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SF PERUSALS

The Secret Life of Seagulls

by Henry Meyerson

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUELFRENCH.COM

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CHARACTERS

ANNE – Wears attire suitable for the beach through-out the play: bathing-suit, sun-glasses, hat, sandals. Although she is at times wistful and introspectively sad, there is also a sense of youthfulness.

DON – Married to Anne; wears beach attire opening and last scene, otherwise, casual. Tends toward the taciturn, but also can seem vulnerable. Close friends with Jim.

JIM – Friends with Don; attire indicates he spends a lot of time on the golf course. Shows youthful enthusiasm when discussing golf with Don, otherwise angry and defensive with his wife.

SANDY – Married to Jim, close friend of Anne. In beach attire when with Anne, casual attire when with Jim. As opposed to her friend Anne, Sandy tends to view the world through jaundiced eyes.

FRED – A seagull; you can tell by his feathers or any other device to indicate "seagullness."

GEORGE – Another seagull, same age as Fred.

ETHEL – George's wife (she's expecting).

FRED, JR. – Son of George and Ethel (named after Fred).

MABEL – A seagull looking for prospects.

All Seagull roles may be doubled by the four human characters.

PLACE

A beach in Florida; A bar somewhere up North.

TIME

Now.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Plays that are written in a vacuum generally stay there. To get the play produced or published, the play had better be written with the work and advice of smart, talented actors in smart, talented workshops of the kind I was fortunate enough to find. These included: New Jersey Dramatists (Peter Ernst, Artistic Director), and Times Square Playwrights (Tom Thornton, Artistic Director). I would especially like to thank Jennifer Earhart and Branan Whitehead of New Jersey Dramatists, and Sharlene Hartman and Jim Nugent of Times Square Playwrights. Also, despite their occasional lapse in decorum, I would like to thank the multitude of seagulls for their unstinting encouragement and feathers.

Finally, as always, I dedicate this play to my wife, Ronnie, who has always been the smartest and best looking gull on the beach.

–Henry Meyerson
2009

(SETTING: Two beach chairs, side by side, facing audience.)

(AT LIGHTS: **ANNE** *and* **DON** *enter in bathing suits, sit, apply sun-block to themselves. They sit back and admire the view.)*

ANNE. Florida is beautiful this time of year, isn't it? The blue sky, the blue water, the white sand, the seagulls. Reminds me of our honeymoon. Remember the night when we did it on the beach? I still think that old man saw us. I mean, why else would he have been winking at us the next morning? Now that I think of it, it was more like leering. Yep, he definitely saw us. *(beat)* Bermuda. It was just beautiful. The motorbikes. The crappy English food. Oh, the flowers. I never saw such beautiful flowers. The reds, magentas, blues, yellows. Bright, sparkling almost. And the aroma of those flowers. It's been ten years and I can still smell the aroma. *(beat)* You know I think I still have that kilt you bought. I think it's still up in the attic. Now that your legs have…well, filled out, you might look good in it. *(beat)* No, probably not. *(beat)* Jesus, were we young. *(beat)* I guess all beaches are beautiful if the weather is right. They all have the same sand, the same blue water, the same blue sky. Probably the same seagulls. You know, there might only be a hundred seagulls in the whole world and they just fly from place to place just like us, flying from one beach to another, laying under the same sky, on the same beach, looking at the same sea. Those may be the same seagulls flying over our head right now. *(beat)* Strange isn't it that I've never seen anyone hit with seagull shit. All these years, all these seagulls, I've never seen anyone hit. *(beat)* You know which seagulls are lucky? The ones that are born near garbage dumps. They don't have to go out

looking for food like these poor little guys. The food is brought to them. Everyday those seagulls wake up and a new load of food is being trucked in right to their doorstep. Do seagulls have nests or do they just sort of squat down? I guess it's a nest, isn't it. Anyway, all they have to do is walk a few steps and eat their breakfast. If they could read, they'd have the newspaper brought in with their food. Just lucky to be born near a dump. I guess I'm lucky not to have been born near a dump. The smell…whoa! *(beat)* How did I get from the beauty of Bermuda and our honeymoon to the stink of a garbage dump? The mind is a strange animal, Don.

(after a pause)

DON. I'm going.

(Lights fade on **ANNE** *as* **DON** *puts on a shirt and crosses to sit with* **JIM** *at a table in a coffee shop.)*

JIM. You remember the eighth hole on that course.

DON. Dog leg left?

JIM. Right.

DON. I think it's left, Jimmy.

