

ADVENTURES IN THE E.R.

by Scott Mullen

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SYNOPSIS: You never know what you might encounter in the E.R., from frantic hypochondriacs and a severed toe to a needy pregnant woman, foot-rub coupons and a food poisoning mystery.

DURATION: 90 minutes.

TIME: Present.

SETTING: An emergency room. At minimum a row of chairs, then whatever set elements you want to add from there.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3-14 females, 2-9 males, 1-2 either)

THE GREATEST REALITY SHOW EVER

BRYN (f) 20s-60s. Irritated and not feeling well.
(33 lines)
 VERA (f) 20s-60s. Easily entertained. *(53 lines)*
 DEB (f) 20s-60s. Her best friend. *(47 lines)*
 NURSE (m/f) *(3 lines)*

BUG

GARY (m) 20s. An agitated man. *(71 lines)*
 BONNIE (f) Early 20s. A hospital intern. *(72 lines)*

LUCKY TOE

ANGELA (f) 20s. Frazzled. Dressed up for a date.
(58 lines)
 STAN (m) 40s-50s. Her dad. Working class.
 Arm bandaged. *(61 lines)*
 NURSE (m/f) *(1 line)*

THE BABY BUDDY

KYLE (m) 20s-40s. Quiet and shy. *(85 lines)*

MARIA (f)20s-30s. 9 months pregnant. Not quiet or shy. (88 lines)

BELLYACHERS

DOUG (m)30s-60s. A man with stomach pain. (63 lines)
 TRUDY (f).....30s-60s. Doug's wife. (67 lines)
 LENNY (m)30s-60s. Another man in pain. (32 lines)
 STACY (m).....30s-60s. A woman in pain. (10 lines)
 NURSE (m/f)(6 lines)

I JUST SNEEZED WITH A BIG MOUTHFUL OF COFFEE AND I DO NOT RECOMMEND IT

RICKY (m)20s-30s. A shy hypochondriac. (70 lines)
 HELEN (f)20s-30s. A slightly less-shy hypochondriac. (64 lines)
 NURSE (m/f)(2 lines)

THE OPEN GATE

APRIL (f)20s-30s. A stressed woman. (39 lines)
 SEAN (m)20s-30s. Her husband. (41 lines)
 NURSE (m/f)(1 line)

MR. WRONG

MOLLY (f)20s-40s. Outgoing. (85 lines)
 WAYNE (m)20s-40s. Intrigued. (79 lines)

COUPONS

MILDRED (f)50s-70s. An aging woman. (39 lines)
 HENRY (m)20s-30s. Her handsome son. (31 lines)
 EILEEN (f).....40s-70s. A woman who needs a foot rub. (39 lines)
 SHARON (f)40s-70s. Her friend. (31 lines)
 NURSE (m/f)(4 lines)

CAST NOTE: The NURSE who appears in six of the plays, can be split into two nurses if desired.

PRODUCTION NOTES: All the action takes place in a row of three chairs. Any other set design is the choice of the production. You do not have to do all nine plays if you don't want to.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES: There is a lot of odd stuff that happens. Have fun with it.

PROPS

THE GREATEST REALITY SHOW EVER:

- ☐ book
- ☐ bags
- ☐ a small notebook and pen
- ☐ snacks

BUG:

- ☐ purse
- ☐ thin sweater
- ☐ half a candy bar
- ☐ bottle of soda
- ☐ bottle of water

LUCKY TOE:

- ☐ rabbit's foot
- ☐ a lump of plastic that could contain a toe

THE BABY BUDDY:

- ☐ headphones
- ☐ backpack
- ☐ coat
- ☐ small bag

COUPONS:

- ☐ three purses
- ☐ a bunch of homemade paper coupons
- ☐ money

THE GREATEST REALITY SHOW EVER

AT START: *BRYN is seated on a chair, trying to read a book. Occasionally she winces in pain. Entering are VERA and DEB, who each carry a bag. They take the empty seats next to BRYN and look around the room.*

VERA: Good crowd today.

DEB: A lot of new faces. Though Wendy is here.

VERA: (*Loud.*) Is it the gallstones again Wendy?

BRYN looks at them, irritated. VERA digs a small notebook and a pen out of her bag. She flips the notebook open.

VERA: Okay. We are open for business. Let's start with... the guy in the red flannel shirt.

DEB: That's easy. He's in a sling. Made out of... two pillow cases tied together? That doesn't seem comfortable.

VERA: You get first guess. But you need to be specific.

DEB: Broken radius. No, ulna. Broken ulna.

VERA: Could be. I'll guess broken elbow.

DEB: Really?

VERA: Just a hunch.

VERA writes it all down. BRYN is watching them now.

VERA: Next. Woman in the green?

DEB: She's in a lot of pain.

VERA: I'm going to say kidney stones.

DEB: I don't know. Could be appendix.

VERA: You think she'd still be out here if it was an appendix?

DEB: They are hard to diagnose sometimes. Look at her pain face.
That's my guess. Appendix.

VERA: All right...

VERA writes it down.

BRYN: Excuse me.

DEB and VERA look at BRYN. She isn't happy.

BRYN: Are you seriously betting on what people in the E.R. are suffering from?

VERA: Yes.

DEB: Yes we are.

BRYN: Stop doing that!

DEB: *(To VERA.)* I think this one has a UTI.

VERA: Is that your guess?

DEB: Maybe.

DEB studies BRYN.

VERA: You're not allowed to look for her reaction.

DEB: Okay, that's my guess.

BRYN: I'm not here for a UTI!

VERA: *(To DEB.)* That's a miss for you.

DEB: It happens. She could still have one though.

VERA: True.

DEB: Make your guess and we'll move on to the next.

BRYN: It's none of your business why I'm here! In fact, there are regulations against you even asking!

VERA: Maybe it's just a bad case of gas.

DEB: Is that your guess?

BRYN: It's not gas! I'm going to report you to a nurse.

VERA: There's nothing illegal about sitting in an E.R. speculating about why other people are here.

DEB: An E.R. is people-watching heaven! I'm willing to bet every single person in this room is looking over here, trying to figure out what you have. What else is there to do in an E.R. waiting room?
(Loud.) She doesn't have a UTI! Or gas!

BRYN: Stop!

DEB: The E.R. is the greatest reality show ever. Most reality shows, they edit things and tell people what to say. But the E.R. is raw, and real.

VERA: It's America.

DEB: Sometimes chairs get thrown.

VERA: Plus remember that guy who had an inflatable flamingo stuck up his butt?

DEB: We've got the perfect chairs too. We can keep an eye on where the people check in—

DEB points to her right, where everyone coming into the E.R. will enter from—

VERA: And we have a view of all other seats. And all the patients.

DEB: And we brought snacks.

DEB pulls something out of her bag. Offers it to BRYN.

BRYN: I don't want snacks in the E.R.!

