

Help Desk

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Cast of Characters

ANGEL
JERALYN

BORIS
TANNER

TALULA
CARTER

MARCUS
BAILEY
DANI

PRESTON
MONIQUE

TAMARA
BOFFO

MARA
BRENT

BRIN
CHARLIE

CHASE
YAMIRA

JESS
BRETT
VIC
MILEY
MABEL

Bonus Scenes:

VINNY
WATKINS

TORI
MASHA

MILENA
STUART
TANNER *
BOFFO *

** Character appears in previous scene*

Production Notes

How to Perform This Play: This play may be performed live—with people in desks spread out on stage, talking into the fourth wall as if there were a computer screen. Or it may be performed virtually, with actors talking into a camera to other actors.

Number of Actors: Any number of actors can be used in this play. If you're not doing the bonus scenes, as few as 4 actors could perform this play, frequently switching costumes. Feel free to cut any scenes as necessary, or add scenes from the bonus section.

Gender of Performers: I've selected the gender of the characters rather arbitrarily. Feel free to change the gender of any character and adjust pronouns accordingly.

HELP DESK

by Don Zolidis

1.

(JERALYN is at the Help Desk, with headphones on. She is scrolling through her phone.)

(Lights up on ANGEL, calling in.)

(JERALYN lets it ring for a moment, calls out.)

JERALYN. Anyone else gonna get that?

(No response from anyone else. The phone keeps ringing.)

Oh okay I guess I got it then. I guess I'll take this one. Whatever. It's cool.

(The phone keeps ringing.)

Y'all are disappointing.

(She answers it.)

Help Desk, this is Jeralyn. What seems to be the nature of your problem?

ANGEL. Hey—so I'm trying to log into the network and I can't seem to make it work.

JERALYN. Oh okay. Boy that's a challenge. Glad I picked up this call.

ANGEL. I'm sorry?

JERALYN. No go ahead. Walk me through how terribly difficult this is.

ANGEL. Um . . . so—I put in my ID and password—

JERALYN. Uh-huh.

ANGEL. And then it says it can't log me in.

JERALYN. Right. Mystery. What could it possibly be?

ANGEL. Well, this is super weird, 'cause normally I don't have any trouble.

JERALYN. Oh you never have trouble. This is your first time encountering an insurmountable difficulty. So difficult, in fact, that it prompted you to call the Help Desk.

ANGEL. Yeah.

JERALYN. You feel like this problem is so hard that it demands assistance from a paid professional. You can't crack this nugget. Impossible to figure out.

ANGEL. Um . . . did I catch you on a bad day?

JERALYN. Why would you say that?

ANGEL. It just seems like you kinda have an attitude.

JERALYN. WHOA. *I have an attitude?* I'm just sitting here, minding my own business, I'm not the person who can't figure out how to log in to the network. I'm in the network just fine. I got no problems.

ANGEL. Right, but you work at the Help Desk.

JERALYN. Oh, you know ALL ABOUT me, don't you? ALL ABOUT ME.

ANGEL. Can you just help me, please?

JERALYN. Oh now you need help. Just a minute ago you were saying I had an attitude, and now all of a sudden you're desperate for my assistance. I don't know, maybe you think it's cool to insult someone and then demand they help you. That's how it works where you live. You do you, I guess.

ANGEL. So . . . with my password? Please.

(JERALYN *sighs.*)

JERALYN. All right—have you tried turning off your computer and turning it back on again?

ANGEL. Does that work?

JERALYN. No I'm just saying stupid stuff to keep you occupied. I'm just making stuff up over here because that's what I like to do with my time. Turn off your computer, then turn it back on again. Do it. DO IT.

ANGEL. Okay, okay!

(ANGEL *turns off her computer.*)

Um . . . so now I turn it back on?

JERALYN. No we just leave it off.

ANGEL. Oh.

JERALYN. *Of course you turn it back on!* What part of "turn off your computer, then turn it back on again" didn't you understand?! Did your brain just cut out after the first part of my instructions?

ANGEL. Sorry I—

JERALYN. How are you gonna log into a network with a computer turned OFF? How are you gonna do that? Are you magic? Do you have magic? Are you a wizard? Am I talking to a wizard? Are you gonna get your wizard wand and abracadabra yourself into the network, is that what you're planning on doing?!

ANGEL. No! I don't know! Maybe!

JERALYN. Is your computer back on yet?

ANGEL. It's booting up.

JERALYN. Uh-huh. All right—well I guess we wait for that then.

ANGEL. I'm doing what you asked me to do!

JERALYN. Not fast enough! I got other people to help, all right? I got people who got real problems calling in—and what are they gonna do if the line is busy?

ANGEL. (*Near tears:*) I don't know! I just can't log in to the network!

JERALYN. And it's my problem that you FAILED?! Take some responsibility for your actions!

ANGEL. I'm trying to! I'm having a hard day!

JERALYN. I bet you are! It's about to get harder!

