

cAndI

A Short 10 Minute Play

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SYNOPSIS

On a long, lonely, late night drive home from a conference an abrasive business executive with a flask of alcohol shows us who he is.

CHARACTERS

DRIVER* a fast talking middle age business executive, self absorbed, in command

CANDI (pronounced 'Candy') the voice of the phone/GPS

* Not giving this character a name is intentional

Scene Opens

Scene is a late night drive from Nashville to Atlanta. The stage is black. A light comes on. It is not overhead, but is a dashboard light which reveals the face of the driver (or it could be a very narrow spot on the driver if a dashboard light is too problematic from a technical perspective). He's a businessman wearing a suit and loosened tie. The stage is never fully lit as he is driving late at night. Occasionally a single spotlight directly overhead passes by as a streetlight. We hear the hum of tires on the highway (which eventually fades as the dialogue starts). We only ever see part of the inside of the car including the car seat, steering wheel, and dashboard to which his cell phone/GPS is attached. Only the dashboard light ever shows his face. Man is wearing a Bluetooth earphone. There should be a feeling of extreme isolation as he never sees another car. The movement of the overhead streetlights reflects the speed of the car, faster on the highway, slower off, and can come to a stop when the car stops.

Driver has a Chinese carryout box in his lap. He finishes off an egg roll or shrimp rangoon and throws the box out the window (box should be attached to a fishing line. When man holds box out the window, person offstage should give a strong jerk of the fishing pole so the box flies out of his hand and off stage rapidly giving the illusion of a car moving fast)

For a moment nothing seems to happen other than the streetlights passing by (at highway speed) while the driver has his left hand on the top of steering wheel moving slightly back and forth. Suddenly we hear the female voice of his phone/GPS.

CANDI

Continue straight to stay on I-24 East.

(pause)

In one mile use the right 2 lanes to take exit 185A to merge onto I-75 South toward Atlanta.

DRIVER

(to CANDI)

Call Tobias Schmidt.

CANDI

Which number for Tobias Schmidt?

DRIVER

Cell.

CANDI

Calling Tobias Schmidt... cell.

DRIVER

(pause)

Toby, still at the hotel? Got what I needed, didn't really wanna stick around. Anything impress you? Most of it was shit.

(we only ever hear his side of the conversation, so there should be realistic pauses for the other side of the conversation; the voice of CANDI can sometimes overlap his conversation somewhat)

CANDI

Use the right 2 lanes to take exit 185A to merge onto I-75 South toward Atlanta.

DRIVER

One kid impressed me, though. Loved his app. Gonna call him tomorrow. Might go as high as 10,000 for it. No, I'm telling you, this app will be big.

CANDI

Merge left onto I-75 South toward Atlanta.

DRIVER

Worth millions! He's just a kid. He'll think \$10,000 is a fortune. I'll invite him to the office, give him the treatment. If he has other ideas that impress me, might even offer him a job. He gets salary and benefits... we OWN all his ideas.

CANDI

Right lane is ending, merge left.

DRIVER

(to himself)

Love that voice!

(to Toby)

No, ha, ha, not you... Candi.

(pause)

Oh, bullshit! Ha, ha, ha! You know, that reminds me of something that's been on my mind lately. These app voices? All pretty generic. You can program some variable preferences in them, accents, gender, whatever.

(pause)

No, I haven't tried Australian yet! But listen, they're still just some anonymous voice. What if they weren't? You ever hear of Majel Barrett? She was married to Gene Roddenberry. Yeah, Star Trek Gene Rodenberry. On the show she had some bit parts... a nurse in the first show, Troi's mother in Next Generation. But she was also the voice of the computers. ALL the computers in ALL the Star Trek series... movies, too!!! No, died a few years ago. But there's enough of her voice on record to synthesize a near perfect replica. Trekkies would go apeshit. Or how about Paul Bettany? He's JARVIS, Tony Starks' AI in all those Marvel movies. That's the biggest movie franchise on the damn planet! Whadya call those fans anyway? MCUBies? Ha, ha, ha!