VERA: Snacks make everything better. Oooo! Look at that guy over there. In the T-shirt and tattoos.

DEB looks, intrigued.

DEB: What's going on with him?

DEB takes a bite of her snack.

BRYN: It's none of your business what's going on with him! How do you even know if you're right? These patients disappear, you never learn what their diagnosis is.

DEB: We have a nurse who judges our guesses.

VERA: She doesn't tell us when we are right or wrong, just the final score. So no regulations are broken!

DEB: Maybe he's got really bad diarrhea.

VERA: Maybe he got stabbed!

DEB: Is that your guess?

VERA: I don't know. I don't see any blood.

BRYN: Stop! How would you like it if I was all up in your business, asking you why you are here?

VERA: See if you can guess.

BRYN: I don't want to guess! It's none of my business!

VERA: Guess. If you're right, we'll leave.

BRYN studies VERA.

BRYN: Stomach ache?

VERA: You think that I'm presenting as stomach ache? That would be much more like this.

VERA acts out someone with a really bad stomach ache. DEB joins her. They are wailing in pain, and then they start laughing.

BRYN: I'm not going to guess any more.

DEB: You would have been wrong anyway.

VERA: We're not here to see a doctor.

DEB: We don't believe in hospitals. Too many people go in, and they don't come out.

VERA: They die. All the time.

BRYN: You can't not believe in hospitals!

VERA: I'm pretty sure I can not believe in anything I want.

BRYN: Medicine works.

DEB: Does it?

VERA: We're alternative medicine people.

DEB: It's served us fine so far.

VERA: There's not a single thing that a poultice can't fix.

DEB: Vera's got on a poultice right now. Show her your poultice.

VERA: She doesn't need to see my poultice.

BRYN: Aha! See? Certain things are too private.

VERA: Oh, I don't care if you know I have a poultice. I just don't want to bring it out into the air. There is a smell.

DEB: That does happen with poultices.

VERA: But if you insist—

VERA starts taking off her shoe.

BRYN: I'm not insisting!

VERA'S shoe hits the floor. She tugs at her sock. BRYN flinches back.

BRYN: What is that smell?

DEB: Poultice.

VERA: Special herbs and spices.

The sock comes off, revealing something discolored on VERA'S foot.

BRYN: What is that?!?

VERA: I think it's looking better.

DEB: It might be less green today.

BRYN: You need to get that looked at!

VERA: I'm not here to see a doctor! My friend Madge put the poultice on. She changed it yesterday. She says it's healing.

DEB: Madge knows what she's doing.

BRYN: Does it hurt?

VERA: Sometimes things hurt, until they don't. It's not too bad.

BRYN: It looks terrible.

VERA: It's fine.

DEB: It does look a little—bigger.

VERA: It's not.

DEB: Are you sure?

BRYN: (To DEB.) Poke it with your finger.

DEB: What? Why?

BRYN: To see how bad it is.

VERA: It's fine, Deb. Don't poke it.

BRYN: Poke it.

*DEB looks uncertain. She finally pokes the wound with her finger.
VERA wails.*

VERA: Owwwwwww! Fine! It hurts!

BRYN: We need to get her seen by a doctor.

VERA: No doctors!

DEB: It does look bad.

VERA: Madge says it's healing!

DEB: Madge flunked out of dental school.

VERA: But she has picked up a lot on the streets!

DEB: Vera!

VERA: If I go in there, they are going to chop off my foot. I like my foot!

BRYN: They'll save your foot.

DEB: She might be right.

VERA: Whose side are you on?

DEB: The best times of my life are hanging out with you. Whether it's here or at McDonald's, (*To BRYN.*) which is the Second Greatest Reality Show ever (*To VERA.*) I need you in my life. Ever since Archie died—you're my rock.

VERA: Awwwww.

DEB: Say you will.

VERA: Fine.

The NURSE comes out.

NURSE: Bryn Parker?

BRYN: Here. But can you take my friend back first? She really needs to be seen by someone.

The NURSE looks.

NURSE: Holy crap.

VERA: It's feeling better.

DEB: Vera—

VERA: Fine.

NURSE: Okay. Come on.

The NURSE helps VERA up, and VERA limps off with her.

VERA: If I die, cremate me and dump my ashes off the lighthouse!

DEB: You aren't going to die!

The NURSE and VERA exit left. DEB looks at BRYN.

DEB: Is she?

BRYN: She's not going to die.

DEB: Why are you here?

BRYN: Ovarian cysts.

DEB: Ouch.

BRYN: I'm not going to die either. What else do you have in the bag?

DEB shows her. BRYN picks something out. She unwraps it. Tastes it. Then she looks off to the left.

BRYN: So what do you think the woman in the blue pantsuit has?

DEB: I don't know. She looks unhappy. And alone.

BRYN: Let's see if she wants some snacks.

BRYN gets up, and heads left. DEB grabs the bags and follows. They disappear offstage.

END OF PLAY

DO NOT COPY

BUG

AT START: *GARY enters and sits in a chair. He looks agitated, tilting his head, trying to knock something out of his left ear. Clearly, it's driving him crazy, though it's funny to watch.*

Entering is BONNIE, purse slung around her neck, wearing a thin sweater. She eyes him, then impulsively sits down in the empty chair to his left.

BONNIE: Hi! My name is Bonnie, and I'm an intern here in the E.R.
You look like you need some help.

GARY: Tell me if you see something pop out.

GARY bangs on the right side of his head again. BONNIE looks.

BONNIE: Nothing.

GARY bangs on his head some more.

BONNIE: You need to stop doing that.

GARY: I know there's something in there. I can feel it.

BONNIE: A bug?

GARY: Don't say that word! That's disgusting.

BONNIE: Bug?

GARY: I don't want to have a bug in my ear!

BONNIE: What else could it be, though?

GARY: Maybe it's just some water.

BONNIE: Moving around?

GARY: Water can move around.

GARY bangs on his head again. BONNIE watches.

BONNIE: Nothing. Do you want me to look?

GARY: Are you a doctor?

BONNIE: I'm pre-med.

GARY: Just pre?

BONNIE: Maybe pre-med. I'm trying to figure out if medicine is a passion! That's why I'm working here!

GARY: How's that going?

BONNIE: It's my first day. You're my first patient!

GARY: Great.

BONNIE: I chose you because I didn't want someone who was bleeding or had actual pain.

GARY: I have actual pain!

BONNIE: You have a bug in your ear.

GARY: Don't say that word!

BONNIE: Sorry.

GARY: Maybe I'll wait for a real doctor.

BONNIE: I know how to look in an ear. What's your name?

GARY: Gary.

BONNIE: Hold still Gary, I'm going to look into your ear.

BONNIE grabs his head.

GARY: Hey!

BONNIE: Shhh. Don't move.