ANGEL. No!

JERALYN. Did you remember your password correctly?!

ANGEL. Yes.

JERALYN. Did you?!

ANGEL. Yes!

JERALYN. Stop lying to me! I know you're lying! Did you enter your password correctly?!

ANGEL. I think so!

JERALYN. Before you were sure and now you just think so?! Which is it?

ANGEL. I don't know! I don't even know who I am anymore! I tried to do the captcha thing and it asked if I was a robot and I started thinking about it, and I was like, *am* I robot? If I was a robot would I even know? Maybe I'm a robot that's programmed to think it's a human being! And all of a sudden I didn't even know if I *deserved* to get into the network if I couldn't even prove that I was a human! I mean, maybe I'm just a brain in a vat and this is a computer simulation and—

(Types something in to the computer.)

Oh. Hold on. I think I got in.

(She exhales.)

Oh I made it in. Thank you. I think I learned something today.

JERALYN. I think you did, lady. I think you did.

ANGEL. You saved me.

JERALYN. Just doing my job. Next time . . . you're a human being. Remember that.

ANGEL. Thank you.

JERALYN. 'Cause a robot never woulda made that dumb mistake.

(Lights change.)

2.

(Light up on BORIS, dressed like a hippie, at the Help Desk.)

(TANNER is calling in.)

(BORIS takes the call.)

BORIS. Help Desk, this is Boris. How may I help you today?

TANNER. Hey man—it's Tanner.

BORIS. Hello Tanner.

TANNER. I need some help.

BORIS. Everyone does sometimes. You came to the right place, Tanner. Tell me what's going on with you.

TANNER. Um . . . so I'm trying to order something from Amazon and it's not taking my credit card information.

BORIS. Uh-huh. That's a bummer, dude.

TANNER. Right. So what am I doing wrong?

(BORIS chuckles.)

BORIS. We're not there yet. Don't rush the process.

TANNER. Oh.

BORIS. You gotta *savor* the process, know what I'm saying? This is a journey that we are on together, and you don't want to rush to the end of the journey without fighting all the monsters along the way. Right? How else are you going to learn and change and grow?

TANNER. I'm not sure I want to learn and change and grow—

BORIS. Ohh. Don't say that, Tanner. Let's unpack that.

TANNER. I'm trying to order socks, actually. For my feet. I need some new socks.

BORIS. Mm-hm, that's what's going on on the surface. But that's not what's really happening.

TANNER. That's actually exactly what's happening.

BORIS. Little word of advice for you: I want you to remove the word "exactly" from your vocabulary. We are faulty creatures. Our perceptions of the world are not necessarily what is "reality." In fact, "reality" which I am putting in "air quotes," is not actually a thing. So you need to release yourself from the pathological need to "know" "what" is "going on."

TANNER. What is going on?

BORIS. Wrong question, Tanner. The question is, what do you perceive to be going on?

TANNER. Is that a question?

BORIS. Is it? Maybe it is, maybe it isn't.

TANNER. So . . . I *perceive* that I cannot put my credit card information in the open tab.

BORIS. Cannot, or *will* not?

TANNER. Nope, cannot. Like I type in numbers and numbers don't appear in the box.

BORIS. Right. Think about what you just said. You type in numbers, and numbers don't appear.

TANNER. (*Utterly confused:*) Yes.

BORIS. You type in numbers, and numbers . . . do not . . . appear.

TANNER. Right.

BORIS. Why do you think you're the master of numbers? Why do you think numbers have to obey you? Are you a number master?

TANNER. I'm not sure.

BORIS. That's the most true statement you've made in this entire call. Let me propose a solution: Ask the numbers to appear.

TANNER. Ask them?

BORIS. You never asked them, did you? You demanded things from them. Like they were your servants. But numbers do not serve you,

man. You don't own them. You know what numbers are? An agreed-upon fiction. Think about that. Three does not exist, man. Three is only what we agree to be three. And three has refused to go along with that anymore.

TANNER. I just want socks. I'm just trying to get socks.

BORIS. No. You say you want socks, but in truth, you are fighting a war with yourself about whether or not "reality" is what you think it is. You gotta open your mind, man.

TANNER. So what do I do?

BORIS. Ask the numbers to appear. With respect. Implore them to join your computer screen.

TANNER. Okay. Um . . . Four?

BORIS. Keep going.

TANNER. Six?

BORIS. Yeah that's respectful.

TANNER. Five?

BORIS. How do you feel about Five?

TANNER. I love Five?

BORIS. Five loves you. Call Five. Call her.

TANNER. (*Longingly:*) Five!

(*Desperately pleading:*)

Five!

(*He reaches out a hand for five:*)

FIVE!

BORIS. *Five hears you!*

TANNER. I love you, Five!

BORIS. Call the others! Call them!

TANNER. *Seven! Nine! One! One again! One another time! Zero! Zero please hear my call! And FIVE!!!!*

BORIS. And your expiration date?!

