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God

A Play in One Act

by Woody Allen

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL
FRENCH**

FOUNDED 1830

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CAST

ACTOR

WRITER

GIRL

DORIS

MAID

TRICHINOSIS

PROMPTER

BURSITIS

MAN (*In Audience*)

LORENZO MILLER

WOMAN (*In Audience*)

BLANCHE DUBOIS

DIABETES

PHIDIPIDES (*A Slave, played by DIABETES*)

ANOTHER GREEK SLAVE

MASTER

BOB

WENDY

GUARD

WOMAN (*On Stage*)

KING

DOCTOR

WESTERN UNION DELIVERY BOY

STANLEY

ANOTHER MAN (*In Audience*)

ANOTHER WOMAN (*In Audience*)

GREEK CHORUS

GOD (*Non-speaking Role*)

GROUCHO MARX (*Non-speaking Role*)

SCENE: Athens. Approximately 500 B.C. Two distraught Greeks in the center of enormous empty amphitheater. Sunset. One is the ACTOR; the other, the WRITER. They are both thinking and distracted. They should be played by two good, broad burlesque clowns.

ACTOR

Nothing . . . just nothing . . .

WRITER

What?

ACTOR

Meaningless. It's empty.

WRITER

The ending.

ACTOR

Of course. What are we discussing? We're discussing the ending.

WRITER

We're always discussing the ending.

ACTOR

Because it's hopeless.

WRITER

I admit it's unsatisfying.

ACTOR

Unsatisfying!?! It's not even believable. The trick is to start

at the ending when you write a play. Get a good strong ending and then write backwards.

WRITER

I've tried that. I got a play with no beginning.

ACTOR

That's absurd.

WRITER

Absurd? What's absurd?

ACTOR

Every play must have a beginning, middle, and end.

WRITER

Why?

ACTOR

(Confidently)

Because everything in nature has a beginning, middle, and end.

WRITER

What about a circle?

ACTOR

(Thinks)

Okay . . . A circle has no beginning, middle, or end—but they're not much fun either.

WRITER

Diabetes, think of an ending. We open in three days.

ACTOR

Not me. I'm not opening in this turkey. I have a reputation as an actor, a following . . . My public expects to see me in a suitable vehicle.

WRITER

May I remind you, you're a starving, out-of-work actor

whom I've generously consented to let appear in my play in an effort to assist your comeback.

ACTOR

Starving, yes . . . Out of work, perhaps . . . Hoping for a comeback, maybe—but a drunkard?

WRITER

I never said you were a drunkard.

ACTOR

Yes, but I'm also a drunkard.

WRITER

(In a fit of sudden inspiration)

What if your character ripped a dagger from his robes and in a fit of frenzied frustration, tore away at his own eyes until he blinded himself?

ACTOR

Yeah, it's a great idea. Have you eaten anything today?

WRITER

What's wrong with it?

ACTOR

It's depressing. The audience will take one look at it and—

WRITER

I know—make that funny sound with their lips.

ACTOR

It's called hissing.

WRITER

Just once I want to win the competition! Once, before my life is over, I want my play to take first prize. And it's not the free case of ouzo I care about, it's the honor.

ACTOR

(Suddenly inspired)

What if the king suddenly changed his mind? There's a positive idea.

WRITER

He'd never do it.

ACTOR

(Selling him on it)

If the queen convinced him?

WRITER

She wouldn't. She's a bitch.

ACTOR

But if the Trojan Army surrendered—

WRITER

They'd fight to the death.

ACTOR

Not if Agamemnon reneged on his promise?

WRITER

It's not in his nature.

ACTOR

But I could suddenly take up arms and make a stand.

WRITER

It's against your character. You're a coward—an insignificant wretched slave with the intelligence of a worm. Why do you think I cast you?

ACTOR

I've just given you six possible endings!

WRITER

Each more clumsy than the last.

ACTOR

It's the play that's clumsy.

WRITER

Human beings don't behave that way. It's not in their nature.

ACTOR

What does their nature mean? We're stuck with a hopeless ending.

WRITER

As long as man is a rational animal, as a playwright, I cannot have a character do anything on stage he wouldn't do in real life.

ACTOR

May I remind you that we don't exist in real life.

WRITER

What do you mean?

ACTOR

You are aware that we're characters in a play right now in some Broadway theater? Don't get mad at me, I didn't write it.