BONNIE looks into his ear. She moves her eye closer, and closer, until it's right next to his head.

GARY: Well?

BONNIE: It's too dark.

BONNIE releases GARY'S head.

GARY: Don't you have one of those lights for looking in ears?

BONNIE: No. Wait! My cellphone has a light!

BONNIE fumbles around in her purse and pulls out her cellphone. She turns on the light. Points the phone at GARY'S ear. She tries to look around the phone.

GARY: Well?

BONNIE: I can't see, the phone is in the way. Wait! I'll take a video!

BONNIE thumbs some icons on her phone. Puts it back up to GARY'S ear. Finally, she takes it down. Fiddles with the phone. GARY leans over.

GARY: Let me see.

BONNIE: There's your ear.

They both suddenly flinch big.

GARY: Ah!!!!

BONNIE: Whoa.

GARY: What was that?!?

BONNIE: I don't know. It was alive though. Definitely some sort of—

GARY: Don't say the b-word.

BONNIE: I think maybe it's a cockroach.

GARY: No! Why would you say that?! That's worse than the b-word!

GARY takes the phone. Looks at it. BONNIE leans over.

GARY: That's not a cockroach.

BONNIE: It could be...

GARY: I don't have cockroaches. I'm a very clean person.

BONNIE: Maybe your wife.

GARY: I'm not married.

BONNIE: Girlfriend?

GARY: I live alone! Just me! No cockroaches!

BONNIE: Well, there's something in there.

GARY: The doctor will take it out.

BONNIE: How soon do you really think a doctor is going to see you?

You are on the bottom of the E.R. totem pole. They are taking back all the stab victims and ebola patients before they ever get to you.

GARY: I don't think there are any ebola patients here.

BONNIE: Do you even have insurance?

GARY: No.

BONNIE: That's a big bill they'll stick you with. You're better off letting me help you.

GARY: You're an intern!

BONNIE: Maybe I can lure it out with some food.

BONNIE digs in her purse.

GARY: That's not going to work.

BONNIE: Cockroaches like food.

GARY: It's not a cockroach!

BONNIE pulls something out.

BONNIE: Found it! Half of a Milky Way bar.

She moves it toward his ear. GARY flinches away.

BONNIE: Do you want the... "thing" out of your ear or not?

GARY looks at her.

GARY: Fine.

BONNIE puts the Milky Way to his ear.

GARY: Is it working?

BONNIE: I don't see anything. Here buggy, buggy, buggy, here buggy, buggy, buggy.

GARY: You're being ridiculous.

BONNIE: Do you have any better ideas?

GARY: No.

BONNIE checks his ear. Sighs. She puts the candy bar back into her purse. She rustles around and pulls out a bottle of soda.

BONNIE: Let me pour my soda in your ear.

GARY: You're not pouring soda in my ear!

BONNIE: It'll wash the bug out.

GARY: But then I'll have soda in my ear! And what if it doesn't work?

Then I'll have bug and soda.

BONNIE: You said "bug."

GARY: Don't pour soda in my ear! It'll be sticky!

BONNIE: Don't be a baby. Fine. I have some water.

She swaps the bottle of soda for a bottle of water. She forcibly tilts his head to the right. Pours some water in.

GARY: Ah! It feels weird!

BONNIE: That means it's working. Now tilt to the left.

GARY tilts his head to the left.

GARY: Now my neck is wet! Did the bug come out?

BONNIE: No. Maybe we drowned it though.

GARY: I feel it moving! Like it's shaking off its wings. Do cockroaches have wings?

BONNIE: I think so.

GARY: Maybe it's a moth.

BONNIE: Oooo! Yes! Moths love to eat sweaters. I can lure it out with my sweater!

BONNIE takes off her sweater.

GARY: What are you doing now?

BONNIE: This will work.

GARY: You're risking your sweater for me?

BONNIE: I'll pull off the moth before he makes a hole. Here we go.

She presses the sweater to his head. Holds it there.

GARY: How long is this going to take?

BONNIE: I don't know. We have to give him a chance to smell it. Do you feel him moving?

GARY: Maybe.

BONNIE: Let me know if you feel him leave.

They sit in silence for about five seconds.

GARY: I don't think anything's happening.

BONNIE: I'm going to pull away the sweater fast and see if I see him.
Ready?

GARY: Okay.

BONNIE pulls the sweater away. She looks at his ear, and then the sweater. Back at his ear.

BONNIE: Nothing.

GARY: Are there any bite marks on the sweater?

BONNIE: No.

GARY: I don't think it's a moth.

BONNIE: Maybe it's a spider.

GARY: Don't say that!

BONNIE: I heard that while they are sleeping, the average person eats five spiders in their lifetime.

GARY: That's an urban legend!

BONNIE: 82% of urban legends are true.

GARY: That's not true!

BONNIE: And if they can crawl in your mouth, they can crawl in your ear.

GARY: I don't want a spider in my ear!

BONNIE jumps up. Looks around the room.

GARY: What are you doing?

BONNIE: Spiders eat other insects. So if I can find a dead fly, I can put it on the edge of your ear, and lure him out.

GARY: I don't want a dead fly in my ear!

BONNIE: Or if I find a spider, I can send him in to eat whatever is in your ear right now.

GARY: That sounds even worse!

BONNIE: I don't see any bugs. This place is way too clean.

GARY: That's a good thing.

BONNIE: I think I just need to suck out the bug.

GARY: What?

BONNIE: Yeah.

GARY: That's... no. Ew.

BONNIE: Do you want the bug in your head?

GARY: Why would you suck it out?

BONNIE: I don't know. I feel like I need to do something to help someone. I'm already having second thoughts about the whole medical thing—there's a guy over there with a little bloodstain on his shirt and it's making me sick. So you may be the only patient I ever see in any capacity as a medical person—but I feel like I need to make it a win. So let me suck the bug out of your ear! Please?

GARY: Okay. If it'll make you happy.

BONNIE: I think it will.

BONNIE moves in. She grabs his head again, adjusts it, takes a deep breath, and then dives in, putting her lips to his ear.

GARY: Ohhhh. Wow this feels weird. Wait—it's moving, it's moving, keep going!

BONNIE: Ahhh!

She breaks away and starts making retching noises.

GARY: I think it's gone. Yes! It's gone! You did it! Oh—are you okay?

BONNIE looks at him.

BONNIE: I swallowed it.

GARY: What?

BONNIE: So gross.

GARY: So you don't know what it was?

BONNIE: I'm going to try to imagine it was a raisin.

They just look at each other.

GARY: So I guess... I can leave.

BONNIE: I guess so.

GARY: Thanks, Bonnie.

BONNIE: You're welcome.

GARY heads off. BONNIE just sits there. A bit traumatized. GARY looks back.

GARY: Do you want to get a drink? I think alcohol kills bugs.

BONNIE: Yes, yes, please, yes.

