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Spotlight

by Buddy Thomas

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL
FRENCH**

FOUNDED 1830

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CHARACTERS

(All college students – early twenties)

GAIL

BRIAN

MICKEY

KAREN

SETTING

A very messy college dorm room.

TIME

A warm March evening, not long ago.....7:30 PM.

(AT RISE: Darkness.)

(The only shadowy light comes from a few dying rays of sun which have crept in past a drawn window shade.)

(On one bed, there is a hint of passionate movement... some heavy breathing.)

(Then, all at once, it stops.)

(GAIL sits up and begins fumbling for her clothing.)

GAIL. Do you know how much I hate rich people? Do you realize how deep and totally overwhelming this hatred is? It's a deep hate. Deep. I want you to know this in case by some astronomical chance I ever come in to a lot of money so you can kick me in the tits in I start displaying symptoms of the wealthy. Symptoms, get it? Cause it's a sickness, a disease that if you're not completely careful makes you forget to be concerned with anyone but yourself, and can I just tell you, Brian, I have no intention of ever being so full of myself and the glamour of the inside of some twelve thousand dollar Prada purse that I forget to notice the rest of the world. I...you know why I'm saying this?

BRIAN. Karen Hedges.

GAIL. *(without stopping from her previous)* It – just – some things really disgust me about this place and it keeps going through my mind about Karen Hedges and how every time there's an audition, her mother mails her American Express Black Card all the way from Phoenix, Arizona, to little Miss Karen, who is then at full liberty to take that card, black, it's BLACK, ok, that means that only like billionaires have them, and Karen's allowed to charge whatever dress she wants to wear to the audition, no matter the price, no matter the place, no matter. Whatever dress. Whatever! You

get it? It's not a problem. She can do it. Next semester, she's coming back with a Mercedes. She's been bragging about it all week. I'm throwing a brick through the window. That white satin rag she wore to the Peter Pan audition last year cost six thousand bucks. Six thousand, can you believe that? That's an actual fact, straight from Connie, and Connie knows because Connie was there when Karen whipped that Black American Express Card out and SWIPED it! And she'll never wear it again. Nobody's ever gonna see that thing again, because the next time there's an audition or a big formal party or whatever that credit card'll be sailin' over the skies of America again, and ol' Karen'll make her grand entrance in a sparkling new million dollar rag, which, worn once, will disappear like a plane in the Bermuda Triangle. Poof! The bitch must have a closet the size of the dining hall.

BRIAN. (*turning on a lamp*) Babe....

GAIL. Can you believe a Mercedes? She told me that herself. I think my mouth dropped open about two feet. Isn't she worried about driving a car like that in this city? Of course not, cause if something happens, like a scratch on the bottom of a tire, she'll just drive it to the nearest garbage dump and pick up another on the way home. It's not a problem.

BRIAN. Gail...

GAIL. What, honey?

BRIAN. The way you can go from sex to bitching in a lightning flash just really chills my blood.

GAIL. I'm not bitching.

BRIAN. You started before my tongue was even out of your mouth.

GAIL. Yeah?

BRIAN. And you're dressed now. Look at you. I can't believe it.

GAIL. Believe it. That cast list is goin' up any second, and I got better things to do than lay around all night.

BRIAN. I thought you didn't care about the cast list any more.

GAIL. I don't. I don't care. I stopped caring. Why should I care. I couldn't care less. The last show of my last year. A part I've wanted to play since I was four years old. The final theatrical production I have the potential of being involved with in my life, as long as I live, before I take my useless sixty thousand dollar diploma away to some shoe-box roach palace in the Bronx, wait on tables 'til I'm thirty, squirt the secret sauce on Big Macs 'til I'm forty, drop dead of fatigue when I'm fifty, why is there reason to CARE?!?!?

BRIAN. So then –

GAIL. Mickey's down there already. He's been there since noon. Didn't go to a class all day. You aware of that?

BRIAN. He wasn't in bio.

GAIL. Cause he was in the theatre sitting smack against the call board like a police dog. He missed Karlson's mid-term and everything. I'm, you know why I'm telling you this? I'm telling you this so you can realize how incredibly calm and rational I'm being, considering.

BRIAN. Fine. Okay.

GAIL. I'm just telling you.

BRIAN. Great. Go, um, find out. Take your time. I've got things to do too.