JIM. No, I mean you're right, it's left.

DON. Got ya.

JIM. What, about 310 to the pin, right?

DON. Yeah.

JIM. Reached it with a driver and wedge.

DON. Get out.

JIM. Dropped it pin high.

DON. Get out.

JIM. Knocked it down for a birdy wordy, Donny, baby.

DON. Son of a gun.

JIM. Even better. On the twelfth…

DON. About 515?

JIM. Exactly.

DON. Sand traps.

JIM. Like the fucking Sahara.

DON. So?

JIM. Driver, three wood, nine iron, one putt and gone, baby.

DON. You birdied the twelfth?

JIM. You got it.

DON. Get out.

JIM. Birdy wordy, Donny, baby.

DON. Good going, big guy.

JIM. Yup. Two birdy wordies for the round.

DON. What'd you shoot for the round?

JIM. The whole round?

DON. Yeah. With the two birdies, what'd you shoot?

JIM. 104.

DON. That's not a score, Jimmy, it's a fever.

JIM. Sure, Don, never mind my good holes. You always have to be a downer. I tell you my good stuff, you make sure to bring up my bad.

DON. Just asking.

JIM. Well, sometimes you should lighten up, Donny.

DON. I feel light. Sometimes you ignore the dark side, Luke.

JIM. Very funny.

DON. Just trying to "lighten up."

JIM. You play in Florida?

DON. Yeah.

JIM. How'd you make out, Tiger?

DON. Fine.

JIM. Liar.

DON. Just fine, thank you.

JIM. You're not going to tell, are you?

DON. Not after this little exchange. I'd be like a sitting duck.

JIM. Annie go with you?

DON. Of course.

JIM. She play.

DON. Yup.

JIM. This is like pulling teeth.

DON. You ask, I tell.

JIM. How is Annie?

DON. She tends to slice and not much of a short game.

JIM. How is Annie?

DON. I left her.

JIM. Where?

DON. At the beach.

JIM. Don't blame you. I hate the beach.

DON. I left her.

JIM. Yeah, you said. That's how come you're here.

DON. I mean I left her.

JIM. Left as in left left.

DON. As in bye-bye.

JIM. At the beach.

DON. Staring into the sea and babbling about seagulls shitting on people. After five days of listening to her, I felt staples were being driven into my head.

JIM. You never see that happen, do you?

DON. Of course you don't. The staples thing is just a figure of speech.

JIM. I was talking about the seagulls. Given the number of seagulls at the beach, you'd think you would have seen at least once in a while someone get shat on.

DON. Is that a real word?

JIM. Which?

DON. Shat.

JIM. No idea, but you get the point. Have you heard from her?

DON. Who?

JIM. Anne.

DON. No.

JIM. You haven't spoken?

DON. Not a word.

JIM. You've been married…

DON. Ten years.

JIM. And you just…

DON. No, not just, Jim. Jeez, give me some credit.

JIM. So how long…?

DON. About a week.

JIM. Still sounds like a…

DON. Not a snap decision, Jim. Plenty of thought went into this. *(beat)* Well, maybe not plenty, but enough. It was the fucking seagulls put it over the edge.

JIM. Yeah, I can see that.

(Lights cross fade to:)

*(***ANNE** *and* **SANDY** *seated in the beach chairs.)*

SANDY. Just like that?

ANNE. Exactly. Isn't that strange?

SANDY. I've heard of these things happening.

ANNE. Really?

SANDY. Oh, sure.

(pause)

Well, come to think of it maybe not. Just got up and left, huh?

ANNE. Just got up and left.

SANDY. Without a word.

ANNE. No. Let me think. Ah. He said, "I'm going."

SANDY. "I'm going."

ANNE. That's what he said, Sandy. "I'm going."

SANDY. What did you think he meant?

ANNE. What do you mean?

SANDY. Well, did you think Don meant he'll be right back, or that he was going to the bathroom, or that he was, I don't know, leaving.

ANNE. Leaving as in…?

SANDY. Leaving leaving.

ANNE. I didn't give it much thought at the time. I guess I figured he'd be right back. That he had to tinkle or something. No reason to think otherwise.

SANDY. What were you guys doing?

ANNE. Just sitting here chatting about the beach, the sky, the water and about our honeymoon. I thought it was a nice romantic time. Then he said "I'm going" and then he left.

SANDY. A week ago.

ANNE. Tomorrow will be a week. Strange, don't you think?

SANDY. That Don left or that you waited a week to call anyone?

ANNE. That he left.

SANDY. But why did you wait so long to call?