She takes his hand, and they exit together.

BONNIE: I'm going to be a doctor!

And they exit.

END OF PLAY

DO NOT COPY

LUCKY TOE

AT START: *ANGELA and STAN enter. STAN has a makeshift bandage around his arm, with bloodstains on it. Maybe some duct tape. They sit in the two seats.*

ANGELA: I'm sure they'll see you soon.

STAN: I appreciate you driving me down—

ANGELA: And bandaging you up—

STAN: I can't believe I fell off that stepladder.

ANGELA: Next time let me get something off the top shelf.

STAN: You don't have to stay. I'm fine. A few stitches, and I'll take an Uber home.

ANGELA: I'm not leaving you alone in the E.R., Dad.

STAN: I think I'm safe here.

ANGELA: It's the hospital. There's nothing worse than being alone in the hospital.

STAN: I'm used to being alone.

ANGELA: Oh, thanks—

STAN: I didn't mean that.

ANGELA: I know I haven't been around much—

STAN: That's not what I meant—

ANGELA: Ever since Mom died—

STAN: You have your life. I'm fine.

ANGELA: I'm sorry. I was happy to get your invitation.

STAN: I really wanted dinner to be perfect.

ANGELA: I appreciate the effort.

STAN: Did I tell you how nice you look—

ANGELA: Dad—

STAN: Nicer than just for dinner with your dad.

ANGELA: I was supposed to meet someone after our dinner.

STAN: A date.

ANGELA: I guess. I need to cancel it.

STAN: No! You need to go on your date.

ANGELA: I'm not leaving you.

STAN: As soon as I get called back by the nurse, you should go.

ANGELA: *(A little too harsh.)* It's fine. Stop.

STAN: Okay. I'm happy you're here. I am.

An awkward beat.

STAN: Are you sure you turned the oven off?

ANGELA: I turned the oven off.

STAN: Sorry.

Silence. ANGELA rocks, a little tense. Her hand slides in her pocket, and she pulls something out. Rubs it.

STAN: Is that... a rabbit's foot?

ANGELA: Oh... yeah. Silly. It calms me down sometimes.

STAN: There's no reason to be upset.

ANGELA: I'm not upset.

STAN: A few stitches and I'll be fine.

ANGELA: I know.

STAN: So the rabbit's foot...

ANGELA: We can all use some luck sometimes.

Silence. STAN tries to fill it.

STAN: Where'd you get it?

ANGELA: I don't know. Around.

STAN: Angela...

ANGELA: It's childish.

STAN: Tell me.

ANGELA: Fine. When I was sixteen, I was really nervous about a date. I was meeting... Charlie at a carnival. I almost didn't go, but we had a really wonderful time. I won the rabbit's foot at one of those booths, where we had to throw darts at balloons. The balloon went pop, and Charlie hugged me—it was amazing. We walked down to the beach, we held hands... and we kissed. My first kiss. A perfect kiss. A perfect night. And the rabbit's foot. I kept it for a while. To remember. And for luck.

STAN: I don't think I met Charlie.

ANGELA: No... It didn't end well. The timing wasn't right. We were young. So then I put the rabbit's foot away for a while.

STAN: I haven't met most of your fellas.

ANGELA: There haven't been a lot.

STAN: I haven't met any of your fellas.

ANGELA: No.

STAN: But you have a date tonight.

ANGELA: I do. If I don't blow it by showing up too late. But I got it in my head that maybe the rabbit's foot was lucky, you know? Because that night with Charlie... was an amazing night. And I haven't had much luck in the last few years. And I'm not superstitious. I don't really believe in luck—and it certainly wasn't lucky for the rabbit. But I found it, and I decided to bring it, because it reminds me of who I was that night, when I was sixteen, and I was in love... maybe that's lucky. And I can't believe I'm telling all this to you.

STAN: You can tell me anything.

ANGELA: I know.

STAN: Now I feel bad, because I've kept a secret from you. I have a lucky charm too.

ANGELA: You have a lucky charm?

STAN: Well yeah. It's a little embarrassing. And weird. I showed it to you once, when you were five, and the look on your face...

ANGELA: I don't remember.

STAN: Your mother got mad at me for showing you. So I never showed you again.

ANGELA: Okay this sounds weird.

STAN: But maybe now you're old enough.

ANGELA: I'm definitely old enough. Show me!

STAN pulls an object out of his pocket and shows it to her. It's something in a lump of plastic. ANGELA squints.

ANGELA: What is it?

STAN: It's my lucky toe.

ANGELA flinches.

ANGELA: Ew!

STAN: That's the exact same face you made when you were five.

ANGELA: It's a toe!

STAN: It's not going to bite you. It's encased in Lucite.

ANGELA: Why do you have a human toe?!?

STAN: It's actually your great-grandfather's lucky toe. Here, take it.

ANGELA: Don't give me a toe!

STAN: You were carrying around a foot!

ANGELA: It wasn't a human foot! Is that toe even legal?

STAN: It's a family heirloom.

ANGELA: Family heirlooms are like jewelry! Or antiques! Not a toe!

STAN: There's a story.

ANGELA: It better be a really good story!

STAN: Your great-grandfather Vincent was in World War II, fighting in France, when a grenade went off near him. He was lucky—they got him to a medic, and to a hospital. He had a couple of wounds and had lost a toe. He thought it was gone forever. Turns out his friend Dave found Vincent's toe in the foxhole, and put it in a snowball, and kept it in his bag—and then got involved in this crazy terrible string of battles in which most of the men in his unit were killed. But Dave survived.

ANGELA: Because of the lucky toe.

STAN: He thought so. And he carried that frozen toe with him for the rest of the war. And then he tracked down your great-grandfather Vincent and gave him his toe back. And told him the story. And Vincent put that toe in Lucite and carried it around with him. He was even carrying it when he met your great-grandmother Rose—and trust me, that turned out well, because she gave birth to my dad. And after Vincent died, my dad carried the toe with him everywhere, and he met my mother, and they were happy. And the toe got passed down to me. And I met your mother. And we were happy too.

ANGELA: You all found love. Because of the toe. Seriously?

STAN: Who's to question luck? You brought a rabbit's foot!

ANGELA: I was just looking for some magic!

STAN: Here's magic.

ANGELA: But mom died!

STAN looks at her.

ANGELA: I'm sorry.

STAN: Well, not even the toe is perfect. Your mother thought the toe was stupid. But we had twenty-five amazing years.

ANGELA: I know you did.

STAN: I wouldn't trade them for anything. But yeah, after she died... I didn't carry the toe for a while. I tossed it in a desk drawer. And then I had my heart thing—

ANGELA: You said it was nothing major—

STAN: Scared me. So I started carrying the toe again. Made me feel better.

ANGELA: So then you keep it.

STAN: No. It was supposed to be passed on to you. It's time.