TANNER. Why do you—

BORIS. SPEAK YOUR EXPIRATION DATE INTO THE UNIVERSE!

TANNER. JULY 2025!

BORIS. YESSSS!

(TANNER *takes a deep breath.*)

TANNER. Nothing seems to have happened? Boris? Boris are you there?

(*Short pause.*)

Boris did you just steal my credit card information? Boris?

BORIS. Thanks for calling the Help Desk.

(*Lights down on BORIS.*)

3.

(*Lights up on CARTER and TALULA.*)

TALULA. Hello?

CARTER. Is this the Help Desk?

TALULA. Yes it is.

CARTER. I got a bone to pick with you.

TALULA. I'm sorry to hear that, but I'm here to help. That's why I'm at the Help Desk. I love helping people.

CARTER. I need to report a faulty product. Possibly poisonous. Super dangerous. And there are no warning signs on it at all, NONE. What's your name?

TALULA. Um . . . Talula.

CARTER. All right, Talula—listen to me. I got one of your so-called bottles of water, and you know what I did? I drank it.

TALULA. Oh.

CARTER. And then I looked at the ingredients. What do you think the ingredients were? In a bottle of WATER. What are the ingredients in a bottle of water?

TALULA. Water?

CARTER. Oh sure water, there's supposedly water in this thing. But you know what else? Magnesium sulfate. Magnesium. Sulfate. Chemicals.

TALULA. I'm not sure those are chemicals.

CARTER. They are SCIENCE words and I do not like them! I didn't ask to put SCIENCE into my body! And now I've got magnesium

throwing a party in my lungs or wherever and sulfate is just RIPPING up my stomach! It's madness!

TALULA. Do you actually feel sick?

CARTER. Do you think these chemicals would be so obvious as to cause OBVIOUS problems?! No. They're smarter than that.

TALULA. I'm not sure that they're smart at all.

CARTER. That's what they want you to believe. Wake up, Talula. Open. Your. Eyes. I've got magnesium and I've got sulfate INSIDE MY BODY right now. What can I do? How do I stop them? I'm freaking out!

TALULA. Okay—first—calm down.

CARTER. I AM VERY CALM.

TALULA. I'm pretty sure speaking loudly activates the magnesium.

CARTER. What?!

TALULA. Shhh! You need to keep it down and act rationally or the sulfate will awaken.

CARTER. It awakens?!

TALULA. Don't you know anything about sulfates?

CARTER. There's more than one?!

TALULA. Yes, sir, yes, there are many sulfates.

(CARTER *gasps*.)

And they lurk around you, unseen, ready to strike at a moment's notice.

CARTER. My goodness.

TALULA. So the first thing you need to do—you need to me very carefully and do everything I say or you will be facing an awakened sulfate and an activated magnesium. Do you want that?

CARTER. No. No I don't want that.

TALULA. No you don't.

CARTER. Are the sulfates in the chemtrails?

TALULA. You better believe it.

CARTER. They're everywhere. They're in our water. They're inside us.

TALULA. Yes, but there is one way to get them out.

CARTER. I have a knife here.

TALULA. Don't—you don't need a knife.

CARTER. Are you sure I don't need a knife?

TALULA. No. That only angers the magnesium.

CARTER. I don't want to anger it.

TALULA. In fact, speaking its name aloud peeves it.

CARTER. Oh.

TALULA. But there is one way to get it out. I need you to find a lavatory.

CARTER. A lavatory?

TALULA. Do you have one in your house?

CARTER. I think so.

TALULA. Okay. I need you to go it, and I need you to urinate. Carter? Carter, are you there?

CARTER. I'm scared.

TALULA. Be brave, Carter. It's the only way to get it out.

CARTER. If you say so.

TALULA. And listen, never buy one of our products again, okay? I don't think you can handle it.

CARTER. Thank you. You saved my life today.

TALULA. Just doing my job. Now go. Pee. Pee like the wind.

CARTER. Thank you. I'll name my first-born after you.

TALULA. Please don't. Also don't have children. They've got lots of magnesium in them.

CARTER. Good to know.

(CARTER exits.)

(TALULA takes a moment, then opens a bottle of water.)

TALULA. I love helping people.

(She checks the label on her bottle.)

Sodium bicarbonate?

(Lights down on them.)

4.

(Lights up on BAILEY and MARCUS.)

BAILEY. Help Desk, this is Bailey.

MARCUS. Bailey!

BAILEY. What's up?

MARCUS. Bailey, this is Marcus!

BAILEY. What's up, Marcus?

MARCUS. I am having a bad day, Bailey.

BAILEY. I'm sorry to hear that.

MARCUS. A real bad day. You know why I'm having a bad day?

BAILEY. Uh . . . Climate change?

MARCUS. No—

BAILEY. Natural disasters in your vicinity? Flesh-eating virus? Unsocial rats? Murder hornets?

MARCUS. No, Bailey, I am having a problem with socks.

