

SANDBOX

by Scott Mullen

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SYNOPSIS: Claire has a noisy child. Claire's child is NOT allowed in the "quiet sandbox." When Claire finds a bunch of adults in the "quiet sandbox," she challenges them, only to be surprised at their response.

TIME: Present.

SETTING: Sandbox in a public park.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 females, 1 male)

RITA (f)Adult, can be any age. *(52 lines)*

GABE (m)Adult, can be any age. *(34 lines)*

BETSY (f)Adult, can be any age. *(28 lines)*

CLAIRE (f)20's-30's. *(47 lines)*

PRODUCTION NOTES

Let your imagination reign in terms of the sandbox—and whether it actually has sand in it. At minimum, low sandbox walls usually do the trick in suggesting where this is set. Make sure the space is large enough to allow characters to sit down inside it and move around. Movement by the characters around that space is largely at the director's discretion.

PROPS

- ☐ small blue plastic bucket
- ☐ various toy dinosaurs
- ☐ some cash for the characters to throw
- ☐ briefcases
- ☐ purses

AT START: *RITA sits in a sandbox. She is well dressed, though her feet are bare. Off to the side is a bright blue plastic bucket. Her shoes, socks, and briefcase are nearby, outside the sandbox. RITA runs her fingers through the sand. CLAIRE walks in and stares at RITA.*

CLAIRE: Hey. You. Look at me.

RITA: Shhh.

CLAIRE: Don't shush me. Did you just tell my son he couldn't play in this sandbox?

RITA: I did.

CLAIRE: He's three years old.

RITA: So?

CLAIRE: So?

RITA: Your son was loud and disagreeable. Your influence, I expect. Sorry. Broke my own rule. *(Reaches into her pocket, pulls out some money, and tosses it into the blue bucket.)*

RITA: This is the quiet sandbox. The loud sandbox is over there, on the other side of the playground.

CLAIRE looks.

CLAIRE: It's crowded.

RITA: That's why it's the loud sandbox. Your son is a yeller.

CLAIRE: He's three.

RITA: I'm sure he'll fit in fine over there.

CLAIRE: This is a public park.

RITA: Yes.

CLAIRE: He has the right to play wherever he wants.

RITA: Is he on the sign-up sheet?

CLAIRE: Seriously?

RITA: The quiet sandbox has a sign-up sheet.

CLAIRE: It's a public park.

RITA: Shhh.

CLAIRE glares at her. RITA points.

RITA: Right now he's on the slide. Looks like he's doing fine.

CLAIRE: You're an adult.

RITA: Yes.

CLAIRE: Playing in a sandbox.

RITA: I am.

CLAIRE: Sandboxes are for children.

RITA: As you said, this is a public park. I have the right to play wherever I want. Especially since I'm on the sign-up sheet.

CLAIRE: You don't have the right to turn the sandbox into your private—

RITA: —That's not what I'm doing. Children can play here. If they are quiet. This sandbox is a place of peace and tranquility. Usually.

CLAIRE: Do you even have a child here?

RITA: That's not a requirement.

GABE arrives in a suit and tie. He drops his briefcase, sits in the sandbox, takes off his shoes and socks.

RITA: You're late today.

GABE: I got hung up in a deposition. Who's she?

RITA: Angry mother. Loud son.

GABE: Which one's he?

RITA: Slide.

GABE: Ah. Unfortunate.

CLAIRE: He's three!

GABE: She's very loud.

RITA: I know.

GABE: I could hear her as soon as I came into the park.

RITA: It's an issue.

GABE: Is the kid on the sign-up sheet?

RITA: No.

GABE: (To CLAIRE.) This is the quiet sandbox.

CLAIRE: You're adults!

RITA and GABE chuckle.

CLAIRE: What?

RITA: We get that a lot.

GABE: Look, you go to the beach on the weekends, don't you?

RITA: I bet she does.

GABE: Put your toes in the sand? Just try to let the mellowness of the world wash over you?

RITA: This is our weekday beach.

GABE: Rita here used to be a big drinker.

RITA: Hey. She doesn't need to know that.

GABE: I used to smoke a little crack. To unwind. But this is healthier. This is our crack now.

GABE starts pulling little plastic dinosaurs out of his pockets, and placing them in the sand.

RITA: Let me have the triceratops.

GABE tosses it to her. GABE picks up two other dinosaurs, and uses them to attack each other.

RITA: You should see the look on her face right now.

GABE: Is she still here?

RITA: She is.

GABE: Why?

RITA: I'm not really sure.

CLAIRE: Is there a hidden camera?

RITA picks up the pail.

RITA: This is the Bad Vibes Bucket. We want this to be a mellow place.

You bring Bad Vibes, you pay the bucket. Noise is a bad vibe. Right now, you need to leave, or pay the bucket.

CLAIRE: Seriously?

RITA just looks at her, holding up the bucket. CLAIRE finally digs into her purse. Throws some money in. RITA looks into the bucket, and back at her.

RITA: More.

CLAIRE: This is insane.

CLAIRE reluctantly throws in more money.

RITA: You now have the floor. Sixty seconds, to let it all out. Vent.