WRITER

We're characters in a play and soon we're going to see my play . . . which is a play within a play. And they're watching us.

ACTOR

Yes. It's highly metaphysical, isn't it?

WRITER

Not only is it metaphysical, it's stupid!

ACTOR

Would you rather be one of them?

WRITER

(Looking at the audience)

Definitely not. Look at them.

ACTOR

Then let's get on with it!

WRITER

(Mutters)

They paid to get in.

ACTOR

Hepatitis, I'm talking to you!

WRITER

I know, the problem is the ending.

ACTOR

It's always the ending.

WRITER

(Suddenly to the audience)

Do you folks have any suggestions?

ACTOR

Stop talking to the audience! I'm sorry I mentioned them.

WRITER

It's bizarre, isn't it? We're two ancient Greeks in Athens and we're about to see a play I wrote and you're acting in, and they're from Queens or some terrible place like that and they're watching us in someone else's play. What if they're characters in another play? And someone's watching them? Or what if nothing exists and we're all in somebody's dream? Or, what's worse, what if only that fat guy in the third row exists?

ACTOR

That's my point. What if the universe is not rational and people are not set things? Then we could change the ending and it wouldn't have to conform to any fixed notions. You follow me?

WRITER

Of course not. *(To the audience)* You follow him? He's an actor. Eats at Sardi's.

ACTOR

Play characters would have no determined traits and could choose their own characters. I wouldn't have to be the slave just because you wrote it that way. I could choose to become a hero.

WRITER

Then there's no play.

ACTOR

No play? Good, I'll be at Sardi's.

WRITER

Diabetes, what you're suggesting is chaos!

ACTOR

Is freedom chaos?

WRITER

Is freedom chaos? Hmm . . . That's a toughie. *(To the audience)* Is freedom chaos? Did anybody out there major in philosophy?
(A GIRL from the audience answers)

GIRL

I did.

WRITER

Who's that?

GIRL

Actually I majored in gym, with a philosophy minor.

WRITER

Can you come up here?

ACTOR

What the hell are you doing?

GIRL

Does it matter if it was Brooklyn College?

WRITER

Brooklyn College? No, we'll take anything.
(*She's made her way up*)

ACTOR

I am really pissed off!

WRITER

What's eating you?

ACTOR

We're in the middle of a play. Who is she?

WRITER

In five minutes the Athenian Drama Festival begins, and I have no ending for my play!

ACTOR

So?

WRITER

Serious philosophical questions have been raised. Do we exist? Do they exist? (*Meaning the audience*) What is the true nature of human character?

GIRL

Hi. I'm Doris Levine.

WRITER

I'm Hepatitis and this is Diabetes. We're ancient Greeks.

DORIS

I'm from Great Neck.

ACTOR

Get her off this stage!

WRITER

(*Really looking her up
and down, as she's lovely*)

She's very sexy.

ACTOR

What has that got to do with it?

DORIS

The basic philosophical question is: If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it—how do we know it makes a noise?

(Everyone looks around, puzzled over this)

ACTOR

Why do we care? We're on Forty-fifth Street.

WRITER

Will you go to bed with me?

ACTOR

Leave her alone!

DORIS

(To ACTOR)

Mind your own business.

WRITER

(Calling offstage)

Can we lower the curtain here? Just for five minutes . . . *(To the audience)* Sit there. It'll be a quickie.

ACTOR

This is outrageous! It's absurd! *(To DORIS)* Do you have a friend?

DORIS

Sure. *(Calling to the audience)* Diane, you want to come up here . . . I got something going with a couple of Greeks. *(No response)* She's shy.

ACTOR

Well, we have a play to do. I'm going to report this to the author.

WRITER

I *am* the author!

ACTOR

I mean the original author.

WRITER

(Sotto voce to the ACTOR)

Diabetes, I think I can score with her.

ACTOR

What do you mean, score? You mean intercourse—with all these people watching?

WRITER

I'll lower the curtain. Some of them even do it. Not many, probably.

ACTOR

You idiot, you're fictional, she's Jewish—you know what the children will be like?

WRITER

Come on, maybe we can get her friend up here.

(The ACTOR goes to stage left to use the telephone)

Diane? This is a chance for a date with ———. *(Uses a real actor's name)* He's a big actor . . . lots of TV commercials . . .

ACTOR

(Into the phone)

Get me an outside line.

