

Real Realism

an epic tragi-comedy

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Charlotte Meehan
27 Chestnut Street
Sharon, MA 02067
508.212.5342
charlotte@sleepingweazel.com
www.charlottesmeehan.com
www.sleepingweazel.com

CHARACTERS:

A, a middle-aged woman, becomes ALICE

B, a middle-aged man, becomes WILLIAM

C, a child (10-year-old boy), becomes CHARLIE

D, child's mother, late twenties to early thirties, becomes DARLA

E, another man, late twenties to early thirties, becomes EDDIE

TIME:

Now. Or any time. Some time.

PLACE:

Something makes you think you're in a room, but it's fleeting.

Set: Five identical blue chairs. A green astro-turf rectangular rug placed on the diagonal. A blue sky floor. A large video backdrop. Some props — as few as possible.

Costumes: Everyone is in shades of blue and green. Some small flourishes of black and yellow. **A** should wear plenty of gold and ridiculously nouveau riche shoes and bag.

Note: The gun should be immediately recognizable as *not* a real gun. In the Sleeping Weazel Boston premiere, a neon green plastic water gun was used.

Scene: A large video backdrop shows A, C, D, and E standing in an offstage elevator. C bounces a ball on the ground and against the wall, to the annoyance of the adults, as the following litany of “don’ts” begins in one booming voice from overhead. One by one, the performers leave the waiting room/video backdrop and enter the stage.

Meanwhile: B seated alone onstage, spotlighted in half-darkness with his head in his hands. The blue chairs are set up to suggest a waiting room.

VOICE OVERHEAD

(booming)
By all means, and on all accounts, do not do the following:

Don’t be proud.
Don’t be judgmental.
Don’t be cowardly.
Don’t be petty.
Don’t be miserable.
Don’t be silly.
Don’t be condescending.
Don’t be effusive.
Don’t be paranoid.
Don’t be foolish.

(from overhead, as D enters, self-satisfied with her “look”)
And, above all, **don’t** be conceited.

D

(sassess back)
Don’t, in company, open a book and begin reading to yourself.

VOICE OVERHEAD

(as A enters)
Don’t speak ungrammatically. Study books of grammar, and the writings of the best authors.

A

(a little shaken, but recovering)
Don’t borrow books unless you return them promptly.

VOICE OVERHEAD

Don’t scold your children, or your servants, in front of others.

B

(growls)

Don't be over-civil. Do not let your civility fall short, but over-civility is a mistake.

(**E** enters, speaking the following line.)

E

Don't, if asked your candid opinion of a person, be too ready to give it.

VOICE OVERHEAD

(arguing with **E**)

Don't make obvious puns. An occasional pun, if a good one, is a good thing; but a ceaseless flow of puns is simply maddening.

VOICE OVERHEAD and C

(while **C** bounces basketball)

Don't interrupt. To cut one short in the middle of his remarks, anecdotes or story, is unpardonable.

A

Don't contradict. Differences of opinion are no cause of offense, but downright contradiction is a violation of the canons of good society.

E

Don't be witty at another's expense.

D

Don't repeat the scandals and malicious rumors of the hour.

VOICE OVERHEAD

Don't talk about your maladies, or about your afflictions of any kind. Complaining people are pronounced on all hands great bores.

B

Don't carry a lighted cigar into a house when paying a visit.

C

Don't be over-familiar. Don't slap your friends on the back, nudge them in the side, or give other physical manifestation of your pleasure.

D

Don't speak too quickly.

Don't drink alcohol in the morning. **A**

Don't walk in the street. **E**

Don't pee in the grass. **C**

Don't fart in the car. **B**

Don't be vulgar. **A**

Don't be bossy. **D**

Don't squeal. **E**

Don't squawk. **B**

Don't eek. **C**

Don't peek. **A**

Don't do any of these things and you'll be fine. **E**

Don't listen to him. I'm warning you. Don't. Don't. Don't. Don't. Don't. **C**

(patronizing, to **C**)
Don't be disrespectful. **D**

Don't be stupid. **C**

(Blackout.)

Scene Two: Non-direct communication.

At rise: **B** stands center stage twirling a medallion hanging from a string. **A** sits downstage left in a makeshift chaise lounge facing diagonally away from the audience, as if talking to someone by the pool at a spa. **D** lies on two chairs upstage right with her feet in fake stirrups. **E** stands upstage facing the wall. **C** walks in a circle around the others, intermittently bouncing a basketball.