ANGELA checks her watch again.

STAN: Go on your date. And take the toe.

ANGELA: I'm not going to take the toe!

STAN: When my father gave me the toe—

ANGELA: Dad—

STAN: Shhhh. Listen. When my father gave me the toe, he thought it was a little silly too. But what he told me is this—this toe gives you permission to do what you want to do. This toe gives you permission to be brave. And how can that be a bad thing?

STAN holds out the toe.

STAN: Be brave. And if your date tonight turns out to be someone special—don't be afraid to bring him by. I'll make spaghetti and meatballs.

ANGELA sighs. She takes the toe. Kisses her father on the cheek.

STAN: Be brave.

ANGELA heads off... then stops. Turns back to STAN.

ANGELA: I need to tell you something.

STAN: Anything.

ANGELA: My first kiss? Charlie?

STAN: Yes—

ANGELA: She was a girl.

STAN: Oh.

ANGELA: Yeah.

STAN: ...Okay.

ANGELA: And tonight, I'm meeting a girl named Stacy, who seems nice. But I'm nervous, because... I haven't had a lot of luck with love. And I'm sorry I could never tell you before about... this. But maybe I do need to be brave. So thanks. Thanks for everything.

She heads off again.

STAN: Angela?

ANGELA: Yeah?

STAN: If Stacy turns out to be someone special, don't be afraid to bring her by. I'll make my spaghetti and meatballs.

ANGELA looks at STAN. Then she runs to him. They hug.

ANGELA: Sounds good.

They separate. ANGELA heads out again.

STAN: And it will happen! Because of the toe! You should show her the toe!

ANGELA: I am not showing her the toe!

And she's gone. STAN sits on the chair. Takes it all in. And smiles.

NURSE: Stanley Collins!

STAN: Here. I'm coming.

He exits after the NURSE.

END OF PLAY

THE BABY BUDDY

AT START: *KYLE enters, headphones on, and takes one of the seats, piling his stuff—a backpack, a coat—on the other chairs. Entering is MARIA, very pregnant, carrying a small bag. She stops at the sight of the chair.*

KYLE finally sees her, and quickly moves all of things onto the floor on the other side of his chair so she can sit.

KYLE: Sorry, sorry. Go ahead, sit.

MARIA still stands there. KYLE slides his headphones off.

KYLE: Sit.

MARIA sits, carefully.

MARIA: Thank you. I'm sorry about your stuff. I'm not sure how clean the floors are—

KYLE stands.

KYLE: Do you want to put your bag on my chair?

MARIA: Oh no, no. Please, sit.

KYLE: The floors were mopped two hours ago. The mop looked pretty clean.

MARIA: Sit.

KYLE sits. MARIA puts her bag next to her chair. KYLE goes to put his headphones back on.

MARIA: You were here two hours ago?

KYLE leaves his headphones off.

KYLE: I was. But they mop every day at 5 AM. And also any time there are fluids.

MARIA: Oh, that's good.

KYLE: Yeah.

KYLE reaches for his headphones again.

MARIA: So you're a regular here? In the E.R. waiting room? (*Beat.*)
I'm sorry, that's none of my business.

KYLE: I'm here a lot.

He doesn't continue.

MARIA: You don't have to tell me. I respect people's privacy.

KYLE: Thank you.

He grabs his headphones again.

MARIA: I'm pregnant. I mean, you probably noticed. I'm due today.
Any minute now—boom, baby. Probably not that fast. Though I'm
hoping it'll just slide out.

KYLE: Maybe you should check in with the nurse.

MARIA: Oh, I did. She told me to go home, because I'm not having
contractions yet. But home is two buses and some cold bus stops
and I am not going all the way back home to my empty apartment
just to come back. No. I'm staying right here until this baby comes
out. I'll try to warn you before my water breaks, so you can get your
stuff off the floor.

KYLE looks at her. At his bags.

KYLE: Is it going to be a lot of water?

MARIA: No idea. This is my first! I'm a little nervous. No—I'm a lot
nervous.

KYLE: You should be fine. You're in a hospital.

MARIA: Exactly! That's why I'm not leaving. Even if they try to kick
me out. Do they do that? Kick people out?

KYLE: Maybe if they are causing a scene.

MARIA: I'm not going to cause a scene. I'm just going to sit here and wait. In the waiting room, for my baby to come. Oh! The baby just kicked. You want to feel it?

KYLE: I... I'm not comfortable with that.

MARIA: It's okay.

KYLE: If your husband needs a place to sit, I'll move.

MARIA: I'm not married.

KYLE: Your boyfriend.

MARIA: Ha! No. Just me. Which is why I don't want to go back to my apartment. Suppose my water breaks, and I slip and fall, and hit my head, and no one is there, then what? Is the baby going to crawl out by itself? No. Even if I'm here for days, this is where I'm staying. I have sandwiches. You want a sandwich?

MARIA reaches toward her bag.

KYLE: No thank you.

MARIA: Well I do. I made a plan for this. I mean, I don't know how long you're going to be here, they'll probably call you any minute—

KYLE: They probably won't.

MARIA: So if you're hungry, let me know. And if I need your help, you'll help me, right?

KYLE: Help you?

MARIA: I need a baby buddy. Just for right here, right now.

KYLE: I don't know.

MARIA: Nothing major. If my water breaks. I don't want to have to go to the desk to tell them that, leaving a trail of... fluid behind me. So you'd tell them for me, right?

KYLE: I can do that. Yes.

MARIA: And maybe if I need a Snickers bar. Because I get cravings, and Snickers bars are ninety-five cents in the machine down the hall over there—

KYLE: I know where it is.

MARIA: I have dollars, in my pocket. My Snickers pocket. Crisp dollar bills, so the machine will take them. I'm prepared. If you need a Snickers, just ask. Or a Kit-Kat. They have good Kit-Kats in that machine. Different flavors if you are into that sort of thing.

KYLE: I'm fine.

MARIA: But if I need a Snickers, you'll get me a Snickers.

KYLE: Sure. If you save my seat.

MARIA: Of course.

KYLE: Then yes. I will be your baby buddy.

MARIA: Then there's the pizza scenario.

KYLE: Uh oh.

MARIA: Yeah. I've had these insane pizza cravings. Nothing too wild—pepperoni. Maybe ham if they have it. Sausage.

KYLE: I can't leave to get you a pizza—

MARIA: No! I'm planning on having it delivered! Right here to the E.R. waiting room! And they probably won't let that happen, so I'll have to eat it in the parking lot. All I need you to do is save my seat.

KYLE: Unless I get called to see the doctor.

MARIA: Then I'll understand.

KYLE: Okay.

MARIA: And I can pay you in slices.

KYLE: I don't need to be paid.

MARIA: I can't eat a whole pizza. It's part of the baby buddy thing. You need to eat slices.

KYLE: I can eat a slice.