DORIS

I don't want to cause any trouble.

WRITER

It's no trouble. It's just that we've seemed to have lost touch with reality here.

DORIS

Who knows what reality really is?

WRITER

You're so right, Doris.

DORIS

(Philosophically)

So often people think they grasp reality when what they're really responding to is "fakeositude."

WRITER

I have an urge toward you that I'm sure is real.

DORIS

Is sex real?

WRITER

Even if it's not, it's still one of the best fake activities a person can do.

(He grabs her, she pulls back)

DORIS

Don't. Not here.

WRITER

Why not?

DORIS

I don't know. That's my line.

WRITER

Have you ever made it with a fictional character before?

DORIS

The closest I came was an Italian.

ACTOR

(He's on the phone. We hear the party on other end through a filter)

Hello?

PHONE

(Maid's voice)

Hello, Mr. Allen's residence.

ACTOR

Hello, may I speak to Mr. Allen?

MAID'S VOICE

Who's calling, please?

ACTOR

One of the characters in his play.

MAID

One second. Mr. Allen, there's a fictional character on the phone.

ACTOR

(To the others)

Now we'll see what happens with you lovebirds.

WOODY'S VOICE

Hello.

ACTOR

Mr. Allen?

WOODY

Yes?

ACTOR

This is Diabetes.

WOODY

Who?

ACTOR

Diabetes. I'm a character you created.

WOODY

Oh, yes . . . I remember, you're a badly drawn character . . . very one-dimensional.

ACTOR

Thanks.

WOODY

Hey—isn't the play on now?

ACTOR

That's what I'm calling about. We got a strange girl up on the stage and she won't get off and Hepatitis is suddenly hot for her.

WOODY

What does she look like?

ACTOR

She's pretty, but she doesn't belong.

WOODY

Blonde?

ACTOR

Brunette . . . long hair.

WOODY

Nice legs?

ACTOR

Yes.

WOODY

Good breasts?

ACTOR

Very nice.

WOODY

Keep her there, I'll be right over.

ACTOR

She's a philosophy student. But she's got no real answers . . . typical product of the Brooklyn College cafeteria.

WOODY

That's funny, I used that line in *Play It Again, Sam* to describe a girl.

ACTOR

I hope it got a better laugh there.

WOODY

Put her on.

ACTOR

On the phone?

WOODY

Sure.

ACTOR

(*To DORIS*)

It's for you.

DORIS

(*Whispers*)

I've seen him in the movies. Get rid of him.

ACTOR

He wrote the play.

DORIS

It's pretentious.

ACTOR

(*Into the phone*)

She won't speak to you. She says your play is pretentious.

WOODY

Oh, Jesus. Okay, call me back and let me know how the play ends.

ACTOR

Right.

(*He hangs up, then does a double take, realizing what the author said*)

DORIS

Can I have a part in your play?

ACTOR

I don't understand. Are you an actress or a girl playing an actress?

DORIS

I always wanted to be an actress. Mother hoped I'd become a nurse. Dad felt I should marry into society.

ACTOR

So what do you do for a living?

DORIS

I work for a company that makes deceptively shallow serving dishes for Chinese restaurants.

(A Greek enters from the wings)

TRICHINOSIS

Diabetes, Hepatitis. It's me, Trichinosis. *(Ad-lib greetings)* I have just come from a discussion with Socrates at the Acropolis and he proved that I didn't exist, so I'm upset. Still, word has it you need an ending for your play. I think I have just the thing.

WRITER

Really?

TRICHINOSIS

Who's she?

DORIS

Doris Levine.

TRICHINOSIS

Not from Great Neck?

DORIS

Yes.

TRICHINOSIS

You know the Rappaports?

DORIS

Myron Rappaport?

TRICHINOSIS

(Nodding)

We both worked for the Liberal party.

DORIS

What a coincidence.

TRICHINOSIS

You had an affair with Mayor Lindsay.

DORIS

I wanted to—he wouldn't.

WRITER

What's the ending?

TRICHINOSIS

You're much prettier than I imagined.

DORIS

Really?

TRICHINOSIS

I'd like to sleep with you right now.

DORIS

Tonight's my night. *(TRICHINOSIS takes her wrist passionately)* Please. I'm a virgin. Is that my line?

(The PROMPTER with book peeks out from the wings; is wearing a sweater)

PROMPTER

"Please. I'm a virgin." Yes.