B

(as he plays with the medallion, finally landing it on his forehead)
Funny, but I'm suicidal again.
Wasn't expecting that.

A

(bragging to imagined spa partner)
I want to have less things.
But then I keep having more things.

B

I need to buy a pillowcase.

D

(popping up from her gynecological exam)
Well, **I'm** really surprised to have another urinary tract infection.
Especially after the divorce.

E

(quickly turning around)
He says he wants to be together.
Then he worries that I watch crappy TV.

(**C** stops dead from his walking and bounces his ball very hard while saying the following line.)

C

And, Mom, make sure you take ALL the scallions out of my sesame noodles.
Or I'm not going to eat them.

(**C** continues walking.)

E

I mean, what's that about?

D

I should have some relief in some area of my life.

B

This has not been a good fall.

A

I found a house listed for just under five.
Custom-made. A short sale.

B

Not good at all.

A

(suddenly, hopeful)
I wonder if they'll have to come way down.

D

I feel really lousy buying things made in China.

C

China. Typical.
What about India?
Or Mexico?
(beat)
And nobody ever thinks about Romania.

(**B** walks decisively downstage.)

B

(to the audience)
I stubbed my toe.

E

What I always say is,
Eat anything you want, and then one salad a day.

D

(walks up to **E**)
Fuck you.

E

(right back at **D**)
A relationship can't be expected to solve everything, after all.

A

(turns around on her chair to face the audience)
That's what they said.
They SAID I had a shot with a short —

B

(interrupting)
It's just not that simple.
Attitude is 90 percent responsible for good results.

(C speaks directly to B.)

C

Go fart in a shit box.

E

(to the audience, referring to C)
Surprising as this may sound, I am against abortion.

A

(confessing to the group)
The thing is, no matter how much time I have, I really don't want to clean my house.

B

You need a maid.

D

Yeah.

A

I don't have a job.

E

Oh, please.

A

(to E)
What?

E

(to D)
Don't let her fool you.
She's loaded.

B

Up to her ears.

D

(to **A**)
Really?

(No response.)

Oh, come on. . . tell us something at least.

(**C** pulls a tiny handmade doll out of his pocket.)

C

I love my little daughter.

(As **C** approaches **A**, **D**, and **E** downstage center, they form a semi-circle around him. **B** walks across the stage and says the following to **E**.)

B

If oppressed people had grown up in a forgiving home, then it might be a totally different story.

D

(to **B**)
I'm a happy camper.
You have to choose to be a happy camper.

E

EVERYbody watches crappy TV.

(to **D**)
Don't you watch crappy TV?

(No response.)

(to **A**)
You **MUST** watch crappy TV.

(**A** twirls around, slowly bends to her knees, and hums like a Buddhist. The others hum in unison with her.)

A

(in a sacred tone)
It's difficult. I see that young man every time I go to the supermarket.

(They come together center stage around **C** who has placed a mat on the floor and walks his tiny doll on the basketball as if she is traveling the globe. The following lines are spoken in a steady stream.)

D

I used to say to him, “go back to school. You’re smart. I can tell.”

E

He’d always agree. Now he wears a skull cap over his head in all seasons.

B

He looks older, skeletal, more lost. He came here from I forget where. Ohio maybe.

A

(breaking into her own voice)
I had a shot with a short sale.

E

He’s going to wheel people’s carts around that parking lot for the rest of his life, I think.

A

(again, away from the others in tone)
I hope he doesn’t become violent.

(And they disperse.)

C

(slowly, deliberately)
Once, I was living near the end of the world and the snow began falling very strangely,
sideways and almost upside down.

(C folds up his mat carefully, puts the doll back in his pocket, and returns to
walking and bouncing in a circular pattern around the others.)

E

(breaking the moment, in defiance, to the audience)
I burned myself yesterday, as if on purpose.

Poured boiling water all over my hand.
Just like that.

(B walks right up next to E, who is standing downstage left of center.)

B

(competitively, to the audience)
I stubbed my toe on the porch steps.

E

(louder)
With the teapot right there.

B

(annoyed)
Uh. Yeah. Pushed my toe right into the step.