MARIA: Perfect. You're my baby buddy! This is awesome.

They sit there silent.

MARIA: And then, after I have the baby, if you're still around, maybe you can come to my room and visit me.

KYLE: I don't think—

MARIA: I'm scared. This is scary, and I know I don't seem that nervous, but I'm going to have this baby. And I'm excited! But it takes a village, you know, and I don't have a village. Not yet. I have no one. I don't need anyone—but maybe I do. I just hoped to find a baby buddy who would tell me it's going to be all right. That I'm going to be an amazing mother. Because I think I am, but maybe I'll need to hear it. Because there's no one that's going to be visiting me here. Which is embarrassing, but there are reasons, it's a story, but not for today, and I'm rambling, and I'm sorry.

KYLE: I don't think I can be your baby buddy.

MARIA: Really?

KYLE: It feels like maybe it's a job for someone else.

MARIA: Maybe you can help pick one out, then.

KYLE: Maybe the guy over there in the hat.

MARIA: He seems creepy. And he's a guy.

KYLE: I'm a guy.

MARIA: But you don't seem creepy. It's a vibe. You seem like a nice guy. You gave me your seat!

KYLE: I just moved my stuff.

MARIA: Still.

KYLE: Woman over there, in the red.

MARIA looks. Tilts her head.

MARIA: She seems bossy. Judgy. That's not what I want. Reminds me way too much of my mother.

KYLE: Why isn't your mother here?

MARIA: She's in Florida. Thank goodness. She thinks I'm not due for two months. I did not want her here for this. She can visit the baby.

KYLE: Maybe the couple over there, with the—

MARIA: No couples. They've got their own thing going on. No time for me. No—you're the best baby buddy right now.

KYLE: I can't.

MARIA: Married? You're not wearing a ring.

KYLE: Not married.

MARIA: Perfect. Not that I'm looking for a husband. I'm not, at all. In fact, it would be amazing if you were gay. I've never had a gay bestie.

KYLE: I'm not gay.

MARIA: So... what's your story? Why are you here?

KYLE looks away.

MARIA: C'mon. We're stuck in an E.R. waiting room together and you said they probably won't call you soon even though you've been here for two hours and I feel like I need to know about that. So spill.

KYLE: I'm not well.

MARIA: Well I guessed that, you're in the E.R.

KYLE sighs. Not easy.

KYLE: I have stomach problems. Chronic.

MARIA: Oh. Ow. Does it hurt?

KYLE: Almost constantly.

MARIA: I couldn't tell.

KYLE: I hide it. Last thing I need is people feeling sorry for me.

MARIA: And they can help you here?

KYLE: Not really. Sometimes. Sometimes it gets really bad, and they can give me stuff. It's not bad now, but it feels like it does when it's about to get bad, so I came here. Just in case. It makes me feel safe.

MARIA: Yes!

KYLE: Sometimes it's nice to be in a place where if things get bad, you know there's someone who can make it better.

MARIA: Yes!

KYLE: So I come here a lot. But—

MARIA: But—

KYLE: It's not good. None of it is good.

MARIA: I want to hug you.

KYLE: No.

MARIA: Please?

KYLE: I'm not used to human contact.

MARIA: Does it make it feel worse?

KYLE: I don't know.

MARIA: So...

KYLE: I don't know.

MARIA: What's your name?

KYLE: Why?

MARIA: Because I'm going to name my baby after you.

KYLE: Don't.

MARIA: I don't know if I'm having a boy or a girl yet, I want it to be a surprise. All the baby clothes I bought are green. So hi—I'm Maria. Tell me your name.

KYLE: Kyle.

MARIA: That's perfect! If it's a girl, she can be Kylie! And you can be her godfather!

KYLE: No.

MARIA: You don't have to do anything. Just come to my room, while I'm lying there holding the baby, and tell me my baby is beautiful. You can lie if you want, I don't care. Just tell me. "Your baby is beautiful and you'll be a great mom."

KYLE: I'm not sure I'll be here.

MARIA: Where are you going? You have a job?

KYLE: No. I'm on disability.

MARIA: Don't go to Florida.

KYLE: I'm not going to Florida.

MARIA: So where then?

KYLE: Sometimes it hurts too much.

MARIA just looks at him. He can't look at her.

MARIA: That's not the answer.

KYLE: That's the only answer I have.

MARIA: It's not.

KYLE: I'm losing my apartment.

MARIA: Not the end of the world.

KYLE: I don't have anyone in my life.

MARIA: Neither do I!

KYLE: No—you have a baby. I have no one.

MARIA: You have me.

KYLE: You don't even know me!

MARIA: You have Kylie. Kyle, if it's a boy.

KYLE: I can't be a godfather.

MARIA: My aunt left me her house. It's big. There's a guestroom. You can live there—

KYLE: No!

MARIA: Two buses to get to the hospital, which is a pain, but maybe you have a car.

KYLE: I can't live in your house.

MARIA: Why not?

KYLE: You're just offering because you feel sorry for me.

MARIA: I feel sorry for everyone in this E.R.! But I'm not inviting them to stay with me.

KYLE: Maybe this is just another pregnancy craving. Right now you want Snickers and meaty pizza and a connection with a strange

man you don't know, but after you give birth... maybe you'll have second thoughts.

MARIA: That's valid. But I love Snickers, I love meaty pizza—and I will always want that. The same with connection. Don't you want connection? Don't you yearn for it?

KYLE: What will you expect from me?

MARIA: I don't want love, Kyle—I've had love. I just want a friend. Maybe someone to get things out of the kitchen cabinets—you seem tall. I want a village for my baby. And we'll tell my mother you're gay, because she'll think I'm crazy for having a strange man in the house. But she loves the gays.

KYLE: Sometimes I'm in pain. Real pain.

MARIA: I'm sorry.

KYLE: Sometimes I weep. Like a child. Which is embarrassing.

MARIA: And if someone holds you, does it feel better?

KYLE: ...That's never happened.

MARIA: Don't you think you should try everything?

KYLE: You'll be disappointed by me.

MARIA: Do you want to disappoint me?

KYLE: No.

MARIA: Then I'm not worried about that.

MARIA stands, awkwardly.

KYLE: Where are you going?

MARIA: We're going to hug.

KYLE: Maria—

MARIA: Let me ask you. In your mind right now, is there a part of you that's excited about the idea of moving in with me and my baby? Because that baby will cry. And if you live with me, you will have to be my baby buddy, and maybe that means helping with crying babies. And I think you need to choose life, and maybe that's not the life you want. But if there's a spark of something in you—

KYLE: Maybe.

MARIA: I can work with maybe. Hug me. Now. I need this. Buddy hug. Like two guys after scoring a touchdown in baseball.

KYLE: Football.

MARIA: Whatever. Hug me.

KYLE stands warily. Hesitates, then moves toward her. And they embrace. She embraces harder.