CANDI

Call from home.

DRIVER

Hold on, 'nother call. It's the wife. No, just hold. Won't be long.

Hey, babe, can't talk long, Toby's on the other line. Talking convention business. What's up?

(pause)

An hour or so. I'll get there when I get there, OK? Look, just hold for a bit. I'll finish up with Toby.

Toby, still there? Good.

(pause)

Why fly? Nashville to Atlanta is just three hours. OK, three hours the way I drive, ha, ha! With all that security shit... takes more than three hours for a one hour flight. And I hate flying... all that recycled air. If there's a sick brat on the plane, everyone's got it by the time we land. And that's if you're lucky! If you're not, it's some damn foreigner with coronavirus!

(pulls a flask out of his jacket pocket and takes a swig)

Besides, I trust me more than the pilot. If I have to go to California, I'll fly, but not to Nashville. Holy shit! Just got a brain storm! An app voice... the perfect app voice!!! Stephen fucking Hawking! And the beauty of it? It's not really his voice!!! We wouldn't have to pay a fucking dime! Ha, ha!

(long pause)

Oh, shit... point taken. The voice is free, but the name isn't. If the estate's not on board... trolls out the wazoo!

(takes another swig)

Don't worry, she's on hold.

(long pause)

Thanks, I appreciate that. Don't know what the hell Stan was thinking giving Chanese the promotion. That job was mine. I deserved it. Well, she's not going to be my boss, thank God, though she may be yours.

(takes another swig)

Anything happen after I left? C'mon, out with it. No shit! Well, I'm glad I left! Standing room only, are you serious? No accounting for brains... total science fiction. Look, artificial intelligence is something that WE ARE going to create...

we ARE creating it. It's not gonna pop up on its own just 'cause some Jew hippy mathematician says a bunch of viruses are gonna get together. Look, internet... satellite systems... NOT as big as the ocean. And even if they were, so what?

(getting loud)

Life didn't start on its own. Wasn't an accident! That was God! God did that! So get real for Chris's sake!

(pause)

OK, OK, sorry. You're just telling me what happened, not preaching it yourself. My bad. Phew, you had me worried there for a second, Tobe.

(takes another swig)

Well, plenty of fodder for Monday morning. Guess I left Angie on hold long enough. Go sleep off that seminar. Or drink it off, ha, ha! Don't let it give you nightmares, Tobe. Total bullshit. Guy's just trying to get millions for a big book deal by riling people up. Hmmm, maybe I could do that! OK, see you Monday.

Angie.

(pause)

Angie? Wotthehell! CANDI, call home!

(takes another swig)

CANDI

Calling home.

DRIVER

I told you to hold, Angela. Don't ever hang up on me.

(he is not yelling at her, or threatening, but his calm and measured tone conveys the message that he wears the pants in the family; it's threatening without actually making a threat.)

Did Jesse like his present? Tell me what it is, so I'll know.

CANDI

There's an accident 10 miles ahead. Traffic is at a complete standstill. To go around, take the next exit on the right, routes 41/76 southeast to Tunnel Hill and Dalton State College.

DRIVER

Ah, shit! Give me a second while I get off the highway.

CANDI

Turn right onto route 41/76 southeast. Go 9 miles and turn right on route 201 Southwest/ Lafayette Road.

DRIVER

God bless you, Candi. Candi's got me on a detour... some accident up ahead. Kinda surprised, though. Haven't seen any other traffic for a half hour at least! How did Jesse's party go?

Don't be giving me shit about that. You know business comes first. I had to go to this convention. How else am I to, "keep you in the lifestyle to which you are accustomed?"