GAIL. Because –

BRIAN. No more speeches, huh? If you keep babbling, my eardrums are gonna melt.

GAIL. Hey.

BRIAN. Well you just talk, and talk, you know. I don't even need to be in the room. You just go on, and on, from one subject to the next, it bothers me the way –

GAIL. – It bothers me the way I can't get a little support when I need it the most.

BRIAN. How can I support you? I can't get a word in! You're out in the sky some place, you and Mickey, man, runnin' around, makin' yourselves crazy over nothing –

GAIL. Nothing to you.

(She starts to leave.)

BRIAN. Babe, Gail, wait, okay –

GAIL. No, I'm –

BRIAN. Come on.

GAIL. What.

BRIAN. I'm sorry.

GAIL. You're –

BRIAN. Come over here.

GAIL. Brian, even as we speak, Karen Hedges is finding out she's been cast as Maria, and I think I need to be there to knock out a few of her teeth.

BRIAN. Well, when do I get a chance to be with you?

GAIL. You're with me now, we just –

BRIAN. I mean –

GAIL. We'll have all semester to spend together when I don't get cast.

BRIAN. You're cast. Don't pretend you think you're not. If not Maria, then some other part. Chorus, or –

GAIL. Oh. No. You do not seem to understand the situation, Brian –

BRIAN. Here we go.

GAIL. – because if they by some sick, unexplained mystery happen to get the guts to *dare* to stick me in that chorus after all I've done for them, my last show, it's – it's not as if –

BRIAN. Okay. I know. Okay.

GAIL. If it is such a hassle to listen to me –

BRIAN. It's not, Gail, if you say something new, I just can't take it any more, you should hear Mickey. He goes on and on just like you until three in the fucking morning. I go to sleep and have terrible nightmares about *West Side Story* and I'm not even in the theatre department.

GAIL. Do you dream I don't get Maria?

BRIAN. No, I dream that the Jets and the Sharks are dancing on top of my grave.

GAIL. Well, I guess I could get Maria. God knows I should get Maria. I don't think I'm being unrealistic about thinking I'm right for – I mean, poor Mickey. He honestly, *honestly* thinks he is right for Tony. I mean, I'm not being crazy, am I, to think –

BRIAN. What's the matter with Mickey playing Tony? He sounds okay –

GAIL. Babe, this is *West Side Story*. Not *La Cage*.

BRIAN. La what?

GAIL. Look. I don't have much going for me in this world, but I've at least got the capacity to be realistic when it comes to –

BRIAN. He was doin' that song in here the other day for the ten thousandth time and he sounds just like the guy on the CD.

GAIL. Trust me. They'd cast him as Anita before they give him Tony.

BRIAN. Well, then I don't understand, then.

GAIL. No. Ya don't.

BRIAN. I'm betting you both get the leads. You sing good together. You look good together.

GAIL. Standing next to him, I'm a ballerina hippo from *Fantasia*.

BRIAN. Well –

GAIL. But wait, can I just tell you about Karen Hedges' accent? Her Spanish accent? I mean, of course it's not a Spanish accent. Everyone who heard her read knew it wasn't a Spanish accent. What it was, what it is, that is a mystery no one can solve. Jack said she sounded like Miss Celie in *The Color Purple*. The point is, the hag has less acting talent than a rotten cantaloupe. But they don't care. They'll give her Maria. They've let her ruin enough shows at this school, what's one more, right?

BRIAN. (*His head is starting to throb.*) What's one more.

(*He retreats to his desk and makes a thin attempt to get some work done.*)

GAIL. Right. I mean, after she scared the living shit out of thousands of children as Peter Pan, you think they'd take a hint.

BRIAN. A hint.

GAIL. Kids were screaming. Crying, hysterical, all through the show. It was horrible. She just couldn't make them believe.

BRIAN. Horrible.

GAIL. And *Streetcar*. Jesus. She played that part like a deranged crack whore. Not that she could remember a single line –

BRIAN. Gail?

GAIL. Yes?

BRIAN. Why don't you go to the theatre now. I'm gonna try to get some stuff done.

GAIL. What did you wanna talk to me about?

BRIAN. It's not important.

GAIL. Later, maybe?

BRIAN. Later, you'll be incoherent. You'll be this big puddle of screeching goo.