ANNE. I told you. I thought he was coming back.

SANDY. Annie, it's been a week.

ANNE. Tomorrow.

SANDY. What have you been doing for the past week in this hotel alone?

ANNE. Waiting.

(cross fade to:)

DON. Where's Sandy?

JIM. Not sure. When I got back a couple of days ago from the golfing thingee, she wasn't here.

DON. Ah. You thought she would be home, then.

JIM. No reason to think otherwise, right? I mean she's always been home when I got there.

DON. Didn't she go with you on this trip?

JIM. Yeah.

DON. So…

JIM. I was putting out the seventh hole, turned around and she was gone. When I got back to the room she was gone. I just figured she'd gotten bored and went home.

DON. So what did you do?

JIM. Finished out the week-end. Beautiful course.

DON. Yeah, I remember.

JIM. Two birdy wordies.

DON. She leave a note?

JIM. No.

DON. Well, at least we know she's not with her mother.

JIM. How do we know that?

DON. Isn't her mother dead?

JIM. Oh, that's right. Boy, that old lady hated me.

DON. Why's that?

JIM. She thought I played too much golf. Apparently her ex-husband played a lot of golf.

DON. That would be Sandy's…

JIM. No. That was her step-father. Her father just disappeared one day.

DON. How do you disappear?

JIM. Way Sandy tells it, he left the house to buy some cough drops and never came home.

DON. So there was no note?

JIM. From her father?

DON. No, Sandy.

JIM. Nope.

DON. Anything missing?

JIM. Some of her clothes.

(cross fade to:)

ANNE. It is nice here, isn't it?

SANDY. So restful.

ANNE. Quiet.

SANDY. Except for the seagulls.

ANNE. What's wrong with the seagulls.

SANDY. All that squawking. *(makes squawking sound)* Sounds eerie at night. *(makes squawking sound)*

ANNE. For some reason I find that sound reassuring.

(pause)

SANDY. I left him.

ANNE. Who?

SANDY. Jim.

ANNE. I assumed that when you got off the plane without him.

SANDY. You knew I left Jim?

ANNE. He's not here, is he? So, yeah, I figured you left him when you came down here.

SANDY. I don't mean I just left him. I left left him.

ANNE. Left left?

SANDY. As in adios, Jimmy, baby.

ANNE. Why?

SANDY. Golf. Golf, golf, golf. Endless playing, then endlessly talking about it.

ANNE. Is that a good enough reason to leave your husband?

SANDY. It was for me, kiddo.

ANNE. What did he say?

SANDY. I told you. He was talking about golf.

ANNE. I mean when you told him you were leaving.

SANDY. Since I didn't tell him I was leaving, not much he could have said.

ANNE. You just up and left?

SANDY. Between the seventh and eighth holes.

ANNE. Just like Don. Not a word, up and left.

SANDY. Except no seagulls.

(cross fade to:)

*(***FRED***, a seagull, is squatting on the stage.* **GEORGE***, a seagull, enters, walks around then approaches* **FRED***.)*

GEORGE. Is this seat taken?

FRED. Plenty for everyone, pal.

GEORGE. I'm George.

FRED. Pull up some sand, George. I'm Fred.

*(***GEORGE** *squats. He makes seagull noises as he makes himself comfortable. They both preen their feathers for awhile.)*

FRED. *(cont.) (upbeat)* Nice out here today, right George? The sea, the sand, the sky, bright sun. Makes you glad to be a seagull.

GEORGE. It certainly does.

FRED. *(downbeat)* Then again it's pretty much the same all over isn't it. Seen one beach, seen 'em all. Kind of desolate out here sometimes. Sometimes the fog rolls in can't see your beak in front of your wing.

GEORGE. I wouldn't know.

FRED. You must have seen other beaches.

GEORGE. Nope.

FRED. Ah, you're one of those land-locked seagulls. This must be quite a change.

GEORGE. And a pleasant one, that's for sure.

FRED. Welcome to paradise, George.

GEORGE. Thanks. And you're right, Fred. It is lovely here.

FRED. Here on holiday or business?

GEORGE. Just taking a little vacation. First ever.

FRED. That right? First land-locked, now never been away. You've been under wraps, George.

GEORGE. Oh, it's been fine. You get born into something that works, pretty much okay to stick to it.

FRED. Maybe so. Here with the misses?

GEORGE. No. She's not much for long trips, so I just took off, so to speak.

FRED. You've really never just flown the coop?

GEORGE. Nice play on words, Fred, but nope, pretty much stay home with the misses.