(Exits)

WRITER

What's the goddamn ending?

TRICHINOSIS

Huh? Oh— (*Calls off*) Fellas!
 (*Some Greeks wheel out an elaborate machine*)

WRITER

What the hell is that?

TRICHINOSIS

The ending for your play.

ACTOR

I don't understand.

TRICHINOSIS

This machine, which I've spent six months designing in my brother-in-law's shop, holds the answer.

WRITER

How?

TRICHINOSIS

In the final scene—when all looks black, and Diabetes the humble slave is in a position most hopeless—

ACTOR

Yes?

TRICHINOSIS

Zeus, Father of the Gods, descends dramatically from on high and brandishing his thunderbolts, brings salvation to a grateful but impotent group of mortals.

DORIS

Deus ex machina.

TRICHINOSIS

Hey—That's a great name for this thing!

DORIS

My father works for Westinghouse.

WRITER

I still don't get it.

TRICHINOSIS

Wait'll you see this thing in action. It flies Zeus in. I'm going to make a fortune with this invention. Sophocles put a deposit on one. Euripides wants two.

WRITER

But that changes the meaning of the play.

TRICHINOSIS

Don't speak till you see a demonstration. Bursitis, get into the flying harness.

BURSITIS

Me?

TRICHINOSIS

Do what I say. You won't believe this.

BURSITIS

I'm afraid of that thing.

TRICHINOSIS

He's kidding . . . Go ahead, you idiot, we're on the verge of a sale. He'll do it. Ha, ha . . .

BURSITIS

I don't like heights.

TRICHINOSIS

Get into it! Hurry up. Let's go! Get into your Zeus suit! A demonstration.

(Exiting as BURSITIS protests)

BURSITIS

I want to call my agent.

WRITER

But you're saying God comes in at the end and saves everything.

ACTOR

I love it! It gives the people their money's worth!

DORIS

He's right. It's like those Hollywood Bible movies.

WRITER

(Taking center stage a little too dramatically)

But if God saves everything, man is not responsible for his actions.

ACTOR

You wonder why you're not invited to more parties . . .

DORIS

But without God, the universe is meaningless. Life is meaningless. We're meaningless. *(Deadly pause)* I have a sudden and overpowering urge to get laid.

WRITER

Now I'm not in the mood.

DORIS

Really? Would anyone in the audience care to make it with me?

ACTOR

Stop that! *(To the audience)* She's not serious, folks.

WRITER

I'm depressed.

ACTOR

What's bothering you?

WRITER

I don't know if I believe in God.

GOD

DORIS

(To the audience)

I am serious.

ACTOR

If there's no God, who created the universe?

WRITER

I'm not sure yet.

ACTOR

Who do you mean, you're not sure yet!? When are you going to know?

DORIS

Anybody out there want to sleep with me?

MAN

(Rising in the audience)

I'll sleep with that girl if nobody else will.

DORIS

Will you, sir?

MAN

What's wrong with everybody? A beautiful girl like that? Aren't there any red-blooded men in the audience? You're all a bunch of New York left-wing Jewish intellectual commie pinkos—

(LORENZO MILLER comes out from wings. He is dressed in contemporary clothes)

LORENZO

Sit down, will you sit down?

MAN

Okay, okay.

WRITER

Who are you?

LORENZO

Lorenzo Miller. I created this audience. I'm a writer.

WRITER

What do you mean?

LORENZO

I wrote: a large group of people from Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, and Long Island come to the Golden Theater and watch a play. There they are.

DORIS

(Pointing to the audience)

You mean they're fictional too? *(LORENZO nods)* They're not free to do as they please?

LORENZO

They think they are, but they always do what's expected of them.

WOMAN

(Suddenly a WOMAN rises in audience, quite angrily)

I'm not fictional!

LORENZO

I'm sorry, madam, but you are.

WOMAN

But I have a son at the Harvard Business School.

LORENZO

I created your son; he's fictional. Not only is he fictional, he's homosexual.

MAN

I'll show you how fictional I am. I'm leaving this theater and getting my money back. This is a stupid play. In fact, it's no play. I go to the theater, I want to see something with a story—with a beginning, middle, and end—instead of this bullshit. Good night.

(Exits up the aisle in a huff)

LORENZO

(To the audience)

Isn't he a great character. I wrote him very angry. Later he feels guilty and commits suicide. *(Sound: gunshot)* Later!