GAIL. You're saying I won't get it?!?

BRIAN. You're saying you won't get it! What do I know? I'm just listening and agreeing because it's all I have the energy to do any more.

GAIL. I can't believe this. You really think I'm not good enough to play that part.

BRIAN. Oh my God. Gail. Honey. I know you could do it.

GAIL. Just *do it*!?

BRIAN. Do it great, amazing. Magnificent. Spectacular. The universe would never know a better performance...
But –

GAIL. But?

BRIAN. Look, I just have this on my mind. I've got to say it to you.

GAIL. You think Karen Hedges would be better.

BRIAN. No, I don't think Karen Hedges would be better. Come over here and sit next to me.

GAIL. You've always had a little crush on her. You think I don't notice these things.

BRIAN. Would you give me two seconds please to say something to you?

(She sits next to him. She sits on an apple core. Stands up. Hands it to BRIAN.)

Ughhhh, I'm sorry, this garbage pile I'm living in –

GAIL. *(sitting down again)* Every room is messy.

BRIAN. Some rooms are messy. This one's a landfill. *Mickey.* Look at this thing.

(BRIAN has picked up something disgusting.)

Every day, I find a new, unidentified molding object. What is this?

GAIL. Brian, everyone's gonna know the list before I do.

BRIAN. I just wanna tell you something.

GAIL. If this is gonna be a relationship talk, how I'm a shitty girlfriend, blah blah –

BRIAN. I just wanna tell you one thing.

GAIL. One thing, huh?

BRIAN. One thing.

GAIL. Okay, lemme brace myself here.

BRIAN. You don't have to brace yourself for anything, Gail. I just wanna tell you that I love you.

GAIL. You love me.

BRIAN. I love you.

GAIL. You love me.

BRIAN. Yes.

GAIL. That's it?

BRIAN. And I love the time I spend with you.

GAIL. That's two things.

BRIAN. Oh. Sorry.

GAIL. Look. I'm...I'm sorry the way I act. I'm...uh...not a very good person.

BRIAN. What do you –

GAIL. Really, you know. Something inside of me is green and black and rotten. I can feel it there. I'm not good. I'm evil, sort of.

BRIAN. I've always wanted to date a demon.

GAIL. Well, it's true. Only an evil person would find joy thinking of Karen Hedges hanging upside down by her fake toenails from the top of the Empire State Building.

BRIAN. I'm sure many would find the same joy.

GAIL. As crazed and starving vultures peck out her eyeballs and send her entrails falling to Fifth Avenue.

BRIAN. Well –

GAIL. As she screams. I'm evil. I always felt sorry for the villains in Walt Disney movies when they fell over the cliff or got the dagger through their heart, whatever. The Queen in Snow White is a very sympathetic character. She's living her life, minding her own business, and along comes this sing-songy little bitch who prances around in a yellow hoops skirt talking to pigeons. I'm tellin' ya, I'd do the same thing the Queen did and order my guard to take her to the woods and rip her heart out.

BRIAN. Gail, I want you to get the part. I really do.

GAIL. So do I, boy, you know if –

BRIAN. Shhhhhh...But um...part of me. Part of me is hoping you don't get it, that you don't even make the show. And wait a minute don't look at me like that, cause I wanna tell you why. Look, mmm...man. Okay. It's this. There's, the way I see it, there's these last few months of school left, and that's all I've got to spend with you before everything goes crashing into a black hole when who knows what's gonna happen to any of us,

or anything. I've got a few ideas what might happen to you and me, but I don't like to think about 'em, cause they're not too happy. At least, I mean, I see what happens to like, Bob Carrera and Jodie. When Bob graduated, he met someone else two months later, and then Jodie did too and well...The way people zip through your life for a split second and then kaplow! Gone. It's safe here. It seems like it could go on forever, you and me. Until you get to the end of the track and the train goes spilling all the passengers over a cliff.

GAIL. We're not gonna –

BRIAN. No, we don't know what's gonna happen. I got another year left here, and you'll be out in the city making all your little theatre connections, that stuff, and then the train'll spit me out over the edge, but that's a year. By, by that time, I mean...who knows? I'm scared of what could happen to us, Gail. I know we aren't perfect, not even close to it, but losing friends and people I love makes me sick all through my body...But we've got these couple of months left. And we could have so much together, do so much, if...Well, if you had the time to spare. But you won't have it. You'll be in that theatre, every single night, every hour, every weekend, then...I'm, uh....I just love you, Gail. I'm sorry. I just love you and I'm scared. I'm sorry.