KYLE: The baby—

MARIA: The baby's fine. How does this feel?

KYLE just starts crying.

MARIA: Good. Good.

KYLE: I felt the baby kick.

MARIA: The baby's happy. Oooooo... The baby wants a Snickers.

KYLE: I'll get it.

MARIA: I think I'll come with you.

KYLE picks up his stuff and takes her arm. They exit right.

END OF PLAY

BELLYACHERS

AT START: *DOUG enters, groaning, helped by his wife TRUDY. They sit down. DOUG holds his stomach, rocking a little; throughout the play, he exhibits consistent belly distress.*

TRUDY: You're not feeling any better?

DOUG: Does it sound like I'm feeling better?

TRUDY: Don't snap at me. It wasn't my fault.

DOUG: We don't know that yet.

The NURSE comes in, with a bucket.

NURSE: It may be some time before we can see you. Here's a bucket.

TRUDY takes it.

DOUG: Don't hospitals have those little bags?

NURSE: You look like a bucket man.

TRUDY: She's not wrong.

DOUG: I'm pretty sure I'm empty now.

TRUDY: The car will never be the same.

The NURSE exits.

DOUG: I threw up out the window.

TRUDY: Mostly out the window.

DOUG: I told you to pull over.

TRUDY: And that vomit didn't look like my salad.

DOUG: Whose salad do you think it was? You saw me eating your salad. You told me all I could eat was your salad.

TRUDY: You know the doctor put you on a specific diet.

DOUG: What does he know?

DOUG winces again.

TRUDY: You cheated on your diet, and you got sick! If you listened to him, we wouldn't be here in the emergency room.

DOUG: All I had was salad.

TRUDY: You did not get food poisoning from my salad!

DOUG: You don't know that.

TRUDY: I ate the salad too.

DOUG: You have a cast-iron stomach.

TRUDY: I know you ate something else—

DOUG: Here we go.

TRUDY: It's important! If there's food making people sick at the potluck, we need to let them know! I told Diane I'd call her as soon as we figured it out.

DOUG: There's nothing to figure out.

TRUDY: Was it Kimberly's potato salad? Just because it has salad in the name, you aren't supposed to eat it. So much mayo—

DOUG: I didn't eat Kimberly's potato salad. I don't like potato salad.

TRUDY: That's true. But you do like sausage. And I saw a man put down a plate of sausage.

DOUG: I didn't eat any sausage!

TRUDY: You better not have.

DOUG: It was your salad.

TRUDY: It was not my salad!

Entering is LENNY, who is also in pain. He carries a paper bag with him. He sees them and takes the seat next to them with a groan.

LENNY: I heard you were headed here.

DOUG: You feeling it too?

LENNY: Something got me.

TRUDY offers him the bucket. LENNY waves it off.

TRUDY: Did you eat any salad?

LENNY: I am not a salad guy.

TRUDY: I told you. It wasn't the salad!

LENNY: We need to figure it out. They've all stopped eating. There's are a lot of nervous, hungry people waiting for our phone call.

TRUDY: Call them and tell them they can eat the salad.

DOUG: Hungry people don't want a salad!
TRUDY: Some do.
LENNY: I think it was the shrimp. It smelled a little sketchy, but I love shrimp. And it tasted fine. Mostly.
DOUG: I didn't eat any shrimp.
TRUDY: You do like shrimp.
DOUG: I didn't even know there was shrimp!
TRUDY: So you would have eaten it.
DOUG: What kind of shrimp was it?
LENNY: I don't know. It was shrimp. Shrimp is shrimp.
TRUDY: I still think it was the sausage.
DOUG: I didn't eat any sausage!
LENNY: I didn't have any sausage.
DOUG: See? It wasn't the sausage.
TRUDY: So you admit you had sausage!
DOUG: I didn't admit anything!
LENNY: Who brought the sausage?
DOUG: I think it was that guy, what's-his-name, just moved here from Chicago.
LENNY: They have good sausage in Chicago. I would have liked to see that sausage.
DOUG: It's probably still there. *(To TRUDY.)* Because I didn't eat it!
LENNY: Well, I saw you eating something, and it wasn't no salad.

DOUG makes a "shhhh" motion to LENNY.

TRUDY: A-ha!
DOUG: I don't know what he's talking about. *(To DOUG.)* All I ate was Trudy's salad. Doctor's orders.
LENNY: I might have been mistaken.
TRUDY: You aren't mistaken. Cheater.
DOUG: You have no proof of anything.
TRUDY: It's not about proof.
DOUG: I have a stomach ache. I'm not going to die.
TRUDY: It's not about the food poisoning. I don't want you to die from your high blood pressure and your cholesterol and your heart and all the other stuff your doctor is worried about!
DOUG: One sausage isn't going to kill me.

TRUDY: Ha! So you admit you had a sausage!

DOUG: Fine. I had one sausage.

TRUDY: Plus whatever it was that gave you both food poisoning!

LENNY: My Uncle died of food poisoning.

DOUG and TRUDY both look at him.

DOUG: You're not helping.

LENNY: We need to figure this out. The doctor will want to know what we ate. I brought some samples for testing.

LENNY opens the bag. DOUG looks in. Flinches away.

DOUG: Give me the bucket.

TRUDY passes him the bucket. DOUG puts it under his mouth. Deep breaths.

DOUG: Okay, it passed.

TRUDY: What did you bring?

LENNY: A little bit of everything I ate.

TRUDY: (To DOUG.) Which of the things in the bag did you eat?

DOUG: I didn't eat any—

TRUDY: Tell me!

DOUG: I'm not looking in that bag again.

TRUDY: (To LENNY.) Tell him what you brought.

LENNY: Some Spanish pastry stuff. Em-pa-nandas?

DOUG: I didn't eat any of that.

TRUDY: Doug—

DOUG: I didn't.

LENNY: There's some kebabs.

DOUG: What kind of meat?

LENNY: I don't know. Kebabs.

TRUDY: You used to love kebabs.

DOUG: I didn't eat any kebabs.

LENNY: There's some beanie-weenies—

DOUG: I saw the beanie-weenies. I did not eat the beanie-weenies.

LENNY: And pork chops.

And DOUG stiffens, just a bit.

TRUDY: I saw that!

DOUG: You didn't see anything.

TRUDY: You had a pork chop.

DOUG: Fine. I had a pork chop. It's white meat! It's not that bad!

TRUDY: It is if you eat twelve.

DOUG: I ate one pork chop!

TRUDY: And a sausage.

DOUG: The pork chop didn't make me sick.

TRUDY: Undercooked pork—

DOUG: It wasn't undercooked. It was overcooked. Dry.

TRUDY: But you ate it anyway.

DOUG: I didn't want to waste food.

TRUDY: (To LENNY.) Did you have a pork chop?

LENNY: I did.