BAILEY. Oh.

MARCUS. My socks are malfunctioning, Bailey.

BAILEY. I'm not sure socks can malfunction, sir.

MARCUS. Oh can't they? I DISAGREE. I have worn these socks for six months straight and do you know what happened?

BAILEY. I can't imagine.

MARCUS. They got a HOLE in them. Now how did that happen?

BAILEY. Maybe your feet wore a hole in them.

MARCUS. My feet are PRISTINE. Do you understand how beautiful my feet are? My feet wouldn't hurt anyone! And you're insinuating that my lovely feet have attacked some socks? Didn't happen. Did not happen.

BAILEY. I'm not sure this is a huge deal.

MARCUS. How can you say that? I had big plans for these socks! Ruined! I was gonna make cute little puppets with them!

BAILEY. You can still make puppets.

MARCUS. How'm I gonna make a little puppet? My little puppet has a hole IN ITS HEAD. Was it shot?! Was my puppet the victim of a

murder? HOW AM I GONNA EXPLAIN MY MURDERED PUPPET TO PRESCHOOLERS?!

(Puts a sock on his hand.)

“Hey kids it’s me, Jimbo, pay no attention to the GIANT HOLE IN MY FOREHEAD WHERE I WAS SHOT BY A RIVAL PUPPET GANG.” Kids are gonna be screaming, calling for their mommies! “Don’t worry kids! I was raised from the dead by a voodoo priest and now I’m a zombie! But I’m only a little bit contagious! Who wants to give me their brains to eat?”

BAILEY. But you don’t have to say that—

MARCUS. I’m going wherever my art takes me. Right now, because of my holey socks, it’s taking me to some pretty dark places, Bailey! Real dark. “Hey kids has anyone seen my brains!?”

(He sticks a finger through the hole in the sock.)

“Oh no my brains are oozing out I hope you can sleep well tonight! Here come my brains! Blarhrrhrhrgh!”

(His sock puppet dies horribly.)

“I was . . . MURDERED!”

BAILEY. I’m sorry sir but our policy is not refund socks that have been worn. Every day. For six months.

MARCUS. Where’s your manager?

BAILEY. She’s pretty busy.

MARCUS. I want to speak to your manager! Put your manager on!

BAILEY. All right.

(BAILEY waves to someone in the dark.)

(Lights up on DANI, joining the call.)

DANI. This is Dani. Manager and Chief Problem-Solver. I got your back, noble citizen.

MARCUS. Yeah I got a problem with Bailey. BIG PROBLEM WITH BAILEY.

BAILEY. It’s just policy, sir.

MARCUS. Hey you be quiet while I tattle to your boss!

DANI. Hit me with it. What happened?

MARCUS. I have some malfunctioning socks. These socks are about to cause children trauma. Do you understand the seriousness of that? And Bailey is super unhelpful and mean. Big-time mean!

She will not refund my money! I have never been so outraged in my entire life.

DANI. Bailey, is this true?

BAILEY. I explained to him very calmly that we do not refund socks—

DANI. Bailey. The customer is always right.

MARCUS. THANK YOU.

BAILEY. But we have a policy—

DANI. I don't care about policy, I care about our customer's feelings. And this customer is very clearly upset. And I know you have been a perfect employee for the past nine years here, but this is inexcusable! You're fired!

BAILEY. What?

DANI. That's right, you're fired! Pack up your things and get out of here! You're gone!

BAILEY. But who will take care of my adopted daughter?

DANI. I don't care. You made this guy mad! Get out! You're done here!

BAILEY. And what about my five rescue golden retrievers?

DANI. They're gonna live on the street with you. Serves them right for having such a jerk as an owner! You're gone! I have had ENOUGH of you! I'm calling security to throw you out of here! Enjoy your new home under the bridge you scum!

(BAILEY starts crying.)

BAILEY. I'm so sorry! I'll never do it again!

DANI. Too late! It's over for you! You're a disgrace!

BAILEY. (*Through tears:*) I'm sorry baby, I'm sorry golden retrievers, I'm sorry elderly mother that depends on me!

MARCUS. Um . . . hey. Uh . . . you know what? I can use a different sock for my puppet.

DANI. Don't worry about it, sir.

MARCUS. No I mean—I don't need anybody to lose their job over this. It was probably my fault for wearing the socks for a hundred and eighty days in a row.

DANI. You sure?

(BAILEY sobs piteously.)

MARCUS. Yeah. Um . . . sorry to be a problem. I'll figure it out on my own.

(He drops off the call.)

BAILEY. Is he gone?

DANI. Yup.

(BAILEY stops crying immediately.)

Next time I have a jerk you get to be the manager, okay?

BAILEY. Sure thing.

(Lights down on them.)

5.

(Lights up on PRESTON, with complicated instructions from IKEA, and MONIQUE.)

MONIQUE. Help Desk, this is Monique.

PRESTON. Hey there I got a problem.