GAIL. Brian...It's not gonna end.

BRIAN. How can it not?

GAIL. We have to trust each other.

BRIAN. I do. I mean –

GAIL. But you don't understand how bad I want that part.

BRIAN. No, I do, and I want you to get it –

GAIL. You –

BRIAN. I do. I want you to get it. I'm being selfish to want anything else. This is your career. What's more important than that? It's what you came here for –

GAIL. But I love you –

BRIAN. And I love you. Look, this is stupid. Sometime I just feel as if, I don't know...I'm holding you back, something –

(MICKEY enters, slamming the door. He is not happy. He is holding an empty tequila bottle, which he will promptly toss on the floor.)

MICKEY. Don't ask me, I don't wanna talk about it. I need more liquor and I need it bad.

GAIL. Wait, don't tell me, I wanna look for myself!

BRIAN. It's up?

MICKEY. It *was* up til I ripped it down.

GAIL. Who's Maria?!?!?!? No!! Don't tell me! Is anyone there??

MICKEY. Everyone's there. Waiting for that bald headed stork Fergeson to type up a new list. The original is now floating somewhere in the New York sewage system.

GAIL. You ripped it down?! Seriously?!

MICKEY. I seriously did. And I seriously tore it into a hundred pieces and flushed it down the toilet. It is now exactly where it belongs. Floating with shit!!

GAIL. Who's Maria?!? I have to know! NO!! Don't say it, I can't stand it. Wait, who are you?

MICKEY. *(coy)* Me?

GAIL. You didn't get – ?

MICKEY. Darling, don't pretend you thought even for a moment that I *would* get Tony.

GAIL. Philip?

MICKEY. Who else?

GAIL. Oh my God, I can't believe he's –

BRIAN. *(holds up mystery object)* Mickey, what the hell is this?

MICKEY. A midnight snack.

GAIL. Did I make the show?!

MICKEY. You made it, all right.

GAIL. *(She has worked herself into complete hysterics.)* What's that supposed to mean? No! Don't tell me! I have to see for myself! Where's my other shoe?!?

MICKEY. Yes, that's right. Don't concern yourself with my sorry fate, Gail. Friends like you –

GAIL. I'm concerned for you, Mickey, but you're not the only one at that audition who was up for a lead –

MICKEY. I may have been up for a lead, courtesy call that it was, but as of this moment, you may call me chorus boy number three.

GAIL. They didn't.

MICKEY. They nothing. Fergeson's the one who's gonna find new meaning in the word "terror" not long from now. My revenge shall be long and painful.

GAIL. I'm going now. I can't believe Philip. Jesus. I'm sorry, Mickey. Bye, Brian. I'll be back ten minutes, love you bye.

(She exits, slamming the door.)

MICKEY. Ohh, well. I never *really* thought I stood a chance against the North American Drug Connection.

(MICKEY has picked up something, taken a bite, and tosses it on the floor halfway through BRIAN's next line.)

BRIAN. What the hell is that supposed to – PICK that up before I ram it straight up your ass!

MICKEY. Ooooh, you just gave me a hot flash.

BRIAN. Mickey, I want you to stop throwing your crap all over the floor. I can't walk to the bathroom at night with the lights out any more cause I'll step on the petrified remains of your last week's lunch!

MICKEY. Thanks, Brian. There's so much concern for my emotions at this college, I can barely stand it.

BRIAN. I can only be concerned about so much, okay? A person only has the ability to be concerned about so much before his brain splits into a million bloody shreds and explodes, what fuckin' part did you get this time?!

MICKEY. As if you care –

BRIAN. Well, Mickey, I better care, right, unless I want guilt for the next –

MICKEY. No, forget it.

BRIAN. What did Gail get?

MICKEY. I'm Nibbles.

BRIAN. Huh??

MICKEY. I never even knew there was a character in *West Side Story* named Nibbles, but there is, and I'm it, after all this build up, three lines, max. I'm sure, but hey, hey, hey, there's no small parts, only small actors, right?

BRIAN. I wouldn't know.

MICKEY. You wouldn't.

