm sorry. We're having a bad night.

MATRON

Yes, I thought you might be. I just read the Post review.

HANK

The Post review? It's out?

MATRON

Yes. I assumed that was why you were over here getting...

HANK

Totally shit-faced?

MATT

No, ma'am. We haven't seen The Post yet.

MATRON

Oh, well then, here take mine.

MATT

Thank you. That's very kind...

MATRON

My pleasure. And let me just say, no one deserves to be described in those terms! Good night gentlemen.

(MATRON exits. WAITER enters with a bottle of wine)

HANK

No, you incompetent dolt! We didn't order another bottle of wine. We moved onto the hard stuff hours ago. Remember?

WAITER

Yes, I do remember. The wine is from the couple over there. They said they just read the Wall Street Journal review and they feel just terrible for you both.

(WAITER exits)

HANK

Great! Great! Great! Great!

MATT

What's great?

HANK

We have become such pathetic losers that we now have total strangers buying us pity wine. We are done!

MATT

Nonsense! Come on! Pull yourself together! We've been here before. Lots of times. We can overcome this!

HANK

No, of course you're right.

MATT

Well of course! Our next show will be a huge hit!

HANK

No, when I said you're right, I meant we have been here before. Matt, we've been writing shows together for twelve years and have not had a single success.

MATT

Come on...we've had some successes!

HANK

Some "Artistic successes" but all..."box office failures"!

(WAITER enters)

HANK

WHAT NOW!?!?!?

WAITER

The gentleman who was seated at that table gave me this card and asked that I give it to you.

(MATT reads the business card)

MATT

Holy shit! That was Al King...the producer? That was Al King...The King of Broadway!

WAITER

Yes, the same. "No shit". He said you are to meet him at the Lambs Club tomorrow morning for breakfast. He said has a very important opportunity to discuss with you.

HANK

What opportunity!?! This sounds like a scam. Why wouldn't he have just approached us directly?

WAITER

Well, don't shoot the messenger but he said he was too afraid to approach you directly because of your loud, obnoxious, abusive, vulgar, disgusting and intoxicated state. He didn't want you to create yet another scene.

MATT

Okay, bring our check. I need to get Prince Charming here home, showered and sober. What time does he want us...

WAITER

Nine A.M...sharp.

HANK

Nine A.M.... in the morning!?! Who the hell is even awake at nine A.M. in the morning?

MATT

Everyone but you! Let's go!

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE TWO

(MATT AND HANK move their table to downstage-right to indicate they are now at THE LAMBS CLUB. THEY sit at the table waiting for ALBERT) It is 11:30 A.M. the next morning.

HANK

What's with this guy? He's gone to the john like three times already!

MATT

Nerves probably. You probably make him nervous.

HANK

How do I make him nervous?

MATT

Showing up forty-minutes late didn't help. I can't believe you left me alone with him for forty-minutes. Where the hell were you?

HANK

I'm sorry. This is new to me.

MATT

What is?

HANK

Waking up when the sun is still out. So when is he going to get to the subject at hand?

MATT

He's getting there. He's building up to it. You can't rush these types.

HANK

What types?

MATT

Producers. Keep in mind he has an opportunity for us and he seems very excited about it. So, when he finally gets to it, please try to conjure up some enthusiasm.

HANK

You give me the cue and I'll wet my pants.

(A WAITER brings a bottle of wine to the table)

WAITER

Pardon me Gentlemen...Welcome to the Lamb's Club.

HANK

Say... aren't you the waiter...

WAITER

Hmmm?

HANK

Oh never mind.

MATT

We're waiting for our host to return from the men's room and then we will order.

WAITER

Oh, I do so look forward to that moment. Meanwhile *(handing them the bottle of wine)* it's from the ladies in the corner booth. They told me to tell you they are so sorry.

(THE WAITER exits. MATT waves to the ladies)

MATT

Now listen Hank, I need you to behave today. We need this gig. We need a hit.

HANK

Seriously, this guy hasn't had a hit in a decade.

MATT

Seriously... Neither have we.

(ALBERT enters and sits at the table)

ALBERT

Sorry about that, fellas. Now where were we?

HANK

I think you were about to tell why you asked us here.

ALBERT

Yes, right. Well, in the forty-five minutes that we were waiting for you to show up...Matt was sharing with me that the two of you want to finally write something that will appeal to an audience. Something people will actually want to pay money to see.

HANK

(With a glare at HANK and then back to ALBERT)
Yes, but that's actually always been our goal...

ALBERT

Ha, ha! Well, I would have never guessed that! Oh, sorry...you were being serious. Well, anyway, I've studied the history of theater...well at least the history of box office revenues. What works and what doesn't. And I have one word for you. *(AFTER A BEAT)* Orphans!

HANK

I beg your pardon?

ALBERT

Orphans.

MATT

I think it's brilliant.

HANK

What is? I don't even understand it.

ALBERT

You do know what orphans are?

MATT

Albert says orphans always sell. Oliver. Annie. Matilda.

HANK

Was Matilda an orphan?

ALBERT

Wasn't she? Well, it doesn't matter. What does matter is that orphans sell.

MATT

Albert was telling me people come by the millions and they bring their millions of children.

ALBERT

That's right! Some of Broadway's greatest box office hits have been about orphans. It's a guaranteed sale. I mean...who doesn't love a singing, dancing orphan!?!

MATT

No one!

ALBERT

And when they are finished on Broadway...these orphan shows travel...and then eventually become movies. It is a no risk proposition.

MATT

And Albert has discovered that there is one orphan that has just come into public domain... so we can do whatever we want to her and we won't have to pay anybody anything!

HANK

And who is this lucky orphan?

MATT AND ALBERT

Pollyanna!

HANK

Pollyanna!?! And you want to produce this?

ALBERT

Absolutely. I'll sign a contract today!

HANK

You are willing to sign us...even before we even written it? You know that you want to produce it?

ALBERT

I am willing to sign you not only write the stage version...but also the screenplay version.

HANK

What's the catch?

ALBERT

Well...there is a catch.

ALBERT (Continued)

My new wife...Mrs. King the Eighth... put into our pre-nup, that I put her twelve-year-old daughter in a musical. And she wants to be Pollyanna.

MATT

Ah. And has she done anything before? Stage work I mean?

ALBERT

No, I don't believe so.

HANK

Has she ever been on a stage?

ALBERT

Not that I know of.

HANK

But can she act?

ALBERT

I don't know.

HANK

Can she sing?

ALBERT

I don't know. But you can teach her.

HANK

Wow. I don't know.

ALBERT

Look, I have no choice. I have to do this. It doesn't matter what it costs because it would be so much more expensive if I don't put her into a show. What do you have to lose?

HANK

Our reputations!?!

ALBERT

Oh, please!

MATT

Well, he's got a point there.

ALBERT

So, do we have a deal?

HANK

Okay, I'm game if you are.

MATT

Okay, we're in.

HANK

And you're sure Pollyanna isn't too sugary sweet for today's audiences?

ALBERT

Well, of course she's sweet. She's Polly-friggin'-Anna!

ALL

To Polly-friggin'-Anna!

(BLACKOUT)

END OF PLAY