MONIQUE. Sure you do. That's why you're calling the Help Desk. Before we start I have to let you know that this helpline costs ninety-nine cents a minute. Do you accept the charges?

PRESTON. Why do I have to pay to get help?

MONIQUE. You want people to help you for free? Out of the goodness of their hearts?

PRESTON. Well—

MONIQUE. Do you accept the charges? And I want you to know that whining about the charges costs five dollars a minute.

PRESTON. Okay, I accept the changes.

MONIQUE. All right, so what seems to be the problem?

PRESTON. Right. So I bought a Bjorgborn-ingen Fallfe—

MONIQUE. Oh the Bjorgborn-ingen Fallfe, one of our top sellers.

PRESTON. Right, and I'm trying to put it together . . .

MONIQUE. Even a child could put that together.

PRESTON. Well, I'm actually on step forty-seven—

MONIQUE. That's a good step. One of the best.

PRESTON. Great, but I've put the little tubey things into the little holes, and they kinda get stuck, and I can't get them back out again.

MONIQUE. Are you looking at the pictograms?

PRESTON. Yeah I've got them right here.

MONIQUE. The pictograms are designed for people who don't even have the ability to read.

PRESTON. Uh-huh.

MONIQUE. So what you're saying is—these designs were built so a toddler could put this together, but it has you stumped.

PRESTON. Well, the tubey things don't fit in the—

MONIQUE. So you're confused? You don't know what's going on. I'm surprised you were capable of finding the phone number on there.

PRESTON. Well they actually make it hard to find the help line—

MONIQUE. Oh a lot of things are hard I guess, aren't they, little fwend?

PRESTON. My name is actually Preston.

MONIQUE. Aww Pweston is having twouble with his pictogwam. Poor Pweston.

PRESTON. I'm actually paying for you to help me.

MONIQUE. You are incapable of doing this yourself, so you need to pay money to a stranger to help you. That's where you are in your life.

PRESTON. Yes, that's why I called! Help me!

MONIQUE. All right I'll help you. Are there any other competent humans in the house with you? Anyone who can read or handle a tool of any kind?

PRESTON. This seems insulting.

MONIQUE. Do you want me to help you or not? Is there anyone else there? A six-year old, maybe?

PRESTON. No it's just me.

MONIQUE. Yeah that makes sense.

PRESTON. Why did you say that?

MONIQUE. I think it's pretty obvious that if you can't put together a Bjorgborn-ingen Fallfe no one will ever love you.

PRESTON. What?!

MONIQUE. Are you going to let me help you or you just going to whine?

PRESTON. You're not helping me!

MONIQUE. Whining costs five dollars a minute, Preston. Is that what you want?

PRESTON. Okay, what do I do? I'm on step forty-seven.

MONIQUE. Okay, I want you to take a deep breath first.

PRESTON. Fine.

MONIQUE. You didn't take a deep breath.

PRESTON. I did take a deep breath.

MONIQUE. I didn't hear a deep breath.

PRESTON. Fine.

(PRESTON sighs sarcastically.)

MONIQUE. That was a sarcastic breath.

PRESTON. YOU'RE CHARGING ME BY THE MINUTE!

MONIQUE. SO MAYBE YOU BETTER DO WHAT I SAY! BREATHE!

PRESTON. I'VE BEEN BREATHING!

MONIQUE. NOT DEEPLY! NOT SINCERELY!

PRESTON. THIS IS THE MOST SINCERE, MOST DEEP BREATH I CAN DO!

(PRESTON breathes as deeply, as sincerely, as possible.)

(He hurts himself. Badly.)

(He stumbles around, maybe falls over.)

MONIQUE. Sir? Sir are you all right?

PRESTON. I . . . hurt myself.

MONIQUE. Do you need help?

PRESTON. Call . . . an ambulance.

MONIQUE. Of course.

PRESTON. Thank you.

MONIQUE. It's only twenty-one dollars a minute for me to call an ambulance.

(Lights down on them.)

6.

(Lights up on TAMARA, on hold. She paces nervously.)

TAMARA. Is anyone there?

(No response.)

You can do this, Tam.

(She takes a deep breath.)

(Lights up on BOFFO, dressed in a full clown outfit, with wig, makeup, suit, shoes, funny nose, etc . . .)

BOFFO. This is the Help Desk, can I help you?

TAMARA. Um . . . what are you supposed to be?

BOFFO. I'm at the Help Desk. I'm here to help you. Anything you need.

TAMARA. You're dressed like a clown.

BOFFO. You're very observant. Yes I am. I find it puts people at ease.

TAMARA. Does it?

BOFFO. Definitely. You'd be amazed at how people open up to you when you're a clown. How can I help you?

TAMARA. This is a very serious call.

BOFFO. Of course.

(BOFFO honks his nose.)

Does that help?

TAMARA. No.

BOFFO. What if I did it twice?

(Honks his nose twice.)

TAMARA. I'm just—I'm a little freaked out by clowns.