FRED. Where's home?

GEORGE. Up north. Staten Island.

FRED. No kidding? What a great place.

GEORGE. You've been there?

FRED. I'm a travelin' gull, George. Yeah, I've been there a couple of times. Are you close to the landfill?

GEORGE. Close? I'm right at the landfill.

FRED. In?

GEORGE. On. Like the house on a lake or on a golf course.

FRED. That is awesome.

GEORGE. Yes. A lovely spot. Great view. I get to see the garbage trucks come in and unload.

FRED. That must be exciting.

GEORGE. It's a comfortable life.

FRED. That spot must have cost you a pretty penny.

GEORGE. I made some good investments in garbage recycling. I just kept trading up.

FRED. Sweet.

GEORGE. How about yourself? Vacation?

FRED. Kind of. I'm single so, like I said, I just keep moving around. Wanderlust, you might say. Right now I have a little bachelor pad on the other side of the dune over there.

GEORGE. Very nice.

FRED. Over all, yeah, but I don't have your luxury. I have to either go get my own food or call in.

GEORGE. You have call in?

FRED. I usually order week old sushi.

GEORGE. Very nice. If I'm lucky, sometimes I find some of that.

FRED. I wouldn't complain. You've got a smorgasbord of stuff right at your door.

GEORGE. It's not all week-old sushi, Fred. It may be delivered to the door, but it's seagull eat seagull out there to get the stuff.

FRED. Competition, huh?

GEORGE. Almost enough to make me a vegetarian.

FRED. So, you have a great, stable location, but have to fight to feed. I have unlimited freedom to move around, but hope to get dead fish washed up on the beach each day for my meals.

GEORGE. Are you comparing our lives?

FRED. Just our situations.

(cross fade to:)

ANNE. Do you think Jim knows you've gone away?

SANDY. Since I didn't tell him, he probably hasn't even noticed.

ANNE. Oh, he must have noticed. After a while he'd notice.

SANDY. Took you a week. Don goes for a pee, doesn't come back for a week and you figure he was going for the world record for taking the longest leak in history.

ANNE. I knew he was gone, Sandy. I just didn't realize he had gone gone. There's a difference. I asked if you think Jim noticed you had gone or had gone gone.

SANDY. A distinction without a difference.

ANNE. I don't know what that means.

SANDY. It means Jim just doesn't give a shit either way.

ANNE. Oh, I don't believe…

SANDY. It all became perfectly clear to me on the seventh hole.

ANNE. What did?

SANDY. He was putting out or digging a divot or whatever and I just realized he would rather be doing that than be with me.

ANNE. Excuse me, Sandy, but a lot of woman are golf widows.

SANDY. And a lot of women are schmucks, Anne. Ten years of trailing him around the country, course by course, hole by hole, divot by divot. Enough. Enough "Where'd the fucking ball go?" Enough watching him throw the clubs into the pond. And more than enough, thank you, of "birdy wordy."

ANNE. What?

SANDY. He says that sometimes when he's playing and it seems to make him very happy.

ANNE. *(puzzled)* Birdy wordy. What do you think it means?

SANDY. Am I attractive?

ANNE. Well…

SANDY. Am I attractive!

ANNE. Yes.

SANDY. Would men find me appealing?

ANNE. Sure.

SANDY. Do I have a right to determine my future?

ANNE. Of course.

SANDY. Then no more birdy wordies, Anne. Never again.

ANNE. Can't say I blame you.

SANDY. Blame me? I should be applauded for putting up with him for so long. I was just up to here *(touches her throat)* with him. Fed up.

ANNE. Do you think that's why Don walked out?

SANDY. Birdy wordies?

ANNE. Being fed up with me.

SANDY. Yes.

ANNE. You didn't have to answer so quickly. You could have thought about it a bit first.

SANDY. Why beat around the bush. Fed up with you. That's it. Just as I was fed up with Jim.

ANNE. But what was there to be fed up about?

*(***SANDY** *stares at* **ANNE**.*)*

But we loved each other.

SANDY. I love profiteroles, but that doesn't mean…

ANNE. What's that?

SANDY. What?

ANNE. Profit something. What you just said.

SANDY. Profiteroles?

ANNE. Yeah, that.

SANDY. Pastry filled with cream.

ANNE. That sounds good.

SANDY. You usually pour chocolate syrup over them.

ANNE. Wow.

SANDY. Can I get back to…

ANNE. I'm sorry, but I always like to learn.

SANDY. But somehow we went from doomed marriages to profiteroles.

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