(quotes said in a lighter, mocking manner)

If it weren't for this job, you can kiss our Whitewater Creek house goodbye. One day this job will get us to Tuxedo Park! You want the kids to give up Carlisle Montessori, end up in some shitty public school? Didn't think so. I keep you in the lap of luxury babe... our own pool, designer dresses, jewelry, the country club, all your "ladies" groups. Wanna give up your Beemer? Then don't give me shit about the job.

(takes another swig, all the swigs are having an effect)

So who all was at the party?

CANDI

Turn right onto route 201 Southwest/Lafayette Road. Proceed 7 miles to Old Ringgold Road.

DRIVER

Uh-huh, uh-huh. The Jenkins... who are they? They're what? Shhheeeeeeit! See, now you should be happy I wasn't there. Don't care if they're nice. I woulda called the police when I saw them at the door. Sooner we get to Tuxedo Park, the better.

Huh, that's weird. Just went through another green light. Yeah, I get it. You're supposed to go through green lights. What's weird is I haven't seen a red light since I got off 75.

(long pause; to himself)

Haven't seen any other cars either.

(another pause)

There's another green light up ahead. Hold on a second.

(Slows down and stops at the green light. He is also under an overhead streetlight. He puts the car in park and gets out.)

Wait a minute. Will you wait a minute? Just shut the hell up for a second!

(long pause, light doesn't change)

Damn, it's still green. Jesus, why the hell am I looking a gift horse in the mouth?

(laughs at himself, feeling the alcohol)

Doo, doo, doo, doo, Doo, doo, doo, doo

(music from "The Twilight Zone")

Shit!

(gets back in the car and continues driving; this is the last time he passes under a streetlight and from here on he's only lit by the dashboard light or tight spot.)

Jesus! Where the hell are the streetlights? I'm really in the fucking boonies! So who ELSE was at the party?

CANDI

Turn right onto Old Ringgold Road. Proceed 3 miles to Gordon Springs Road.

DRIVER

You know who I'm talking about! Did Jesse invite Sarah? Did her dad show up? Yeah, I thought so. Bet that was sweet for him. Single dad at a party full of MILFs!

(loudly)

No, I'm not! You're all a bunch of mother hens over that sad sack piece of shit! You think he didn't pick one of them up at the party?

CANDI

Turn left on Gordon Springs Road.

DRIVER

I see the way he looks at the ladies... the way he... the way he looks at you. Don't give me that shit! The guy's a predator! Probably offed his own wife.

(last sentence said almost admiringly)

If I ever thought... you and him... well... God forbid you should have another accident on the staircase. But, that's not gonna happen. He wouldn't give you the time of day. You're stuck with me babe.

(takes another swig, there is a crashing sound)

Oh, Jesus! What the fuck? I just hit something! No, not an animal. Oh for Christ's sake, not a person! Just a roadblock or something. Some sign on it. I don't know what it said. Candi said to go this way, so it must be OK. Look, I'll be home whenever I get home. And you better be waiting up for me, Angela!

(short pause)

Wear something... nice!

(hangs up on her)

Well, Candi, it's just you and me now. Let's get home.

CANDI

Continue straight for the next three miles.

DRIVER

God I love that voice. Who are you, really? Toby says you're just some wrinkly old broad... naah, a voice that sexy's got to be a young babe. One of these days

(short pause, takes another swig and looks at the GPS)

I'm gonna find you.

CANDI

(very matter of factly with no inflection as she always speaks)

I don't like the way you treat your wife.

DRIVER

(looks at GPS as he is suddenly sober)

What?

(he looks out straight ahead and screams as light go out. Scream stops. A few seconds later we hear the sound of a crash and explosion. Stage is black, but there is a flickering yellow light of fire coming from offstage, then completely black, but with late night sounds of crickets, etc.)

The End

Note – actor should keep in mind that the character is drunk towards the end, but change is gradual.

If there is an outro song, it could be either 'It's More Fun to Compute' or 'Computer World' both by Kraftwerk. The former is only 60 seconds, so if you need more, go for the latter.