BOFFO. Understandable.

TAMARA. Kinda scared by them.

BOFFO. Yeah a *lot* of people dress up like clowns and commit crimes. Happens all the time. You never know which clowns are the good ones, so I get it.

TAMARA. Are you a good one?

BOFFO. I'm the best one. I'm a listening clown. Go ahead. Tell me your problems.

(BOFFO produces fake flowers from his sleeve.)

TAMARA. Uh . . . okay . . . so I took a home DNA test because there are some medical issues in my family.

BOFFO. Sure.

TAMARA. And I wanted to make sure I wasn't susceptible to genetic diseases—

BOFFO. Right. Mm-hmm.

(BOFFO produces a puppet version of himself and sets it in front of him.)

TAMARA. Why did you bring out the puppet?

BOFFO. This is Li'l Boffo. Whenever I sense things are about to get emotional, I need Li'l Boffo. Say Hi Li'l Boffo.

(He waves Li'l Boffo's arms.)

"Hi Li'l Boffo!"

He's a card.

TAMARA. Can you put the puppet away please?

BOFFO. (As Li'l Boffo:) "Tell me about your medical conditions."

TAMARA. I don't want to tell the puppet about my medical conditions.

BOFFO. (As Li'l Boffo:) "Li'l Boffo is sad now."
You hurt his feelings.

TAMARA. I don't care! Put him away!

BOFFO. (As Li'l Boffo:) "No! Don't put me in the box! I'll be good I promise!"

You go in the box now!

"Never!"

In the box!

(Li'l Boffo struggles.)

"Don't listen to the clown! He's an evil clown!"

Shhhhh!

(He forces Li'l Boffo off the table and into a box.)

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah."

(BOFFO slams the box shut. Turns back to TAMARA.)

Sorry about that. He gets inappropriate sometimes.

TAMARA. You were the one controlling him!

BOFFO. Whoah! That is a serious accusation!

TAMARA. Your hand was up his butt!

BOFFO. That's ridiculous! He doesn't even have a butt! Who would put a butt on a puppet?!

TAMARA. Up his—whatever. Opening.

BOFFO. Oh my gosh you're gross.

TAMARA. I am trying to tell you something serious!

BOFFO. I am a very serious person, all right! I am the most serious person who works here. Tell me what your problem is.

TAMARA. My problem is you!

BOFFO. Tell me your other problems then!

TAMARA. I am scared because it turns out I might have a genetic predisposition for—

(BOFFO is blowing up a balloon animal.)

What are you doing?!

BOFFO. Is this a mystery to you? What does it look like I'm doing?

TAMARA. Are you making a balloon animal?

(BOFFO honks his nose.)

BOFFO. What kind of animal do you want?

TAMARA. I want no animals! Negative animal!

BOFFO. That's not an animal! That's the absence of an animal! How am I supposed to create the absence of an animal? That's not even possible.

TAMARA. I DON'T WANT A BALLOON ANIMAL.

BOFFO. Maybe I want one! You ever thought of that! Noooo because you're so wrapped up in yourself! But maybe talking to you is so difficult I need a balloon animal to help me through it emotionally. Maybe that's why I'm making a penguin!

TAMARA. You're making a penguin?!

BOFFO. THEY'RE CUTE!

TAMARA. I love penguins!

BOFFO. You do?

TAMARA. They're the best. Go ahead.

BOFFO. Oh okay.

(BOFFO *tries to make a balloon animal penguin.*)

(*He is very very bad at this.*)

BOFFO. Um . . . here you go.

TAMARA. That looks just like the penguin balloon animal I had as a little girl. Thank you so much.

BOFFO. No problem.

TAMARA. I feel so much better now. It's weird, the calming presence of that misshapen balloon animal is so soothing. I feel like I could tell you anything.

BOFFO. I know.

TAMARA. And what I need to tell you—

(BOFFO *rings his bell.*)

BOFFO. Time's up! You'll need to speak to another representative.

(*Lights down on him.*)

7.

(*Lights up on MARA and BRENT.*)

BRENT. Help Desk, this is Brent.

MARA. Hey. I need some help.

BRENT. You called the right place.

MARA. I know I did.

BRENT. How can I help you?

MARA. I need to get rid of my boyfriend.

BRENT. Um . . . I'm not sure I'm the right person to call.

MARA. You help people, right? I need help—getting rid of my boyfriend. He's terrible.

BRENT. I'm sorry to hear that. Again, I don't know that I'm the right person—

MARA. He's worn the same pair of socks for six months.

BRENT. Oh.

MARA. Six. Months. Can you explain to me the mental state of a person who would do that?

BRENT. I can't, actually.

MARA. He breathes with his mouth OPEN. All the time. The boy cannot close his mouth. He's just walking around here, wearing the same socks every day, with a big open mouth like he's like one of those whales that's just sifting ocean water to eat krill. I can't take it anymore.

BRENT. Have you tried telling him how you feel?