CLAIRE: Why are you playing in a sandbox? Because it reminds you of a happier time? A primal time? When you felt safe? When you had mothers to take care of everything? It's pathetic.

RITA: Are you done?

CLAIRE: Yes.

GABE: Interesting theory.

RITA: No. It's not. It's just sand, lady. It feels nice.

Well-dressed BETSY walks up. She looks at RITA and GABE.

BETSY: Seriously?

CLAIRE: I know, right?

BETSY: I can't believe you started without me.

BETSY pulls off her shoes. Sits down in the sandbox.

BETSY: T-Rex me, Gabe.

GABE: Market down again?

BETSY: You have no idea.

GABE tosses her the T-Rex. They playfight with their dinosaurs.

CLAIRE: What's wrong with you people?

BETSY: Who's the witch?

RITA: Hey now.

BETSY: Sorry.

BETSY finds some money in her pocket, and tosses it into the bucket.

BETSY: Why is she still here?

RITA: Betsy—

BETSY: I paid extra. (To **CLAIRE**.) Scat.

CLAIRE: This is a public park.

BETSY: Which one is her kid?

RITA: Slide.

BETSY: Ah. He's not very attractive, isn't he?

CLAIRE: Hey!

BETSY throws some more bills into the bucket. Finally drops them all.

BETSY: Or bright.

CLAIRE: He's three!

GABE and BETSY are playing with their dinosaurs again.

CLAIRE: Do any of you have kids here?

GABE: Not required.

BETSY: Totally not required.

RITA: I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

CLAIRE: This is a public park! This is a sandbox for children!

GABE: Do you know what was here, on this spot, one month ago?

BETSY: She doesn't know. It's not even her park. Is it? You're an interloper!

RITA holds the bucket up to her.

BETSY: I'm out of cash.

RITA: Then you need to relax. Play with Rex.

BETSY: Fine.

BETSY plays with the dinosaur.

GABE: Nothing was here a month ago. We built this sandbox, Rita and I. Framed out the wood, had the sand shipped in from some beautiful beach in... Florida?

RITA: The Georgia coast.

GABE: The park officials signed off on it. And there really is a sign-up sheet. Not that you need to be on the sign-up sheet to play here.

BETSY: She's not.

GABE: But it's a quiet sandbox. A sandbox of non-judgment. Of peace. Where Betsy can forget about her sex addiction.

BETSY: She doesn't need to know about that.

GABE: She's been celibate for weeks.

BETSY: Stop reminding me.

GABE: So you have a choice. You can leave... or you can stay, and play.

BETSY: No! She's not allowed.

RITA: I have to agree with Betsy. The vibe isn't right.

CLAIRE: I'm not playing.

BETSY: Then leave.

GABE: Shhh. Take off your shoes.

CLAIRE: No.

GABE: Your son is fine. He's still on the slide.

BETSY: What kid plays on the slide for more than five minutes?

CLAIRE: He's three!

BETSY: I vote no. That's a majority. Two to one against.

GABE: I'll come over to your house tonight.

BETSY: Yeah?

GABE: Yeah.

BETSY: I vote yes.

CLAIRE: What about your sex addiction?!

GABE: I go over there to cook for her.

BETSY: His chicken risotto is the best.

CLAIRE: Oh.

BETSY: Though if you want dessert....

GABE: Behave.

BETSY: That's not what you said last time.

GABE: We agreed that that was a bad decision. For both of us.

RITA: Fine. She can come in. But if she's loud, she's paying the bucket again.

CLAIRE: I'm not getting in there.

RITA: Take off your shoes.

CLAIRE: This isn't for me.

RITA: Are you happy? In general, in your life?

CLAIRE: I'm very happy.

RITA: No problems at all?

CLAIRE: This isn't about me.

RITA: I can see the stress in your hands.

CLAIRE: You can not.

RITA: In your shoulders. In your neck.

CLAIRE: Stop.

GABE: Look at your son. The joy on his face as he slides down the slide. And then, as soon as he hits the bottom, he's running for the ladder again. Climbing as fast as he can. When was the last time you were that happy?

CLAIRE watches her son.

CLAIRE: I'm too big for the slide.

GABE: Take off your shoes.

CLAIRE: Why are you doing this?

RITA: Take them off.

CLAIRE looks at RITA, then slips one shoe off, and then the other. She steps in the sandbox.

CLAIRE: Oh... that is nice. Just... yes.

GABE: Sit down.

GABE takes her hand. CLAIRE sits.

RITA: See? Isn't this nice? Quiet. And you can see your boy from here.

BETSY: Ten bucks says he's still sliding.

GABE: No. He's coming over here.

CLAIRE bolts to her feet.

CLAIRE: Bobby? Are you okay? Are you okay? Wait, Bobby... stop. Bobby, you're too loud. You can't play here. Go play on the slide, Bobby. Yes, yes, that's a good boy. Your mommy loves you. *(Watches, then sits again.)* This really feels good.

GABE: I know.

CLAIRE: Tell me I'm a good mother.

RITA: Shhhh. Toes in the sand. Relax.

CLAIRE sighs. Relaxes. BETSY hands her a dinosaur. CLAIRE hesitates, and takes it. And they play in the sand together.

THE END

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