TRUDY: Was it dry?

LENNY: It was okay.

TRUDY: It was the pork chop!

LENNY: Now we know.

Coming in is STACY, holding her stomach. TRUDY sees her coming and gives STACY her seat.

STACY: Thanks. Owwwwwww.

LENNY: It got you too, huh?

STACY: That Uber guy whose car I threw up in gave me only one star.

LENNY: We're just about to call and tell them we figured it out. It was the pork chops.

STACY: I didn't have any pork chops.

TRUDY: Are you sure?

STACY: I'd think I'd know if I had a pork chop.

LENNY offers her the bag. STACY looks in and pulls away fast. DOUG is already offering her the bucket. She takes it but manages not to vomit.

TRUDY: So it wasn't the pork chop. And it wasn't the sausage.

STACY: There was sausage?

LENNY: Apparently. I didn't see any.

They look at DOUG.

DOUG: It was good sausage.

TRUDY: Doug!

DOUG: Okay, it was amazing sausage.

TRUDY: What did you do?

DOUG: I only had two!

TRUDY: But—

DOUG: I... may have hidden the rest in our car trunk.

LENNY: I can respect that.

DOUG: But that was all I ate, I promise.

TRUDY: Your promises are worth nothing! What else did you have?

I bet you had some undercooked chicken!

TRUDY grabs DOUG'S head from behind, and shakes it.

TRUDY: Which did you eat? Which did you eat?

DOUG: Do you want me to throw up again!

TRUDY: I want the truth!

DOUG: I didn't have any more meat!

TRUDY: You all ate something!

STACY: I'm a vegetarian.

TRUDY: What?

STACY: I didn't eat any meat.

DOUG: Did you have my wife's salad?

STACY: I think so.

DOUG: Ha!

TRUDY: It wasn't my salad! I wash my vegetables!

LENNY: And I didn't eat the salad.

STACY: Unless maybe there's more than one thing.

TRUDY: But not my salad.

LENNY: I ate a lot of food. Too much to remember.

TRUDY: But Doug didn't. Did you? My salad, two sausages, a pork chop—and what else—

DOUG: Nothing else.

TRUDY: You might as well tell me.

DOUG: I'm serious.

TRUDY: Doug—

DOUG: I might have snacked a little. I had a handful of pretzels. Some chips. Some dip.

STACY: The dip next to the chips? I had some of that.

They look at LENNY.

LENNY: I had a lot of that. And I brought some!

LENNY opens the bag. They all flinch away.

TRUDY: Call it in!

LENNY is already on the phone.

LENNY: It's the dip! The dip!

He hangs up the phone.

LENNY: The party is saved.

The NURSE comes back in.

NURSE: Can I have all the food poisoning people in curtain seven?

LENNY: It was the dip!

NURSE: Great. Follow me.

LENNY and STACY follow the NURSE, and they exit. TRUDY grabs DOUG.

TRUDY: Say you're sorry.

DOUG: I'm sorry.

TRUDY: And you'll eat nothing but salad for a week.

DOUG: Nothing but salad.

TRUDY: Kiss me.

They kiss. The NURSE comes back again.

TRUDY: And I'm throwing away the sausage.

DOUG: But it was the best sausage I ever had.

TRUDY: Tough.

NURSE: Don't throw away perfectly good sausage. Give it to me.

TRUDY: Deal.

The NURSE looks at DOUG.

NURSE: Curtain seven.

DOUG: Sausage....

The NURSE follows TRUDY out the exit. DOUG watches them go, then exits where LENNY and STACY went.

END OF PLAY

**I JUST SNEEZED WITH A BIG MOUTHFUL OF COFFEE
AND I DO NOT RECOMMEND IT**

AT START: *RICKY enters, or moves over from where he was sitting, and takes the seat center stage. He looks up as the NURSE enters, with HELEN walking behind her. HELEN looks down, not making eye contact.*

RICKY: Is the doctor ready to see me yet?

NURSE: Not yet, Ricky. I wanted you to meet someone. This is Helen. Helen, this is Ricky. You two have a lot in common.

RICKY: Do you think the doctor will see me soon?

NURSE: We'll see, Ricky.

The NURSE guides HELEN into the seat next to RICKY, and then exits. RICKY and HELEN sit there awkwardly, neither looking at each other. Finally—

HELEN: I don't know why she brought me over here. I didn't ask her to.

RICKY: Okay.

HELEN: I shouldn't sit this close to you. You might have something.

HELEN moves over one seat. She seems more relaxed. RICKY too.

RICKY: Thank you.

Silence again.

RICKY: I'm not sick though. I don't think. I don't know.

HELEN: Why are you here?

RICKY: You'll think it's silly.

HELEN: Okay.

Silence again.

RICKY: I just sneezed with a big mouthful of coffee and I do not recommend it.

HELEN: That's why you're here?

RICKY: Yes. Coffee came out of my nose and went all over the place.

HELEN: Wow.

RICKY: I had to change my shirt. And my pants. And wipe up all the coffee. And as I was doing that, I did not feel well. So I came here. I still do not feel well.

HELEN: I think you're probably fine.

RICKY: Are you a doctor?

HELEN: I wish. No.

RICKY: So you don't really know if I am fine. But I'm not going to let you feel my forehead.

HELEN: I don't want to feel your forehead.

RICKY: So you don't know.

HELEN: Do you have a headache?

RICKY: I don't think so.

HELEN: Is your tongue green?

RICKY: Why would my tongue be green?

HELEN: I don't know. Don't sick people get green tongues?

RICKY: I was drinking coffee.

HELEN: Still.

RICKY: It's probably brown.

RICKY sticks out his tongue. He tries to get a look at it, without success.

RICKY: I can't see my tongue. Can you look?

HELEN looks.

HELEN: Red.

RICKY: Not brown.

HELEN: Red. Not like blood. Just a normal red.

RICKY: I still want the doctor to check me out. I know they're going to make me wait though, and hope that I go home. One day I waited here for eight hours. Eight hours.

HELEN: Then they saw you?

RICKY: No, I went home. I was feeling better.

HELEN: What if you'd really been sick?

RICKY: Well, the nurse did ask me some questions. I think she thought it was nothing. I guess she was right. I don't even remember what it was. Still, it feels safe here, you know? If something does happen, and I passed out and fell on the floor, then I'm pretty sure they'd take care of me.

HELEN: Has that ever happened?

RICKY: Not yet. Today maybe. I can still taste coffee in my nose.

HELEN: You know what?

RICKY: Please don't tell me it's all in my head. I don't like when people tell me that. Even though it might be true, sometimes.

HELEN: I wasn't going to tell you that.

Silence.

RICKY: So what were you going to tell me?

HELEN: One time... I was here for fourteen hours.

RICKY: Really!?!

HELEN: I thought I had polio.

RICKY: I thought they cured that.

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