MARA. What?

BRENT. Maybe you should just communicate with him.

MARA. "Hey Marcus close your mouth!" Never gonna work. He's dumb too. This boy is so dumb. He eats out of the garbage. He will literally open the garbage can and rummage around for food like a raccoon—mouth open the whole time. Flies are going in but they aren't even getting caught. They fly into his mouth, they're like "it's really dumb in here" and they escape. Every time I see his face I want to push him into a river.

BRENT. So why are you dating him?

MARA. He's so cute. But I hate him.

BRENT. Okay, um . . . maybe instead of complaining to me, maybe you could communicate with him.

MARA. Why are you trying to deflect responsibility?

BRENT. I'm not, I'm just saying that—

MARA. You're deflecting. You need to help me.

BRENT. I am helping you.

MARA. You're just talking. That's not helping. I need action. I want my boyfriend removed. Surgical action. Like I've got a 190 pound cyst that needs to be excavated from my life and transported to the nearest landfill.

BRENT. I'm not sure how I can do that.

MARA. Come up with a plan. Be creative. Think, Brent, think. Do you know people?

BRENT. People?

MARA. Yes, Brent. People. Do you know People?

BRENT. I know people.

MARA. Are these people good at getting rid of unwanted things? Permanently.

BRENT. I'm not sure what you're asking.

MARA. Oh I think you know what I'm asking.

BRENT. Are you really asking me to take care of your boyfriend?

MARA. Yes, Brent, I am.

BRENT. Okay. Hold on.

(BRENT takes out a black folder from beneath his desk.)

I've got an opening next Tuesday at 2 a.m. Three-person job. Your boyfriend will never be seen again.

(Short pause.)

MARA. Are you saying you're gonna kill him?!

BRENT. Isn't that what you wanted?!

MARA. NO! My goodness what is wrong with you?!

BRENT. I thought that's what you were asking!

MARA. You are sick! You are demented! He's just annoying, he doesn't need to be whacked!

BRENT. You said "take care of"!

MARA. Yes, as in given job assistance and provided with affordable housing in a nice community!

BRENT. YOU SAID "REMOVED"!

MARA. Yes as in given a ride to a new furnished apartment near a farm upstate with a gym and a swimming pool! With lots of other stupid boys that he can play with in a healthy peer group! What is wrong with you?! You think you're some kind of mafia help desk?!

BRENT. You asked if I knew people!

MARA. Where is your supervisor? I want to talk to your manager!

BRENT. Oh come on!

MARA. Put your manager on the phone!

BRENT. Fine!

(Lights up on DANI.)

DANI. This is Dani.

(Lights down on them.)

8.

(Lights up on BRIN and CHARLIE.)

CHARLIE. Help Desk, this is Charlie.

BRIN. Hey there. I'm having a little bit of a problem.

CHARLIE. Aren't we all? But I'm the only one getting paid to help people, so fire away.

BRIN. So I downloaded your virus protection program on my computer.

(CHARLIE laughs.)

What?

CHARLIE. Nothing. I'm sorry I'm just amused. Go ahead.

BRIN. What are you amused about?

CHARLIE. Little joke we have here in the office. Not a problem. You don't need to worry about it. I just love my job, that's all. By the way, if you hear me laughing or high-fiving people, just ignore that.

BRIN. Why would you be high-fiving people?

CHARLIE. I just love my team, that's all. So you downloaded the virus protection.

BRIN. Yes, your "Virus Assassin 3."

CHARLIE. Oh you got 3?!

(CHARLIE laughs again.)

Hey everybody I got a customer here who got Virus Assassin 3!

(Laughs and celebration from offstage [or offscreen].)

I know, right!? Woo!

BRIN. Yeah, so I downloaded Virus Assassin 3 because it said it would take care of my viruses permanently.

CHARLIE. *(Chuckling to himself:)* Yeah it says that. Classic.

BRIN. But as soon as I installed it I started getting all these pop-ups.

CHARLIE. Yup!

BRIN. And they just say things like, "your computer is in danger!" Or this one "There are viruses coming for your computer—they are stealing all of your information and writing emails to your mom blaming her for all the problems in your life." I mean that's really

specific. My mom doesn't even know she's responsible for all the problems in my life.

CHARLIE. Amazing.

BRIN. So it seems like all Virus Assassin 3 does is just put pop-ups on my computer scaring me.

CHARLIE. Sometimes fear is the best motivator.

BRIN. But that's basically what a virus does.

CHARLIE. Yup!

BRIN. So how is Virus Assassin 3 different than a virus?

(CHARLIE laughs.)

CHARLIE. Hey she's asking how Virus Assassin 3 is different than a virus!

(More laughs and celebration offstage.)

Yes you're right.

BRIN. What am I right about?

CHARLIE. Virus Assassin 3 is in fact a virus. Don't get upset—it's there to show you just how bad a virus can be.

BRIN. But I paid for it!