E

I wanted to hurt myself. On purpose.
I needed to externalize my pain.
The psychic distress was out of control.

B

And **I** am in real pain.

E

(to audience)
What's the use of trying to get ANY sympathy from you?

C

(to **B** and **E**)
OK, you fell. You fell.
We get it.

B

I did not fall.

E

(defiantly, but shaky)
I didn't fall either.
I burned my hand.

C

(interrupting)
What difference does it make?
There's decay. There just is.

(**A** walks down center stage, then stops.)

A

And beauty. I'm beautiful, for example.

D

Like the rain.

A

(haughtily, annoyed at **D**)
Yes, the rain.

A cont'd.

(beat)
And the snow.

D

(to the group)
I'm a happy camper.
That's what he always said he loved about me.
Way back when.

B

(to **D**, sort of)
No. He said you need to start being more whimsical.
That's clearly what he said.

D

How would you know what he said?

A

(to **D**)
Oh, dear. How could anyone **not** know?

E

Well, mine worries that I watch crappy TV.

A

(to **E**)
You're going to have to learn to stop repeating yourself.
It shows no savoir faire.

B

Uh. Pot. Kettle.
(to **E**)
Ignore her.

C

(to the group)
Things happen. Life is hard.
You have to give in sometimes.

A

(to the audience)
Well, I don't want to eat tuna out of the can for the rest of my life.

B

(to himself)
I need a nice blanket.
As long as I have a blanket, I'm fine.

D

(confessing to the group)
I am terrified of scams.
I don't want to pay a membership fee to start earning money and then get ripped off.

A

(a sudden realization)
I'll eat tuna out of the can.

E

I work at home and my cable, phone, and internet are free.

C

(proudly, to E)
The first umbrellas were associated with social status in Ancient Egypt.

(No response.)

C

(insisting, loudly)
Can you believe that?

E

(to C)
I'm too old for manual labor.

A

(strutting from upstage center)
I am a huge Eminem fan and I find it flattering that he would rap about me.

D

(to C)
It doesn't matter if you have a Valentine or not.
Just love yourself and be your own.

(C climbs up on a chair.)

C

(in an instructive tone)
Instead of thinking about strings and anti-strings, picture a room that has a bunch of cables attached to random points on the walls.

B

(to **A**)
I'm suicidal again.

A

(sympathetically, to **B**)
White is one of my favorite colors, and I actually have a white car.

D

(to **A**, pleadingly)
I love white.

E

(to **A** and **D**)
I think my sense of style is evolving. I'm figuring out ways to be sexy without having to flaunt it.

C

(again, trying to bring order)
Now imagine that the cables can move, and every time they intersect, they can combine.

D

(competitively)
There is some evidence of Romans using umbrellas to protect a person from the rain.

C

(with patient understanding)
The final step is that in four or more space dimensions, the moving strings will typically never meet.

A

(to **E**)
I love to bake cupcakes and I'm really good at it.

B

(to **A**)
Do you think you could make me a cupcake sometime?
I'd love a cupcake.

(Suddenly, **E** gets a great idea about **A** and **B** and decides to share his "aha" moment with the others.)

E

There are many factors that might make a CatDog relationship work.

(During the following exchange, **B** and **A** become the “supersymmetric partners” of which **C** speaks. They shake and shimmy like electrons.)

B

The cat will need to increase his or her outward displays of affection.

A

The cat will also have to accept that his or her mate will be more affectionate than the cat person deems necessary or even desirable.

C

Supersymmetric partners to currently known particles have not been observed in particle experiments.

(**E** grabs hold of **A** and **B**.)

E

If a CatDog mismatch is causing you a significant problem, I strongly suggest counseling.

C

(from outside, breaking the pattern)

However, particle accelerators could be on the verge of finding evidence for high energy supersymmetry in the next decade.

(**A** nearly collapses.)

A

I don't feel good.

D

Take a ticket.

B

(to **C**)

I put you in charge of things.

A

I had a shot with a short sale.

B

My toe hurts.

E

I'm tired.

D

Hey. It's raining in here.

C

I'm hungry.

E

One salad a day.

(**D** and **C** stack the chairs, and **C** sits on top of them. **D** takes out her umbrella, places it over **C**'s head, and they both stare out at the rainy night with a video backdrop of clouds in a dark sky behind them. Lights fade to black.)