MAN

(Reenters with a smoking pistol)

I'm sorry, did I do it too soon?

LORENZO

Get out of here!

MAN

I'll be at Sardi's.

(Exits)

LORENZO

(In the audience, dealing with various people of the actual audience) What's your name, sir? Uh-huh. *(Ad-lib section, depending on what audience says)* Where are you from? Isn't he cute? Great character. Must remind them to dress him differently. Later this woman leaves her husband for this guy. Hard to believe, I know. Oh—look at this guy. Later he rapes that lady.

WRITER

It's terrible being fictional. We're all so limited.

LORENZO

Only by the limits of the playwright. Unfortunately you happen to have been written by Woody Allen. Think if you were written by Shakespeare.

WRITER

I don't accept it. I'm a free man and I don't need God flying in to save my play. I'm a good writer.

DORIS

You want to win the Athenian Drama Festival, don't you?

WRITER

(Suddenly dramatic)

Yes. I want to be immortal. I don't want to just die and be forgotten. I want my works to live on long after my physical body has passed away. I want future generations to know I existed! Please don't let me be a meaningless dot, drifting through eternity. I thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to accept this Tony Award and thank David Merrick . . .

DORIS

I don't care what anybody says, I'm real.

LORENZO

Not really.

DORIS

I think, therefore I am. Or better yet, I *feel*—I have an orgasm.

LORENZO

You do?

DORIS

All the time.

LORENZO

Really?

DORIS

Very frequently.

LORENZO

Yes?

DORIS

Most of the time I do, yes.

LORENZO

Yes?

GOD

DORIS

At least half the time.

LORENZO

No.

DORIS

I do! With certain men . . .

LORENZO

Hard to believe.

DORIS

Not necessarily through intercourse. Usually it's oral—

LORENZO

Uh-huh.

DORIS

Of course I fake it too. I don't want to insult anybody.

LORENZO

Have you ever had an orgasm?

DORIS

Not really. No.

LORENZO

Because none of us are real.

WRITER

But if we're not real, we can't die.

LORENZO

No. Not unless the playwright decides to kill us.

WRITER

Why would he do something like that?

(From the wings, BLANCHE DuBOIS enters)

BLANCHE

Because, sugar, it satisfies something called their—aesthetic sensibility.

WRITER

(All turn to look at her)

Who are you?

BLANCHE

Blanche. Blanche DuBois. It means "white woods." Don't get up, please—I was just passing through.

DORIS

What are you doing here?

BLANCHE

Seeking refuge. Yes—in this old theater . . . I couldn't help overhearing your conversation. Could I get a coke with a little bourbon in it?

ACTOR

(Appears. We didn't realize he'd slipped away)

Is a Seven-Up okay?

WRITER

Where the hell were you?

ACTOR

I went to the bathroom.

WRITER

In the middle of the play?

ACTOR

What play? *(To BLANCHE)* Will you explain to him we're all limited.

BLANCHE

I'm afraid it's all too true. Too true and too ghastly. That's why I ran out of my play. Escaped. Oh, not that Mr. Tennessee Williams is not a very great writer, but honey—he dropped me in the center of a nightmare. The last thing I remember, I was being taken out by two strangers, one who held a strait jacket. Once outside the Kowalski

residence, I broke free and ran. I've got to get into another play, a play where God exists . . . somewhere where I can rest at last. That's why you must put me in your play and allow Zeus, young and handsome Zeus to triumph with his thunderbolt.

WRITER

You went to the bathroom?

TRICHINOSIS

(Enters)

Ready for the demonstration.

BLANCHE

A demonstration. How wonderful.

TRICHINOSIS

(Calling offstage)

Ready out there? Okay. It's the end of the play. Everything looks hopeless for the slave. All other means desert him. He prays. Go ahead.

ACTOR

Oh, Zeus. Great god. We are confused and helpless mortals. Please be merciful and change our lives. *(Nothing happens)*
Er . . . great Zeus . . .

TRICHINOSIS

Let's go, fellas! For Christ's sake.

ACTOR

Oh, great God.
(Suddenly there is thunder and fabulous lightning. The effect is wonderful: ZEUS descends, hurling thunderbolts majestically)

BURSITIS

(As ZEUS)

I am Zeus, God of Gods! Worker of miracles! Creator of the universe! I bring salvation to all!

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