BRIAN. What'd Gail get?

MICKEY. See? You don't care about me, you don't care that I'm Nibbles, nobody cares that I'm Nibbles, it's my last show, I'm a goddamned Senior, they cast me as a character named Nibbles?!?!? Troy, you know Troy?

BRIAN. No.

MICKEY. Troy!! The freshman? The one with the teeth?! He's Chino! A FRESHMAN!!

BRIAN. Who's Chino?

MICKEY. Well he's a bigger goddamned part than Nibbles!

BRIAN. Someone buy me a plane ticket to Siberia.

MICKEY. If it's such a hassle listening to me –

BRIAN. Were you and Gail separated at birth?!

MICKEY. An Engineering major could hardly understand.

BRIAN. I'm gonna lose it. I'm gonna scream 'til a lung flies outta my mouth. Mickey, I know you're all in a panic about this –

MICKEY. I'm not in any kind of a panic, I could care less, cast a drug addict as the fucking male lead. He's snorting up even as we speak. When he goes crashing off the fire escape on opening night in a cloud of white powder, they'll have only themselves to blame.

BRIAN. Listen, I hate –

MICKEY. Do you know that he can roll up a Kleenex tissue and put it in one nostril and pull it out through the other nostril?! The kid's nose twenty-two and he's already snorted himself a third nostril!!

BRIAN. This room!!

MICKEY. I'll clean it. Forget it. Maybe I won't even do the show.

BRIAN. No, I can't forget –

MICKEY. Yes, you can, I mean, I have so many better things to worry about than getting on that stage and entertaining a bunch eighty year-old doctors and their families who are all too cheap to buy tickets to a Broadway show so they go see the magic of college theatre instead! All of 'em coughing and hacking and falling asleep at the most climactic moment of whatever's going on –

BRIAN. Mickey, it's enough, I wanna talk to you about this room.

MICKEY. (*spots a bottle of liquor, half-full*) Right here. This is what I need.

BRIAN. I can't live like this.

MICKEY. Jose Cuervo Gold. Come on, Brian. Let's do shots. Fly with me to Neverland!

BRIAN. No thanks, Lush, on a Tuesday night. Hey Mickey, it's getting really ridiculous in here. I feel like I'm living in a giant kitty box, except that the cats are shitting out pizza crust and half-Strawberry Pop-Tarts and mold covered peanut butter sandwiches!

MICKEY. I'll clean tomorrow. Can't you see I'm recovering from a tragic situation?

BRIAN. You got crap lying around from last semester! I finally got sick of staring at that green bagel and flushed it down the toilet. I'm surprised there wasn't an explosion!

MICKEY. All right, Joan. I'll clean tomorrow!

BRIAN. You won't, you say that, but –

MICKEY. Tomorrow, get off my back!

(GAIL bursts back into the room.)

GAIL. Okay! I can't take the suspense! Tell me!

MICKEY. *(slurping on the bottle, as he will continue to do for the rest of the play)* I ain't tellin' ya. Go look for yourself.

GAIL. I got halfway there, I couldn't see in front of me. I saw spots. Big, twirling orange and purple spots.

MICKEY. That means you have an aneurysm and you'll be dead within the hour.

GAIL. It's bad news, isn't it. It's Karen, isn't it? It is. You don't even have to say it, I see it in your – what? What are you smiling that way for?! Tell me before I –

MICKEY. It's you. You got it.

GAIL. I...what?! Got?!?

MICKEY. You –

GAIL. Don't play with me, Mickey, what, I got what, just say it, I'm telling you –

MICKEY. Maria.

GAIL. – to-huh-w-no, I did what? I got –

MICKEY. Maria. You got the part. You're Maria.

BRIAN. Mickey, what's the matter with you, why didn't you say something?!?

MICKEY.

BRIAN.

You got it.

Honey, that's fantastic!

GAIL. You're lying.

MICKEY. I'm gonna risk decapitation and lie about this, uh-huh –

GAIL. I'm Maria?!

BRIAN. Babe, Gail, this is –

GAIL. Oh, God, oh my God, oh, go-some-somebody get me a b-bag, I think I'm gonna –

MICKEY. Relax, bitch, it's what you always wanted.

GAIL. It's true? Mickey, it's really – wh-what are you?

MICKEY. I'm Nibbles.

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