CHARLIE. I know! You made a terrible mistake! You were completely fooled! That just shows you how vulnerable you are to other viruses!

BRIN. It says it murders viruses!

CHARLIE. And it does! By becoming one of them! And now your computer is infected with Virus Assassin 3, which is totally about to beam all your credit card information to the Dark Web.

BRIN. The Dark Web?!

CHARLIE. Oh yeah! It's scary. That's why it's called the Dark Web. Pretty soon organized crime in Morocco is going to have access to all your contacts and will be calling your grandma.

BRIN. This is crazy!

CHARLIE. *(Laughing:)* I know! You'd be amazed at how many people fall for this!

BRIN. But how do I get rid of it?

CHARLIE. That's where I can help you. We have a specially designed product that will take care of Virus Assassin 3. No problem. No questions asked.

(He can barely keep a straight face while saying it.)

Virus Assassin Extreme. I know you're worried that it's gonna be expensive, but it's only a monthly fee of \$19.95.

BRIN. Why is it a monthly fee?

CHARLIE. It's a subscription service. Because Virus Assassin 3 is constantly mutating, so you need Virus Assassin Extreme to be constantly adapting to fight it. Don't you know anything about viruses?

BRIN. How do I know Virus Assassin Extreme isn't just another virus?

(CHARLIE laughs again.)

CHARLIE. I guess you'll just have to trust me.

BRIN. But you don't seem trustworthy at all!

CHARLIE. It's quite a dilemma, isn't it? You are really in a bind!

(He calls out to the other people:)

I think she's gonna buy Virus Assassin Extreme!

(More laughs and cheers from people offstage.)

BRIN. I'm not doing this.

CHARLIE. Aww. You sure?

BRIN. Yes! You guys are like criminals! I guess I need to buy a new computer then.

CHARLIE. I guess you do. But you're in luck because we sell those too.

BRIN. Ooh!

(Lights down on them.)

9. Bees!

(Lights up on CHASE and YAMIRA.)

(YAMIRA is wearing as much of a beekeeper's outfit as she can manage. Heavy gloves, a hood or helmet if possible.)

CHASE. Help Desk, this is—

YAMIRA. Bees! There are bees!

(YAMIRA *ducks.*)

They're everywhere! They're inside my house! BEES!

CHASE. This is Chase, how can I help you?

YAMIRA. I'm telling you there are bees!

CHASE. Oh so I'm talking to an amateur beekeeper, am I? Fantastic. Do you know the word apiary? I do.

YAMIRA. Help me!

CHASE. Absolutely! The key to beekeeping is to make sure that your queen is happy.

YAMIRA. She's sending her minions after me! They are inside the house! Aaaaah!

CHASE. Right. Don't keep bees inside the house.

YAMIRA. How do I kill them?!

CHASE. Bees are actually endangered.

YAMIRA. I want them MORE endangered!

CHASE. Bees and other pollinators are responsibility for quite a lot of our food. Instead of fearing them, we should be thanking them. But don't shake hands with a bee, though.

(YAMIRA *gets stung.*)

YAMIRA. Ah!

CHASE. I said DON'T shake hands with them.

YAMIRA. They're shaking hands with me!

CHASE. They must like you.

(*He chuckles.*)

Just kidding, they see you as a threat that must be eliminated.

YAMIRA. How do I eliminate them?

CHASE. Maybe it would help if I understood how the bees got in your house.

YAMIRA. I wanted honey.

CHASE. Classic mistake.

YAMIRA. And I thought it would be fun to keep bees. Aaaaah!

(*She dives to avoid one.*)

YAMIRA. So I got a hive, and I got a queen, and I got a whole bunch of bees. And they were fine for a while—aaaahhh—but I thought it was going to rain, and I was worried about my hive, and they seemed super nice . . . so I brought them into the house.

CHASE. You brought the entire hive into the house?

YAMIRA. I was worried about them!

(She dives again.)

I shouldn't have been, because they're MEAN!

(She gets stung again.)

Ah!

CHASE. Where is the hive now?

YAMIRA. On the kitchen table. But I can't get near it because there are A LOT OF BEES.

CHASE. All right, listen to me, you need to calm down. Bees can smell fear.

YAMIRA. They can?

CHASE. Yes. The smell it and they love it. So stand up. And don't be frightened!

(YAMIRA stands up.)

(She gets stung. Tries not to react.)

YAMIRA. . . . ow.

(She gets stung again. Tries not to react again.)

. . . .ooooow.

(She lets out a high-pitched whimper as she get stung again.)

CHASE. You're doing great.

YAMIRA. . . . They . . . keep . . . stinging . . . me.

CHASE. Oh are these honeybees?

YAMIRA. Yes?

CHASE. Okay, they can't smell fear then. I was wrong. They smell weakness.

YAMIRA. I am very weak.

CHASE. I know. There's only one thing you can do.

YAMIRA. What's that?

CHASE. You must do battle with the queen.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!



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